

Social Services Annual Report 2021/22



Contents

Introduction	1
Director's Summary of Performance	3
How People are Shaping our Services	6
Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help	8
• Quality Standard 1	10
• Quality Standard 2	11
• Quality Standard 3	12
• Quality Standard 4	13
• Quality Standard 5	14
• Quality Standard 6	15
How We Do What We Do	
• Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles	16
• Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability	16
• Audit and Inspection	17
• Collaboration	18
• 'More than just Words'	19
• Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future	19
Conclusion	20
Accessing Further Information and Key Documents	21
• Useful Documents	
• Useful Websites	
• Providing Feedback	

Introduction

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services Annual Report 2021/2022
Over the past few years the Department has been developing this annual report to highlight the key areas of improvements and challenges that have been faced.

This report has been developed in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, referred to as 'the Act' throughout this document. The Act aims to provide the most radical change to the way in which Social Services is provided since 1948. It focuses on improving the well-being of people who come to Social Services for support. It is person centred and focuses on prevention and reducing the need for care and support. It recognises that responsibility lies not only within Social Services Departments, but also within the wider Local Authority and with partners (particularly Health and the Third Sector).

The Act shares similar principles with a number of key national/regional strategies that are being implemented throughout the Council, in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Director of Social Services has a statutory requirement to publish an annual report in relation to the delivery of its functions, to evaluate its performance and also include lessons learned. A key aspect of the report is showing how the six Quality Standards have been implemented in relation to well-being outcomes.

This report provides a strategic overview of the work undertaken throughout 2021/2022 and what plans are in place to move forward and includes where Social Services have worked collaboratively with partners. Further supporting information can be found from **page 21** of the report.

Experiences and learning from service users has been considered as part of the development of the report. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) findings, Audit Wales (AW) findings, case studies, complaints and compliments and quarterly reporting have all been considered as part of the development of this report and evidence from these has been used to inform future learning.

The annual report is used to demonstrate accountability to citizens and service users. As part of this process, the report will be presented to full Council for ratification before it is published on the Council's website and will then be sent to Welsh Ministers. The report will be available on line bilingually and will be shared with partner agencies in order to share good practice, learning and experiences.

COVID – 19 The Council's Response

In March 2020, a decision was made by the UK Government to put the UK into lockdown in order to try and curb the spread of the global pandemic COVID 19. As part of this, the Council had to act quickly and had to consider alternative methods of service delivery, ensuring that the most vulnerable in society were supported.

There has been a particular focus on continuing our services to ensure that our most vulnerable residents and children continue to get the care and support they require, both in their own homes and registered settings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most dramatic and far reaching events to impact on everyday life. Whilst departments like Social Services are still in part in the responsive phase, there was a need for reflection on how we responded to this pandemic in order to inform and shape the recovery phase, as well as prepare for the possibility of any future outbreak.

The Council's Response to COVID 19 – Recovery and Renewal

The Council has identified a number of priorities for recovery and renewal, as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council has identified an overarching recovery theme of 'community' with four supporting themes, one of which is Social Services, which covers both Children's and Adult Services, and has an action plan and monitoring methods in place.

The recovery and renewal plan will act as working document, outlining how we will continue to support the most vulnerable in the community both during and beyond the pandemic.

In Autumn, the Council undertook a Community Impact Assessment pilot which considered a range of qualitative and quantitative research to consider how pre-existing inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19 for key groups such as young people, families with young children and people with learning disabilities. The work identified several key impacts, such as mental health and the digital divide, and our intention is to build on this approach and maximise our use of intelligence to inform future recovery work and ensure decision-making is evidence based.

The significant input from staff has been extremely positive which has enabled services to adapt to change in working conditions and was key to the response and continuation of effective service delivery going forward.



Director's Summary of Performance

As the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services in Blaenau Gwent, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2021/22 which is a requirement of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act).

Prior to taking up the post of Interim Director in April 2022, I held the Head of Childrens Social Services post for 9 years in Blaenau Gwent working closely with colleagues in Adult Social Services and our partner agencies.

It is fair to say 2021/22 was an equally challenging year to the previous one when the pandemic began. It continued to be difficult and exhausting for all our staff in Social Services as we continued to battle with the impact and the changing landscape of the COVID 19 pandemic. It was another roller coaster of a year with many ups and downs throughout. I have nothing but admiration and pride for our staff who in the face of the virus did not take a backward step, they were truly inspiring, courageous, focussed, committed and professional throughout.

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 some of our services including our Community Options day centre buildings and Augusta Respite care facility to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable people in line with relevant Welsh Government public health. Both services were remodelled to enable citizens and their families who were assessed as requiring the most critical levels of support and thankfully during 2021/22 the department was able to gradually increase availability of both services with Augusta House resuming operations all be it in a staged way to continue to manage the risks associated with the virus. Our Community Options team have continued to review the way in which day services have been provided and this ongoing remodelling work will continue through 2022/23.

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.

One of the biggest challenges faced during 2021/22 related to lack of workforce capacity. Within Adult Social Services this was predominantly across our in frontline registered care worker roles, both our in-house and externally commissioned care and support services. In Childrens 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 trying to attract staff into these areas of work. 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. Our staff are our greatest asset and I am constantly amazed and grateful for the additional tasks they undertake and how they always go that extra mile to ensure the job gets done.

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.

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 will become operational from April 2022 and is expected to continue to reduce the numbers of children in residential care.

Adult Services continue to work to the 8 key themes of the Living Independently in 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.

Ensuring our children looked after remain as close to home is a clear priority for the department. Maintaining our existing foster carers and recruiting more is key to achieving this priority. We have continued to support our foster carers and show our appreciation by holding regular events and support groups. Feedback from questionnaires provide evidence that our foster carers feel well supported and valued.

