

The

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Director of Social Services Annual Report

2023/24 Mid Year Snapshot

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Chapter 1 - Directors Summary

The first 2 quarters of 23/24 have seen the continuation of the interim arrangements for the Director and Head of Childrens services. This has not impacted on the directorates ability to continue robust delivery of services, alongside service development and improvements.

We continue to see an increase in demand for services and an increase in the complexity of presenting need by the people of Blaenau Gwent. The Directorate has continued to meet this demand and complexity however, this has led to budget pressures particularly in relation to our children looked after. We are hopeful the development of our first children's home in the spring/summer of 2025 will look to improve outcomes for our children looked after, plus provide some easement to the budget pressure in this area.

Our workforce continues to be our greatest asset to ensure we deliver the best services possible. The workforce strategy developed in 2022 continues to run until 2025 with progress being reviewed on a quarterly basis through our business planning process. This mid-year report provides good evidence of the positive impact this strategy is having on how well supported staff feel and attendance rates across the directorate.

The second part of the year will not only continue to provide challenges in relation to meeting demand for services but also bring the need to cut services to enable the council to maintain a balanced budget. Social Services are not exempt from these cuts, but every effort will be made to mitigate against the impact these cuts will inevitably have.

Despite the challenges, we have continued to progress service developments and improvements. Some of the things we have achieved in the first two quarters of this year are;

- Our 14 plus team won a Social Care Accolade in the category of Building Brighter Futures for Children and Families
- The Independent Living PODS at Augusta House have been opened.
- We have purchased a property to develop our first Blaenau Gwent Childrens home.

Continued on the next page

Directors Summary - continued

- We have had positive feedback from a social Services Staff Survey
- We have 5 of our children looked after progress to university.
- An increase in attendance at work across the whole Directorate
- A positive inspection of Cwrt Mytton
- Increased support for carers due to grant funding
- Commencement of work to improve service delivery at Lakeview.
- Exploring working with partners to increase the use of the hydrotherapy pool at Bert Denning
- Significant increase of social activities within Cwrt Mytton to improve the wellbeing for those who live there.
- Two schools achieve the Children Looked After Friendly Schools Quality Mark
- Extensive work to improve facilities at our Cwm and Sofrydd Flying Start Hubs
- Our Families First Young Carers project have been nominated and shortlisted for a Social Care Accolade



Tanya Evans
Interim Corporate Director
Social Services



Cllr Haydn Trollope
Cabinet Member for People and
Social Services

Chapter 2 - Context / Introduction

Purpose of report

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services six month snapshot of the Annual Report 2023/2024. Over the past few years the Department has been developing these reports 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 which is legislation which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the seven National well-being goals.

The Well-being Act also puts a duty on public bodies to apply the sustainable development principle which states they 'must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

The sustainable development principle is made up of the following five ways of working, pictured here:



Throughout this report some areas of performance that meet these ways of working are demonstrated by these images.



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 [eight Quality Standards have been implemented in relation to well-being outcomes \(see page 6\)](#).

This format is also used within this mid-year snapshot report and provides a strategic overview of the work undertaken throughout the first 6 months of 2023/2024 and what plans are in place to move forward. Further supporting information can be found from page 53 of the report. Both this report and the annual report includes evidence of where Social Services have worked collaboratively with partners.

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.

Both the mid year and annual reports are used internally to monitor performance, identify areas where improvement is needed, recognise successes to take forward and demonstrate accountability to citizens and service users. As part of this process and the meet the statutory requirement, the annual 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 annual report will be available on line bilingually and will be shared with partner agencies in order to share good practice, learning and experiences.

What are the eight quality standards?

The quality standards are linked to the seven well-being goals as set out in Section 4 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>) and linked to the Page 9 of 18 definition of well-being as set out in Section 2 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/anaw/2014/4>

The standards aim to ensure that all people who need care and carers who need support are able to access the right support at the right time from the right place, and that there are appropriately experienced and / or qualified professionals in place to deliver this. Pages 11 to 43 of this report demonstrate progress over the past six months against these quality standards which forms part of our ongoing internal evidence and research to support existing service provision and provide improvements.