Finally, I would want to say a huge 'thank you' to all staff, as they have worked immensely hard during such difficult times. Their resilience and strength of character has shone through as all times. They have continued to meet the care and support needs of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent for which I am very grateful.



Tanya Evans

Interim Corporate Director of
Social Services 2022/23



Damien McCann

Corporate Director of
Social Services 2021/22



Cllr John Mason

Executive Member
Social Services 2021/22

How People are shaping our Services

Previously, as part of the Act, people who use care and support services were invited to complete an annual survey in relation to the provision of care and support. Due to the COVID outbreak and available resources being redeployed to support the emergency response, questionnaires were put on hold whilst services were redirected to support the most vulnerable within our community. Welsh Government were also involved heavily in the COVID 19 response and stated that they did require any local authority to provide a questionnaire analysis. On further review of the survey, Welsh Government decided that this was not the best way to engage with service users and the requirement ended. Social Services Departments are now required to work proactively with service users to shape services moving forward.

The Social Services Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and below are some examples of consultation and engagement activity throughout the year.

Consultation

- Formal consultation took place with Blaenau Gwent Foster Carers. The feedback received was very positive regarding the level of support that Foster Carers received from the department.
- Consultation from the Fostering Well-being programme – this is ongoing consultation work after each set of masterclasses and feedback has been positive. Feedback is used to help shape future masterclasses and the role of the fostering well-being pioneers.
- Consultation survey to all staff and foster carers across the region regarding the Learning and Development Framework – Between November 21 and January 22 a series of workshops (10 in total) regarding the Learning and Development Framework for foster carers were hosted by the RDM. There were separate workshops for staff and foster carers. The presentation made reference to the outcomes of the surveys that were completed earlier in the year and addressed any queries. This then fed into the regional learning and development policy and procedures and is also feeding into the national work on the review of the Framework in practice.

Engagement

Involvement with Individuals, children and families occurs on a daily basis and is recorded as part of care planning. Examples of other engagement activities throughout the year include:-

- Participation and Engagement with the LGBTQ+ groups within all secondary schools. This is supported by the social workers in schools and the community engagement officers who have all received training through Umbrella Cymru.
- Kinship Carers support group sessions
- Inclusive Disabilities Club continues to run every week at the Rassau Resource Centre and is facilitated by families First and is for all those affected by disability. This provides a support group for children with a disability and those who support them including their parent/carers and siblings.
- Skills to Care training
- Presentation opportunity x5 to all foster carers and staff across the region to provide information on Foster Wales, the changes, brand etc. The remit of the event was to welcome people to a new era of Local Authority fostering.
- Carers Engagement service, providing carers telephone engagement service, carers support groups etc

Examples of engagement and consultation are included throughout the report.

Complaints and Compliments

The Social Services Department is committed to providing high quality services to its users; however, despite best intentions, it is recognised that sometimes things can go wrong and the Social Services complaints procedure provides people with the opportunity to voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied with a service.

During 2021/22, there were 3 complaints received in Children's Services. Of these, 2 were classed as stage 1 and 1 was classed as stage 2.

Examples of complaints received in Children's Services this year were :-

- Social Services did not listen to the wishes of the individual during the assessment process; and
- Lack of and miscommunication between parties.

During 2021/22, there were 2 complaints received in Adult Services. Of these, 1 was classed as stage 1 and 1 was classed as stage 2.

Examples of complaints received in Adult Services this year were :-

- Questioning the processes within a service (this however was not upheld); and
- On-going stage 2 complaint regarding a lack of communication from the service.

In order to continue to improve services, the outcomes of complaint investigations and learning from them are undertaken to prevent the situation from occurring again. During 2021/2022 examples of learning identified and actioned include:

Children's Services:-

- Discussions took place during team meetings to share the learning with all Social Workers completing certain types of assessments.

Adults Services:-

- The stage 1 complaint not upheld, and the stage 2 complaint is on-going at this time.

The service also welcomes positive feedback and compliments and uses this learning to improve services moving forward. Examples of compliments received were:-

- You really don't understand what this means to my family and how grateful I am that we have been helped. I thank you all from the bottom of heart—***Family receiving food and gifts from the Christmas appeal***
- I felt so lonely and isolated having a baby during lockdown. It was lovely to talk to other mums, especially about what to expect and knowing I am not the only one feeling like I might be doing it all wrong. Thank you so much for visiting me and letting me be part of this group. Thank you so much for showing me how important I am to my son and that it's ok to take each day as it comes and to enjoy each stage of his precious development—***Flying Start mum attending a virtual parenting programme***
- Thankyou for the wonderful service that you provided and for making our life a lot easier.—***Care Home Team***
- I would like to say a HUGE thank you for all your support to us a family. You have pulled out the stops to help us meet a deadline and you have been professional, patient and empathetic at all times. We appreciate what you have done for us. You have a demanding job and these are challenging times, from what I've gleaned social work requires stamina, both mental and physical! - ***Long Term Care***

Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help

Priorities

The Corporate Plan 2020/22 is the Council's roadmap setting out the vision, values and priorities of the Council. One key priority within the Plan is, *'To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities'*. The business plans throughout the Council, including within Social Services, are aligned directly to the Corporate Plan to ensure that the priorities can be monitored and implemented over the lifespan of the plan. The priorities for Social Services are shown below and the Quality Standards demonstrate where improvement have been made, challenges have been addressed and where outcomes have been achieved.

Corporate Plan Priorities 2020/22 for Social Services are:

- To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own well-being;
- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them;
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering integrated responsive care and support with partners;
- To continue our programme of public engagement and respond in a timely and effective way to feedback;
- To build a collaborative culture between services, partners and communities working together and with people directly to shape and deliver services;
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm; and
- To develop a partnership approach to maximising income reducing the impacts of Poverty.

There are also a number of Corporate priorities identified within the Corporate Plan which all directorates across the Council are expected to implement.