The Quality Standards			
People	Prevention	Partnerships and Integration	Well-Being
All people are equal partners who have voice, choice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them.	The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is prevented, whilst ensuring that the best possible outcomes for people are achieved.	Effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for people.	People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect, and any other types of harm.
Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled, well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision.	Resilience within our communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively encouraging and supporting people who need care and support, including carers, to learn, develop and participate in society.	People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners.	People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own informed decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible.

How people are shaping our services

Engagement -

The Social Services Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and uses various engagement methodologies in order to understand if the service is achieving the intended outcomes, or if amendments to service delivery needs to be considered. The service ensures that the voice of people is used to inform and improve the service moving forward.

Staff ensure that users to the service are heard and listened to by having the what matters conversation to establish the personal outcomes each individual wants to achieve and the support networks they may already have in place to rely on to meet those outcomes.

Throughout April 2023 to September 2023 a variety of engagement events have taken place and some examples of these are included throughout the body of the report.



How people are shaping our services

Complaints and Compliments -

Sections titled ‘What you told us...’

can be found throughout the document and performance **detail** in respect of all complaints received during the reporting period can be found in chapter 4, page 51 .

As an Authority we concentrate on not only the statistics, but how we have utilised the information, analysing any discernible trends and considering what changes and improvements we have made, or propose to make, in response to these complaints and investigations.

The chart here details the complaint themes received during the reporting period and what actions have been put in place, or are recommended to be put in place in order to better our service provision for the future.



Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help - Priorities

The Corporate Plan 2022/27 is the Council's 'road map', setting out the vision, values and priorities of the Council, and the business plans within Social Services Directorate are aligned directly to this Plan. The Social Services priorities are shown below and the Quality Standards, (detailed over pages 11 To 42), demonstrate where improvement has been made, challenges have been addressed and where outcomes have been achieved.

Departmental Priorities 2023/24	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater • To work with our communities and partners including Aneurin Bevan Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support • Ensure we have an appropriately skilled, motivated and supported workforce with clear career development pathways in place that support our service delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm • To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of poverty 	
Children's Services Priorities 2023/24	Adult Services Priorities 2023/24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all children are safeguarded • Ensure we have an appropriately skilled, motivated and supported workforce with clear career development pathways in place that support our service delivery • Ensure all teams deliver an outcomes based approach to practice and service delivery • Ensure that we provide / commission modern, flexible, cost effective high quality support services that meet both current and future well-being needs of children • Ensure that preventative support is available for children and their families, that promote early intervention and prevents needs from escalating. • Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020 – 2025 actions are regularly monitored and reviewed • Ensure outcomes for children looked after continue to improve through the implementation of the Corporate Parenting action plan • Review the way in which children's services operates and decide if a change is necessary in order to manage demand and workload. • Children's Services contributes to the Sustainable Development Principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all adults are safeguarded • Ensure we have an appropriately skilled, motivated and supported workforce with clear career development pathways in place that support our service delivery • Ensure all teams deliver an outcomes based approach to practice and service delivery • Ensure that we provide / commission modern, flexible, cost effective high quality support services that meet both current and future well-being needs of vulnerable adults and their unpaid family carers • Ensure that preventative support is available for adults and their unpaid carers, that promote and maintain personal independence • Manage the Adults Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a review of the current model of Community Options • Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles

Population
of Blaenau Gwent is
66,900

based on
2021 Census
data

69
reablement
packages
completed

April - September 23
down from 210 in the
same period
previous year.

83
children on
child
protection
register

increase of 21 from
the end of previous year
(March 23)

207
Children looked
after

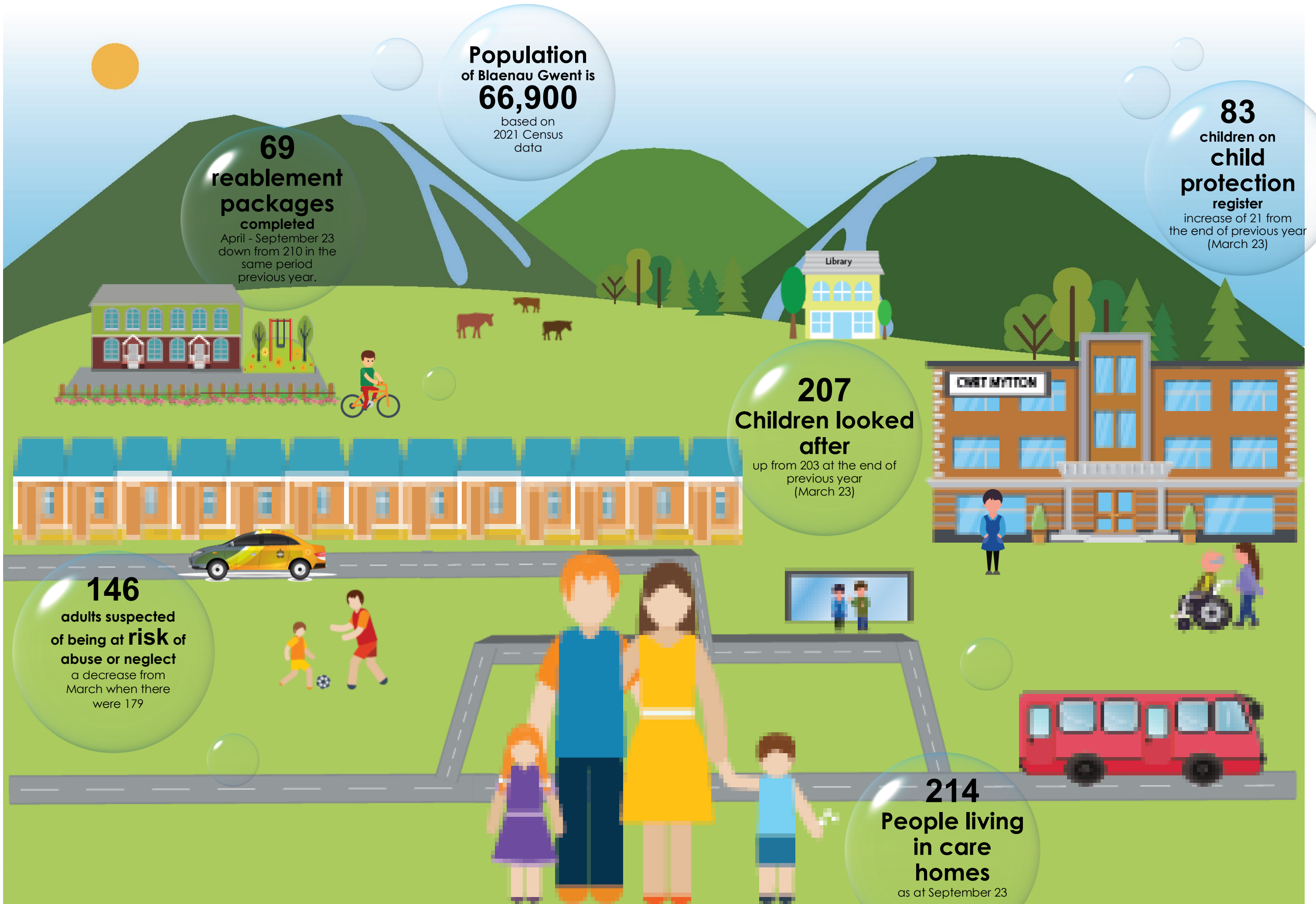
up from 203 at the end of
previous year
(March 23)

146
adults suspected
of being at **risk** of
abuse or neglect

a decrease from
March when there
were 179

214
People living
in care
homes

as at September 23



Chapter 3 (a) - People

People are at the centre of our services with our whole focus being on what matters to them and achieving the outcomes they wish to achieve.

Quality Standard 1

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

Key Activities

The Children and Community Grant (CCG) board continue to oversee and evaluate the **St David's Day grant expenditure**. This is an arm of the CCG grant and is an annual allocation.

The fund is to support young people who are or have been in local authority care to access opportunities that will lead them towards independent and successful lives.

This includes acting as a "bank of mam and dad" for care experienced young people as well as providing funding for an Aspire mentor which coordinates and supports care experienced young people in accessing corporate traineeship placement opportunities within the council.