Children's Services Priorities 2021/22

Priority Title	BRAG
Enhance screening and IAA provision (children and adults)	Green
Support and encourage a cultural change across Children's services by ensuring that community members have a say in what matters to them	Green
Implementation of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy	Green
Improve outcomes for Children Looked After by implementing the Corporate Parenting Action Plan	Green
Implement the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy 2017 –2020	Green
Ensure that all children in Blaenau Gwent have the best start in life (Early Years)	Green
To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements	Green
All teams to ensure the children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded	Amber
Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget	Green
Children's Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	Green

Adults Services Priorities 2021/22

Priority Title	BRAG
Enhance screening and IAA Adult Services support at our front door in line with recommendations within the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014	Green
Support and encourage a cultural change across Adults services by ensuring that citizens have a say in what matters to them	Green
Ensure that preventative support is available to citizens - promoting personal independence and reducing dependencies	Green
Ensure that we provide / commission modern, high quality care and support provision that meet both current and future well-being needs of our citizens	Green
To develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes	Green
Ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded	Green
Develop and maximise opportunities for partnership working across Welsh Government Flexibilities Grants and Welfare reform related programmes	Green
Manage the Adults Service core budget and grant programmes to ensure that expenditure comes within budget	Green
Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	Green

The framework below shows how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'.

Planning Framework



Progress of the Quality Standards

During a comprehensive assessment of performance at the end of 2021/22, the following achievements and challenges were identified as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework.

Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

During 2021/22, the Information Advice and Assistance Service (IAA) in both children, adults services saw a significant increase in the numbers of referrals received across all partners. Analysis of the data over the past two years has been undertaken to understand the increase in the numbers pre and post pandemic. The total number and average monthly referrals increased and in order to respond to this demand, funding for additional resources in the childrens services IAA Team was agreed until March 2022, from the Social Services Sustainability Fund. A report has been drafted demonstrating that the additional temporary staffing capacity, in place since 2019, was still required and, in fact, further additional capacity is needed in order to support the increase in the number of referrals into the team. It was agreed for the additional temporary posts to be made permanent utilising monies from the core budget in order to ensure sustainability of the team. A number of additional temporary posts were also agreed to be in place for the next 12 months to deal with the further increase in workload. With this additional capacity and sustainability the team is well placed to ensure compliance with part 2 of the Act. During 2021/ 22 a full review of the Adult Services IAA team was completed and the service has now been developed to no longer be reliant on temporary grant funding. The service has been remodelled and the new working arrangements will go live from April 22. The new service promotes an integrated Health and Social Care service that promotes preventative assessments with citizens.

All Children Services IAA Staff have been trained in use of the outcomes approach and the mentors programme continues with 6 weekly meetings. Staff are able to share how the approach is being embedded within their teams and day to day practice, with live cases being discussed and feedback from families and children is also included. In addition, the service as a whole continues to deliver interventions based on an outcomes/strengths based approach which has the voices of children and families at the centre of care planning. Assessment and care planning activity continues to promote the active voice, choice and control philosophy of the Act. Outcomes focused and strengths based approaches to practice continue to be modelled, and the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) remains an active partner in ensuring that children and their families engage in a meaningful way. From April 2022, we will have a large number of newly qualified staff who will also receive this training and adopt this approach into their practice.

An important aspect of providing Social Services to service users is that their voice is heard and they are able to shape the services they receive. Consultation with children and families occurs on a case by case basis and is captured in the care planning documents of each child. A recent example of this was when some of the Children Looked After, which the Council supports, challenged some of the language used and subsequently this encouraged amendments to be made to working practices. The 'Contact Team' is now called the 'Family Time Team'.

In order to raise awareness of advocacy and increase demand into the service an awareness campaign was undertaken so that the Gwent Access to Advocacy (GATA) helpline was utilised. However, the Covid-19 pandemic halted progress and made it difficult to identify the true need and demand for advocacy across Gwent. Advocacy providers and the GATA helpline have highlighted that referrals are now returning to pre-covid levels with a marked increase in parent advocacy relating to child protection cases. In 2023, the Community Health Council will be replaced by a new 'Citizen Voice Body' which should provide the opportunity to co-ordinate the provision of advocacy support across the health board in order to strengthen the citizen's voice in relation to health and social care. Delivery of the Adult Services Gwent advocacy strategy has continued throughout the pandemic and our advocacy framework has continued to support vulnerable adults throughout 2021/22.

The Regional Partnership Board previously successfully submitted a 'Gwent transformational offer' to Welsh Government in response to 'A Healthier Wales' which set out a new £100 million transformational programme. The programme was awarded £8,313,131 for 2021/22. Sustainability will be the focus in this final year, bringing together successful elements alongside successful ICF programmes, to create a framework of services within a model of 'Place Based Care'. All four programmes, have embedded well and the evaluation reports demonstrate both financial efficiencies and improved well-being outcomes for citizens have been achieved.

Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

In 2021 a formal consultation with Blaenau Gwent Foster Carers was undertaken and the results of which have been shared internally with Senior Management Team, the Placement Team and with Foster Carers. The response rate was just under 17% with a higher response received from the Kinship Foster Carers. The consultation showed that the highest satisfaction rate was achieved regarding support received from Link Workers and the Placement Team (10 out of 10 from generic Foster Carers), and a significant increase in satisfaction with the training and learning opportunities available (8.85/9.35 out of 10). An Action Plan was developed and all actions implemented prior to the 2022 formal consultation which commenced in March 2022 and is due to end May 2022. An analysis of returns including comparisons to the 2021 data will be presented to Senior Management Team in mid 2022.

The Skills to Care course has become mandatory for all those applying to be approved as Kinship Foster Carers. The Foster Wales Marketing Strategy has been rolled out which has included a national media campaign on TV as well as other advertising taking place. Overall, Blaenau Gwent have more children placed with Blaenau Gwent Foster Carers than independent providers which is a huge achievement.