This year the allocation is £99,013 broken down as follows:

- **St Davids Day (support to children leaving care fund) - £58,856;** and
 - **Aspire Mentor - £40,157 .**

During the first six months of this year, the utilisation of the above has enabled the 14+ team to provide wonderful opportunities for our Children Looked After and care leavers in line with their desired outcomes, and to support them in becoming more independent. Some examples of these are shown in the case study on page 14.

We ensure people have a strong voice and control over what they receive (with advocacy where appropriate).

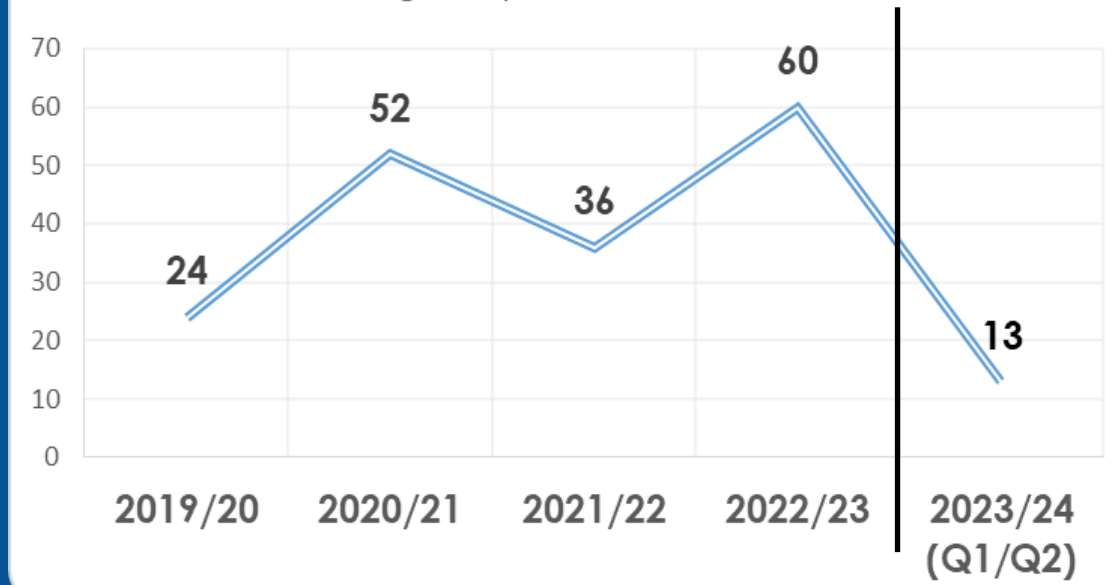


'What Matters' meetings have been

implemented and used regularly in practice with multi-agency participation and high scrutiny of all Child Protection plans.



The total number of "Active Offers" of advocacy for children during the year



In all cases above an Independent Professional Advocate was provided.



Key Activities

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

In order to support the demand in IAA we have developed an action plan following due consideration of what is working well, not well and how we can provide new support to meet this demand. An action plan is now in place and will be reviewed monthly through supervision.