Worcester University has concluded their evaluation of disability services with regards to data collection. Their review included the involvement and contribution of children, young people and their families/carers. The researchers are now analysing the information gathered and completing their report, its findings and recommendations will be shared more widely in September 2022. A longitudinal study by Worcester University will be commencing shortly, during the Autumn of 2022, which will follow children, young people and their families journey through transition from the ages 14 to 24 years.

Families First hold mandatory reflective practice sessions on a monthly basis. These sessions are facilitated by the Team Manager and Clinical Psychologist on an alternate basis and members of the Team are able to discuss cases, share ideas, reflect on what is working well or not, what is important to the family, and how best to support the family to achieve their identified outcomes. Families First paperwork is also being reviewed to become more strength based. Supervision is used to help support workers reflect on their practice and to reinforce an outcomes based approach when discussing families, including the 'what matters question'. This is then reinforced during monthly reflective practice sessions.

There continues to be ongoing strengthening links between the Community Resource Team (Gwent Frailty) and IAA Team. This includes close working with GP colleagues to support pressures across the Health and Social Care sectors. Close work is also ongoing with other professionals such as WAST as well as Primary and Secondary Care colleagues to deliver proportionate assessments at the front door. We have continued to develop a Hospital Hub at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan to expedite the safe discharge from hospital sites. Working with Gwent Local Authorities the service has been able to support unnecessary hospital admissions to acute sites by enhancing the support provided by the Gwent Home First Service. The hospital hub is focussing on a model of 'Discharge to Recover and Assess' whereby a patient undertakes an assessment at home as opposed to being assessed in hospital when it is deemed appropriate. Integral to promoting independence and reducing dependency on traditional care agencies, is the further enhancement of the Care Management, IAA, Community Resource Team and preventative works streams. In order to meet anticipated health and social care demands over the winter period, there has been an increase in the capacity of a number of projects including: • Commissioning additional third sector support from the Age Cymru Hospital Discharge Team; • Recruiting additional Health Care Support Workers to increase the assessments of those receiving double handed care packages, with the aim of reducing these to single handed care with new state of the art equipment; • Increased capacity of Pharmacy support to enable citizens to be independent with medication; • Increased availability of Community Meals service to include a potential offer of tea parcels; • Reviewing all current care packages as part of contingency planning; • Increasing the capacity of the emergency care @ home / DASH service to respond to urgent care packages, including where there has been a rapid deterioration on a person's condition; • Scoping the potential to implement a night time response service in partnership with out of hours GP service, WAST, ABUHB and assistive technology providers; and • Reviewing the dementia reablement service due to the low numbers of referrals.

Meetings are held daily with ABUHB to discuss the escalating crisis across hospital sites. Where possible, to avoid lengthy in patient stays, owing to availability in care homes, assessments at hospital are being prioritised for social work assessments and the availability of domiciliary care packages.

The Children Looked After (CLA) Reduction Strategy has been reviewed and actions are in place up until 2025. This has been aligned to the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy. Through implementation of these, there has been a slow downward trend of CLA. The end of year figure for 2021/22 is showing a further decrease in the number of CLA moving from 200 to 198 children. Welsh Government has recognised the need to safely reduce the number of children coming into care and identified this as a priority area. In light of this, Integrated Care Fund (ICF) money was allocated to each local authority in Wales, via the Regional Partnership Board in April 2019, to invest in and develop services to safely reduce the numbers of children coming into care. It is important to recognise that the success of the CLA Reduction Strategy is dependent on a whole service approach. The robust preventative interventions delivered by Families First and Flying Start prevent needs from escalating into statutory services. The Information Advice and Assistance Team provides robust screening and initial assessment of all referrals ensuring appropriate action is taken in order to meet need. All of the Social Work Teams work exceptionally hard to keep families together and work with families using a strengths based approach. One of the key elements of the Strategy is to promote workforce stability. However, operational teams are facing staffing shortages. It is accepted that this is a Wales wide position and there is no simple solution. The senior leadership team is addressing how best to respond to the staffing short-fall from multiple standpoints; a separate strategy has been devised to consider short, medium and longer-term solutions (and considering the opportunity to collaborate on a regional basis). In order to support this further, Blaenau Gwent has decided to establish its own My Support Service, rather than operating jointly with Monmouthshire. The residential children budget has shifted from an overspend position to a significant underspend position over the last three years. This is a direct result of having a My Support Team (MyST) and the 14 Plus Team working hard to move children out of residential care and closer to Blaenau Gwent.

As a service area, we continue to prioritise safeguarding across all the teams. The Children's Senior Leadership Team receive quarterly reports on the child protection activity. Safeguarding information in relation to Social Services and Education is also provided to Elected Members through the Democratic process. There are a high number of social work vacancies across the locality teams which is making this work difficult to manage, therefore, safeguarding has been identified as a service and corporate risk.

The 2021/22 Corporate Parenting action plan has been delivered throughout the year with great progress being made. A review of this plan has also taken place to determine what needs to be rolled over into the 2022/23 action plan.

As part of the continuous improvement plan, work has been ongoing regarding the pathway for Part 5 investigations. In line with the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures, strategy discussions, in connection with a potential person in a position of trust, will be held by the Safeguarding Manager. The information will then be assessed to consider if the threshold has been met to proceed to a full strategy meeting. The chairing of these meetings will continue to be the responsibility of the service manager.

A new action for 2021 was for the Placement Team to receive attachment training, which will then be delivered via a variety of methods to Foster Carers to enable them to support children who are experiencing attachment and trauma based problems.