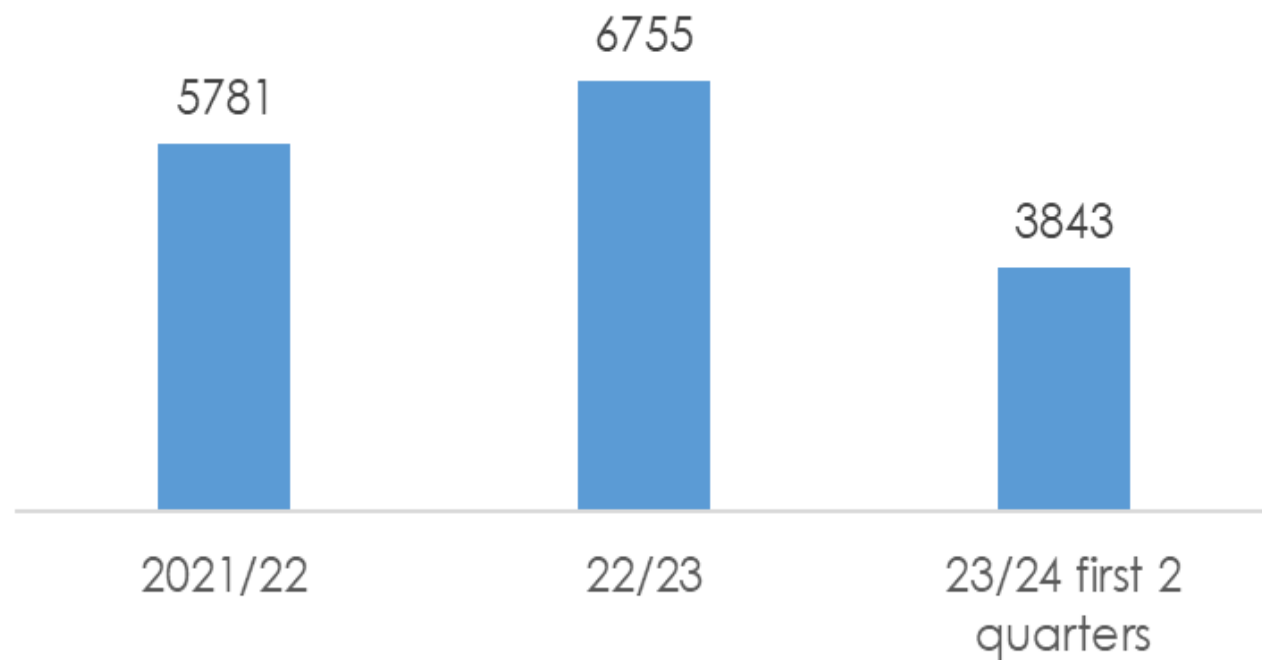
Information, Advice & Assistance (IAA)

The Council has dedicated Adults and Children's Services Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) hubs which provide the first point of contact for people who wish to ask for information, advice or assistance or, with their permission, for a relative or friend. Contact with the hubs can be made in person by phone, letter or e-mail. These methods are also the first point of contact with Social Services by other agencies, such as Health, Education, Police and Housing.

Referrals into Adults Services IAA data collation started in August 2021, therefore previous years are not yet comparable.

Of the 2284 enquiries during the period April to September 2023, **54% were resolved at IAA** (made up of those enquiries signposted, closed down before progressing to assessment and those that led to an IAA). Whereas 60% were resolved at IAA during 22/23

The number of enquires received at 'front door' - Childrens IAA



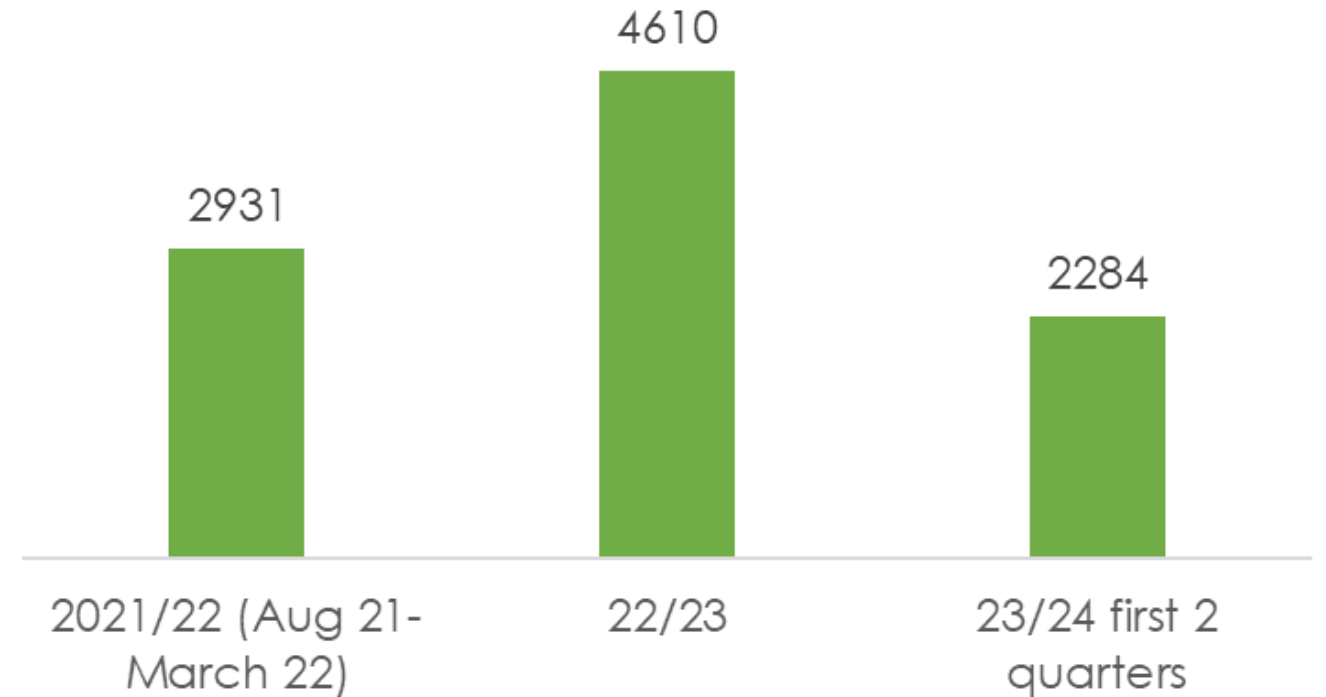
Referrals into Children's Services IAA continues to increase.