For 2021/22 a priority was agreed to support those children where exploitation has been identified as part of the newly adopted Child Exploitation Measurement Tool (CEMT). The CEMT tool kit has been adopted across Gwent and has been built into the Social Services Data System, WCCIS. Officers have ensured all relevant professionals will be invited to Child Exploitation meetings and are currently finalising the prompt indicators. All team training has been completed and will be delivered periodically for new staff. A review of the effectiveness of the new tool will be carried out later in 2022.

This year, after being cancelled last year, the Annual Achievement Award for CLA was incorporated with the Winter Wonderland Event held on 1st December 2021. The annual event recognises the many educational successes of our CLA through the continued period of Covid disruption.

Members from the Safeguarding Team are being based within the IAA Service each week in order to further enhance the service at the 'front door'. A three-year Strategic Plan was published for The South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB) and the Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB). The pandemic has caused significant disruption to all services and communities across the region. Despite this, Gwent Safeguarding Board and Blaenau Gwent Safeguarding Team have worked diligently to ensure that essential services have remained operational to provide support to the most vulnerable adults. We continue to plan for the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) legislation as a replacement for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), and are delivering training as part of the Regional consortium in addition to increasing capacity at a local level. There has been a shortage of staff, in particular within the domiciliary care sector, which has created problems for service delivery. In order to manage the expected increases in demand over the winter period, a risk management tool is to be implemented to prioritise assessments and care packages. This will be undertaken in partnership with ABUHB and CIW.

Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

A full review of all legacy commissioned projects is underway. Financial management procedures are being used as the basis for the review, focusing on outcomes. Findings from the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) have been reviewed in order to identify the needs and demands falling out of it and how they link to the community element of the Care and Communities Grant (CCG). A significant proportion of the preventative services delivered in Children's Services are dependent on grant funding which is allocated on an annual basis. If this funding was removed, it would be a significant risk to the department. We have seen a decrease in the number of public court applications, which is direct evidence that our preventative approach is working in relation to keeping families together.

Funding assisted places continues to be the priority of the Child Development Fund, this is to enable children in need to experience learning from an early age. Take up of the offer is very positive.

Implementation of the new Care and Support Plan, which is outcome focused and much more user friendly, is now complete and available on the Social Services System, WCCIS. A Blaenau Gwent easy to read brochure, detailing children's rights, entitlements and assistance, is available and includes bespoke local information relevant to our care leavers.

The Authorities Corporate Training Scheme for care leavers goes from strength to strength. The officer responsible for the scheme is employed through the Aspire programme funded from the CCG Legacy funding until March 2022. The brochure has been redeveloped and the programmes on offer broadened to capture all young people. The programme supports all care leavers up to age 25 years. A brochure of external opportunities will also be completed. Young people are supported to find a placement externally if there is nothing suitable available internally.

Families first social workers are now back working face to face in schools and have started working with the River Centre. The community workers have set up a number of groups around bereavement, mental health and LGBT+. The new parenting support worker for the abolition of corporal punishment is in post in readiness for the implementation of the new legislation.

Children's Services has received feedback from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) who undertook an assurance check in May 2021. The following comments were made in relation to the outcomes culture in Blaenau Gwent and how the voice of the child is heard: *'Senior managers with staff and partners have worked hard to embed strength based outcomes focused practice. The authority's commitment to strength based outcome focused practice was evident in the files reviewed and staff spoke of how this underpinned their work in both adult and children's services. The authority recognises the importance of gaining people's views to inform practice development and support service improvement. We saw evidence of mentoring groups and peer supervision to share and reflect on case issues and identify potential responses to learning. Evidence showed people's views were sought and their voices heard. Information gathering to represent people's circumstances was also informed by intelligence from a number of relevant partner agencies, notably during early stages of intervention'.*

Consultation has taken place with staff regarding the reconfiguration of preventative services, including the Support Worker roles within IAA and CRT and the Community Connector roles. The new structure, which will be in place from April 2022, will be resilient and sustainable and not reliant on grant funding. Within the new structure, a Senior Practitioner and Senior Therapist will be co-located within the IAA Team to be at the 'front door'. Capacity at Augusta House has been safely increased to support up to four guests. Work is continuing to develop new Augusta Promoting Independence Pods at the site. This project has been delayed due to complications with planning approval and increasing development costs, but the project has now secured additional funding from Welsh Government and should be open late 2022. As part of these plans, the respite offer to young adults, as part of the transition planning from Children's to Adult Services will be increased. The development of the enhanced Day Activities / Community Options Team has progressed well despite the ongoing COVID 19 pressures. Both the Lake View and Bert Denning buildings have safely re-opened but with limited sessional access initially which will be increased as we progress through the year. The outreach service is growing well and is successfully supporting citizens to meet their outcomes both in their own home or in wider community settings.

Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

Both Children and Adult Services has seen an increase in the number of referrals received by the IAA Team. Also, the total number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect reported during 2021/22 was 415, which is an increase from the previous year where the figure was 394. The number of children on the child protection register at 31st March 2022 was 64 an increase of 12 from the previous year.

As at 31st March 2022 there were 5 children placed outside of Wales. This is a reduction of 1 from the previous quarter. However, as well as a reduction, it is important to understand that the cohort of individual children has changed. 2 children were the subject of care proceedings and placed with a parent, with the final care plan recommending that there should be no order in place. The plan was accepted by Court and those children are no longer looked after. A 3rd child was placed with extended family, subject to an interim care order, with a final care plan recommending Special Guardianship. That plan was also accepted and that child is no longer looked after. 2 children were placed with kinship carers on a long-term basis. Those children remain in that placement in accordance with their long-term plan. 1 child was placed in residential provision with a plan to return to Blaenau Gwent when the time is right. That child remains in the provision in accordance with the long-term plan. The cohort, therefore, has reduced by 3 in January and February 2022. However, in March 2022 the cohort increased again with two unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, placed in England via the National Referral Scheme (NRS). Though ideally the Local Authority would place within Blaenau Gwent, the young people became Blaenau Gwent's responsibility in March 2022 having been supported in a welcome centre in England (since December 2021). In that time, they developed their individual links and support networks and Blaenau Gwent has attempted to support the maintenance of those links wherever possible. For future young people referred via the NRS, it is hoped that timely referral will enable those young people to be placed more quickly, so that links can be made within area.