The number in quarter 2 in 23/24 is significantly higher with approximately 1927 compared to 22/23 which were approximately 1568.



Of the 3843 referrals in the first half of this year (April—September 23) **374 (10%)** were referred to preventative services (Families First), compared to 6755 referrals in the full year 22/23 with **772 (11%)** of them being referred to preventative services (Families First).

The number of enquires received at 'front door' - Adults IAA



PREVENTION - Probation and Cyfannol remain part of the IAA hub to ensure that referrals are supported correctly to avoid the need to allocate for statutory assessment. The service manager for IAA and YOS regularly correspond to ensure referrals are made to REACH where support can be offered for prevention support to young people who offend.

Key Activities

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



We encourage and support the use of an individuals own strengths and resources to help promote their own well-being,

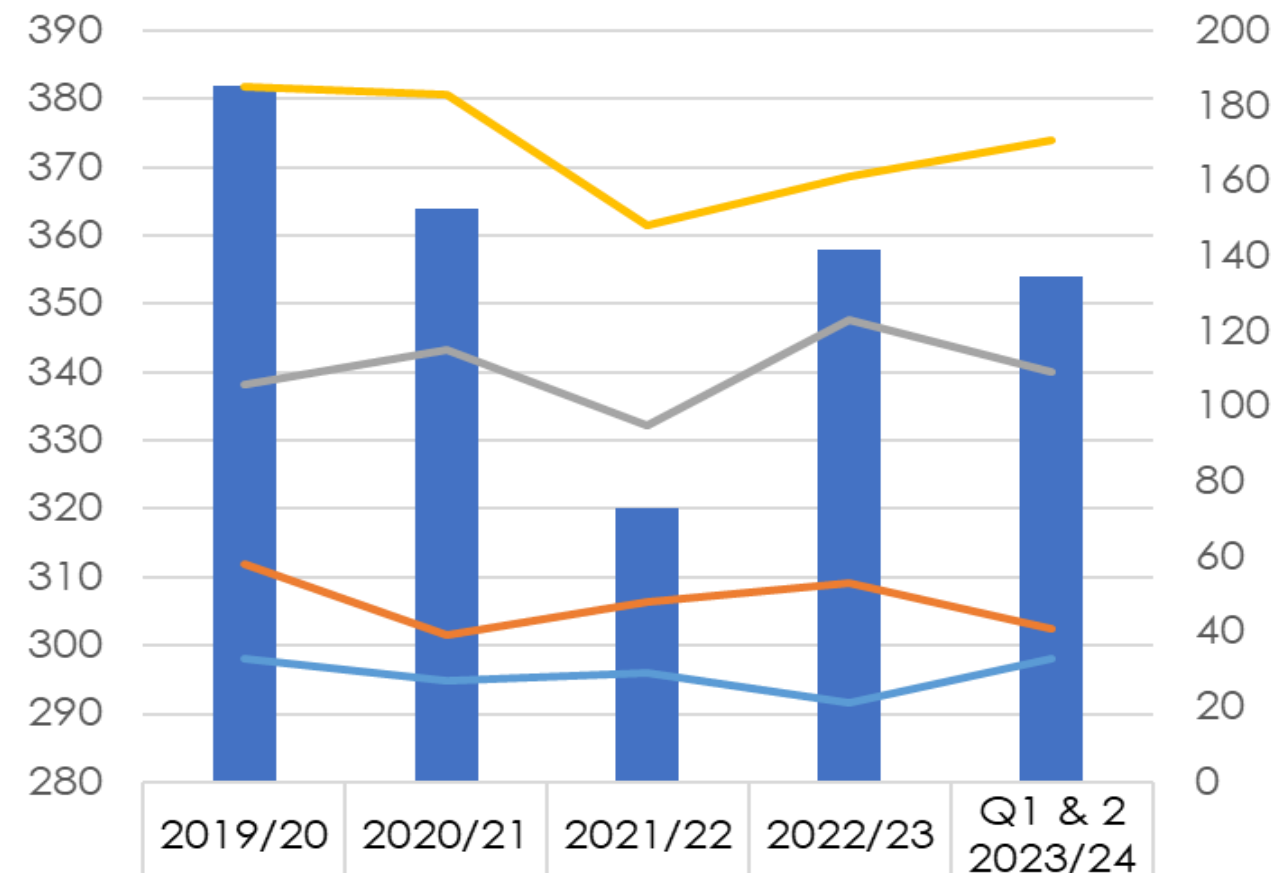


What you told us...