The Beaufort Road upgrade is entering into the final phase of the building refurb and will be completed by the Autumn 2022. Crisis facilities are now also available in the bathroom and kitchen. A Harvest festival was held using food the children had grown in the garden. New equipment has been purchased for the rooms and further work is needed outdoors for a trampoline and a shed for storage.

Work is currently ongoing with our third sector partners to consider options for remodelling the service to increase capacity in order to deliver a 7-day emergency response team, working alongside the Domiciliary Care Brokerage service. This will then assist in responding to the current pressures in the domiciliary care sector by providing low level support to domiciliary care agencies and the in house emergency care @ home team (DASH). The service will also support hospital discharge and provide low level prevention support post discharge, to help alleviate the current demands facing hospitals and support people to return home with the support they require. The Welsh Government Carers Grant has been utilised and provides additional support for unpaid carers through a number of initiatives across our in-house services and commissioned provision. The service is carefully monitoring the core budget and, in particular, the new ways of supporting people owing to COVID restrictions and having to offer alternative models of day support, increased staffing levels and increased infection control processes. The use of agency staff is also being monitored due to high levels of staff absences. The Carers Lead Officer and GP Engagement Support Officers continue to support unpaid carers; providing information, advice, assistance on referral carers assessments. They maintain a presence in GP Surgeries and in Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan, and carers are also supported with one to one sessions and appointments. A number of enhanced support opportunities are also being developed, via the COVID recovery grant, to support unpaid carers including:

- Increasing the capacity of the Carers Engagement team from November 2021;
- Increased third sector support for carers;
- Blocked booking of respite beds to support carers;
- Increased availability of respite at Augusta House; and
- Carers 'well-being sessions' and peer support events.

Over the past year, and with the easing of COVID restrictions, Adult Services has seen an increase in reablement packages being provided in terms of right sizing packages of care. Due to the commencement of the single handed care review, the bettercare project has seen an increase in the number of referrals it has received over the year. The total number of packages of reablement completed during 2021/22 was 539 up from 232 in 2020/21.

Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

The Children Looked After (CLA) education coordinator has successfully completed the Trauma Informed Diploma to inform and improve practice for our CLA. A number of schools across Gwent have also completed this programme. The Placement Team and Locality Teams undertake parallel planning to prevent drift and ensure children are moved onto their long-term provision as quickly as possible. Placement stability meetings take place for unstable placements and the learning from those meetings informs service and practice development.

A mapping exercise to identify all leisure and community opportunities in the region has been completed and now work will be undertaken to understand local facilities. The take up of social events and activities has taken a downward spiral throughout the pandemic and there seems little appetite from our CLA, but we do aim to prioritise this in the 2022/23 action plan.

The key priority of delivering new outcomes and opportunities for our children each year continues to go from strength to strength including:

- An Accommodation Audit is updated annually and care leavers for the year are identified. Meetings are then held with RSL's to inform them the level of accommodation that will be required that year.
- A new Supported Lodgings advertising and promotion scheme has now been developed and is run by Llamau and funded by the Housing Support Grant (HSG). There have been 3 new supported lodging providers recruited by the Authority in a short time along with another waiting to be approved. From the HSG a dedicated floating support service within Llamau has been established and have now recruited a male and female support worker.
- Care leavers are wanting 1 bedroom flats and this continues to be a problem with few RSL's interested in developing this type of accommodation. Meetings with Housing and various RSL's have been held to take this forward and now additional funding has been made available within the Housing Strategy.
- The 'move on' panel has been hugely successful since revised 18 months ago. Lots of young people are accessing accommodation and doing well with the assistance from the RSLs, Supporting People Team and Housing Options.
- The Implementation of a Foster Wales Campaign at both a local and regional level was undertaken in 2021 in order to recruit more foster carers. As a result of the Foster Wales Campaign, we have seen an increase in the number of enquiries for new foster care applicants. At the end of 2021/22, Blaenau Gwent had 49 Foster Carers which is an increase of 32.4% from last year and 23 Kinship Carers (family members caring for children who would otherwise need to enter the care system) which is an increase of 57.5%.

The Service has recently recruited a Housing Support Worker who will be based within the IAA Team providing support to people with housing needs. The Community Resource Team continues to operate a home visiting service so that patients are supported to undertake preventative assessments to avoid the need for health or social care services. The service is continuing to look at funding options in order to increase capacity and enhance Technology Enabled Care (TEC) provision via the Gwent TEC group. A SMART flat is in development, within a sheltered housing scheme, to demonstrate the range of TEC available to support people to continue to live independently within the community. An increase of £828,401 has been received in our Housing Support Grants (HSG) allocation for 2021/22. These monies can now be used to commission services, as evidenced in the Commissioning Plan/Spend Plan, to meet the housing support needs of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. The following services have been commissioned:

- Increase in the capacity of the generic floating support service to meet current and future demand;
- Increase of the in-house housing first provision to support individuals with complex needs. Currently, the team are working with 5 individuals, and the introduction of the 9 units at a property in Brynmawr will enhance the scheme and allow the scheme to be delivered effectively;
- A Crisis Worker supporting people affected by domestic abuse has been recruited. The worker will be able to provide timely support to people in a crisis and will also assist in reducing the current demand on the domestic abuse floating support service;
- There is a high demand for the mental health floating support service. The current service has been enhanced by commissioning a Senior Support Worker, a dedicated Benefits Support Worker and an Asset Coach providing strengths based housing related support which is person led;
- An Assertive Outreach Service is now available offering support to people with substance misuse issues residing in temporary accommodation and HSG accommodation based schemes. The service is in the process of commissioning the following service provisions: a young person's floating support service; a Housing Support Worker co-located within Adult Social Services Information, Advice and Assistance Team; and further development of a new supported housing project in Tredegar which will include tenancy support. Regular contact is being maintained with all care homes throughout Blaenau Gwent.

How We Do What We Do

Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

The past year continued to be a challenging period for the Social Care Sector but the workforce responded with resolve, dedication and commitment.

Workforce Development, as a support service, contributed to the challenges faced in whatever way the sector needed. Whilst pandemic restrictions relaxed overtime, the workforce had to step up to meet the additional pressure caused by high vacancy and sickness absence rates.

The year focused on:

- the continued provision of essential care skills;
- the well-being of the workforce;
- creatively using new ways to enable the successful qualification and registration of student social workers and social care workers;
- supporting recruitment initiatives; and
- providing a risk assessed, prioritised and phased options for the sector.

Innovative ways of delivering training continue to be developed. The changed preferences of the workforce have changed the future delivery models for workforce development. Models that better suit the workforce and the employer.

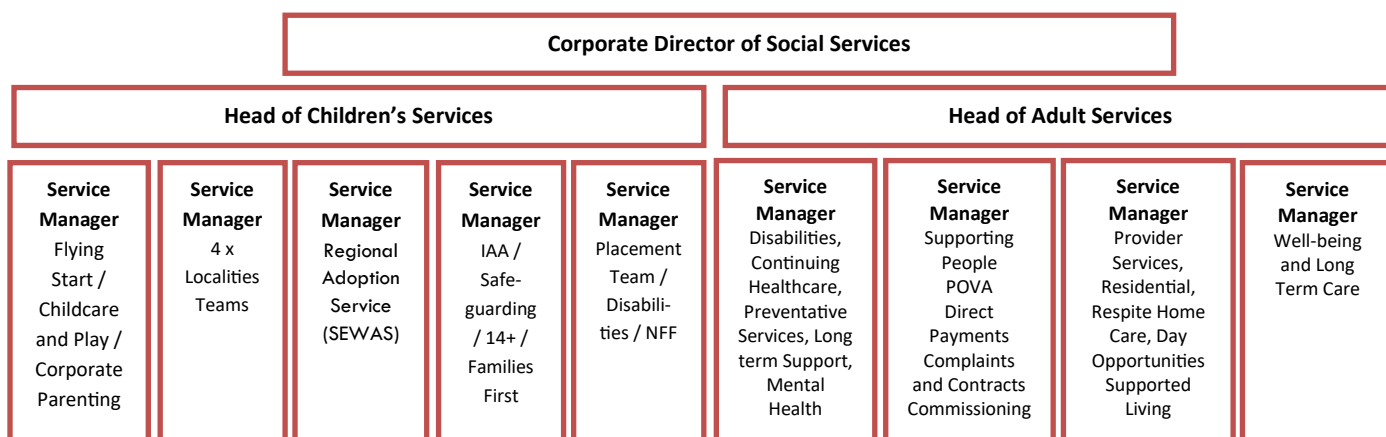
The sector has been provided with the tools to enable an improved learner experience with digital learning. Additional external funding was secured to invest in projectors and screens for establishments and settings enabling the learners to feel the benefits of group learning, shift friendly timing, and minimised costs associated to travel.

Additional funding from Social Care Wales has enabled the authority to improve its investment in its 'grow your own' recruitment strategy, particularly for the current hard to recruit roles.

The organisation has learnt fast on the evolution of workforce development to the extent the authority, in partnership with three other local authorities, is leading on an all-Wales project to secure a fit for purpose digital learner system. The system will respond to the future trends in learning and most importantly put the learner first in its design and functionality.

Benefits continue to be realised for and by the workforce through the scale of opportunity possible due to the joint workforce development service model hosted by Blaenau Gwent in partnership with Caerphilly.

Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability



The Corporate Director of Social Services is a member of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, whereby all Council Directors meet on a weekly basis to consider and make strategic and operational decisions (although some decisions need to be considered by Scrutiny and then ratified by Executive or Council).

In 2021/22 the Directorate had one Executive Member with Portfolio responsibility for Social Services as a whole and was scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee, with safeguarding information reported to the Joint Social Services and Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings were held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

As a whole, the Council has a clear governance and accountability framework and Performance Management Framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. These frameworks are complied with by Social Services who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Act.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis Social Services Senior Managers meet with CIW for liaison meetings. CIW also undertake an annual review and evaluation of the Directorate's performance.

Audit and Inspection Progress

Audit Wales

Following on from an initial Audit in 2019 'Corporate Arrangements for Safeguarding of Children', Audit Wales, in February 2022, commenced a follow-up review. The focus of the review was to determine the extent to which the Council had addressed the eight outstanding recommendations and proposals for improvement to strengthen its corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children. Seeking to answer the following question: Can the Council provide assurance that it has made effective progress since 2019 in addressing the outstanding recommendations / proposals for improvements? The review is now ongoing and being undertaken in two phases. The first phase required the Council to complete a self-assessment and the second phase being a set of structured interviews based on the self-assessment with lead officers and elected members.

Collaboration

Blaenau Gwent Council supports partnership and collaborative working and the Social Services Department continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. Social Services work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. In addition, Social Services fully participates in the sharing of knowledge, good practice and information, which can result in improved services.

Regional Partnership Boards

The Social Services and Well-being Act sets out a statutory requirement for the development of Regional Partnership Boards. The Boards have been established on current local health board footprints. The Gwent Board includes ABUHB and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen local authorities. The Executive member in each local authority, with responsibility for health and social care, sits on the Regional Partnership Board. It is an advisory body which provides oversight and direction for areas of integrated working across health and social care. The main priorities of the Board for 2021/22 has been firstly, the continued response to the Coronavirus outbreak across partner agencies and the effect on services. Secondly, the continuation of the Integrated Care Revenue and Capital Funds and the Transformational Offer beyond 2022, Finally, it has been considering the crisis in health and social care with the inability to recruit staff to certain parts of the system.