"I have seen a massive difference in my mental health. When I first met you, I was a mess, I felt that no one was there for me and that my world was crashing down. I now feel more confident and feel that I have the skills and knowledge to cope better. I enjoyed the walking groups and loved walking Pen Y Fan with the other dads. I will be forever grateful to you".

Families First recruited a new Ethnical Minority worker who will be engaging with gypsy and more recently relocated Nigerian communities.

The number of adults receiving Home Care (snap shot at the last week of the period):



Total number of adults receiving Home Care	382	364	320	358	354
less than 5 hours	58	39	48	53	41
5 -9 hours	106	115	95	123	109
10 - 19 hours	185	183	148	161	171
more than 20 hours	33	27	29	21	33



COLLABORATION - Mentors group this year is focusing on the sharing of assessment tools to aid collaborative working with families to focus on priority risk, strengths, safety planning and co producing plans.



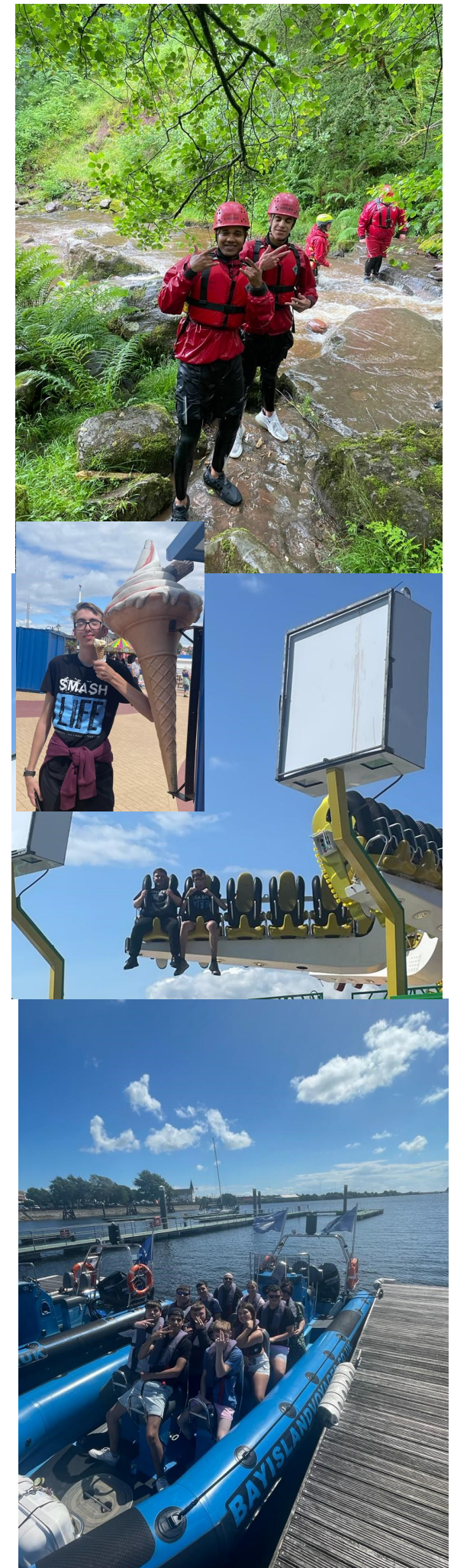
Case Study – Supporting care leavers to form independent and successful lives