‘Mwy na geiriau/ More than just words

As a department we continue to monitor compliance with our responsibilities within More Than Just Words and the Active Offer. We continue to ensure that when citizens contact both our Adult and Children Services Departments, that they are offered the opportunity to communicate in the language of their choice. Our assessment tools within our Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) system specifically asks the question “Do you require this conversation / assessment to be carried out in Welsh?” The form is then attached to the person’s referral.

Our commissioned providers work in partnership with us to promote the Welsh Language and this is reflected in our contracts and service level agreements.

Our Financial Resources and How We Plan For the Future

The total budget allocation for Social Services for 2021/22 was £46.7m. This is an increase from the previous year of £1.300m. At the end of 2021/22 Social Services had an underspend of £3,902,155 and this is due to vacant posts, ICF, Transformation, Home First, Social Services Recovery and Winter Pressures Budget Overspends Grant Funding.

The provision of regular financial forecasting reports in line with the budget monitoring and reporting framework has enabled the Social Services Senior Management Team to make informed decisions on service delivery.

The allocated budget and outturn for 2021/22 is provided in the table below:

The budget for 2022/23 is provided in the table below and includes Strategic Business Reviews savings of £0.155m.

Service Area	Budget	Outturn	Variance (Adverse)/ Favourable
Children’s Services	£14,006,860	£12,652,520	1,354,340
Adult Services	£26,509,200	£23,379,940	3,129,260
Business Management / Staff Support	£6,135,580	£6,717,025	(581,445)
Total	£46,651,640	£42,749,485	£3,902,155

Social Services Budget 2022/23		£
1	Commissioning & Social Work	3,939,340
2	Children Looked After	7,389,860
3	Family Support Services	192,370
4	Youth Justice	237,580
5	Other Children’s and Family Services	2,389,000
6	Older People Aged 65 and Over	6,862,430

Social Services Budget 2020/21		£
7	Adults under 65 with Physical Disabilities	42,630
8	Adults under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,608,670
9	Adults under 65 with Mental Health Needs	535,270
10	Other Adult Services	417,650
11	Community Care	17,782,100
12	Support Service & Management Costs	934,170
13	Corporate Recharges	5,487,140
Grand Total		49,818,210

Conclusion

The previous 18 months has been the most significantly challenging in our life time. We have not witnessed a public health crisis of this scale and ferocity in over a 100 years. The consequences of the global health pandemic mean that we have needed to innovate and evolve the way we work and deliver services. Although there has been a lot of emphasis on recovery, the virus has been very much still prevalent this year and there has continued to be significant pressure in managing the delivery of services.

At the end of this reporting period, Welsh Government announced that all legal Covid measures could be removed from 28th March if the public health situation remains stable. This includes a long term transition plan setting out how Wales can live safely with coronavirus just as we live with many other infectious diseases. Learning from this pandemic, along with the implementation of the Act, will shape and influence future design of services going forward.

It is recognised that in the current financial climate there is a need to work smarter and in partnership. Collaborative work with colleagues, partners and as a region ensures a consistent approach to delivering effective services. Assessment and care planning activity continues to promote the active voice, choice and control philosophy of the Act. Outcomes focused and strengths based approaches to practice continue to be modelled, with the involvement of service users, carers and other key partners, where possible, in helping to shape and influence current and future design of services. A preventative approach to practice is promoted by the directorate through early identification and intervention.

During the reporting period the Directorate were subject to numerous audits, reviewing and evaluating the Directorate's performance. These audits highlighted the good work that is being delivered with positive feedback being received.

CIW undertook an assurance check of Social Services to review how the service helps adults, children and carers, with a focus on safety and well-being. The key lines of enquiry covered the four principles of the Act with the judgements and findings aligned to these: People - Voice and Control; Prevention; Partnerships; and Integration and Well-being. Positive feedback was received.

Audit Wales are currently undertaking a review of the Council's safeguarding arrangements, with a particular focus on the activity being undertaken corporately. The review is still ongoing but a great deal of work has progressed within the Council with regards to safeguarding over the past few years.

This Annual Report of the Director of Social Services provides a snapshot of service activity undertaken throughout 2021/22. Details of Further supporting information and links can be found on the following page:

Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

Useful Documents

Reports to Social Services Scrutiny Committee - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1157&Year=0&LLL=0>

Council Corporate Plan – https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Corporate_Plan_2018-22.pdf

Blaenau Gwent Council Budget Monitoring - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1148&Year=0&LLL=0>

Social Services Website – <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/>

Workforce Development - <http://socialservicesblaenau-gwent.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Useful Websites

Social Care Wales - <https://socialcare.wales>

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) - <https://careinspectorate.wales/>

Data Cymru - www.data.cymru

Dewis Wales - <https://www.dewis.wales>

Gwent Safeguarding - <https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk/en/Home.aspx>

Public Service Board - <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/council/partnerships/partnership-working/>

South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board - www.sewsc.org.uk

Providing Feedback

Social Services welcomes feedback on the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services. Your views are important to us. Please contact us if you would like to give feedback on the plan or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc.

Fersiwn Gymraeg

Yn unol â Chynllun Iaith Gymraeg y Cyngor, bydd fersiwn Gymraeg o Adroddiad Blynnyddol y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.

Write to us:

Director of Social Services

Anvil Court

Church Street, Abertillery, NP13 1DB

Call us: (01495) 355 006

Email us: info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Visit our website: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

The Social Services Directorate is satisfied that the information given in this annual report is accurate based on the information available at the time of publication.

This annual report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.