So far this financial year the 14+ team have provided social opportunities such as:

- Gorge walking;
- Theatre visit;
- Paddleboarding;
- Summer BBQ with rodeo bull;
- GCSE celebration event;
- Attended the national Voices from Care - care leavers forum;
- Beach trip to Barry Island;
- Independent living skills group;
- Easter event; and
- Animal petting opportunity at the office.

The opportunities provide experiences for care leavers including, socialisation to support in developing and sustaining friendships, life skills to support the transition into adulthood, supporting positive wellbeing and emotional health, promoting self esteem and pride, and providing the opportunity to voice their views on services in order to contribute to positive change.



Quality Standard 2

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

Key Activities

The social services function is well-led and supported at a service, corporate and political level.



Our leadership team recognise the importance of engagement with staff. During the reporting period a **survey** has been carried out to gather **staff views** on a few issues ranging from how supported staff felt in work and what they felt about levels of communication.



There was a **32% response rate** to the survey. **91 responses from adult services** and **111 responses from children's services**



The average score for how **rewarding** you found the job you are doing was **8 out of 10**.



The average score for how **supported** you felt by your senior manager was **8.57 out of 10**.



The average score for how **supported** you felt from your colleagues was **8.96 out of 10**.



The majority of those who responded had **supervision** and participated in **team meetings** in the last 12 months.



Over half of those who responded were **not aware** of the council's **volunteering policy**.



Only **half** of those who responded were **clear about the department's vision/priorities** and changes in the department.

Overall, responses painted a positive picture for staff working within the social services directorate particularly about the way in which staff were supported in their jobs. That said there are areas where we can improve on.

ACTION

Next Steps -As a leadership team we will now develop an action plan to work towards making these improvements and we will be repeating this survey next year to measure the progress that has been made. One of the first things we will do is generate a regular Social Services newsletter to keep staff informed of what is going on across the directorate.



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



Workforce stability is a key consideration within Social Services as some teams are facing **staffing shortages**, however, it is acknowledged that this is a Wales wide position and there is no simple solution. The department continues to look at **innovative ways of managing the workload** within teams 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.**

TYPES OF POST	STATUS OF EMPLOYEES IN THE POSTS					Total
	Permanent	Fixed Term	Secondment	Temporary	Relief	
Vacancies	17	48	0	0	0	65
Occupied Permanent posts	461	6	6	0	0	473
Occupied Fixed Term posts	0	117	9	0	0	126
Occupied Temporary posts	0	0	0	12	0	12
Occupied Secondment posts	0	0	3	0	0	3
Occupied Relief posts	0	0	0	0	99	99
Total posts in Social Services						778

Figures do not include agency staff

only 61% of staff are currently permanent

Key Activities

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

Welsh language: progress in the context of More than just words Five Year Plan 2022-27 and the Active Offer.

Welsh Government's 'More than just words' 2022/27 is a Welsh language plan for health and social care which aims to ensure people can access the care they deserve and require in the preferred language choice. This is aligned to the Council's strategic responsibility for Welsh language as outlined in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-07/more-than-just-words-action-plan-2022-2027.pdf>

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.

The 'More Than Just Words' **action plan has progressed**, there is liaison with the local Welsh language champions and **promoting the wide resources and opportunities available is now standard**. Our commissioned providers work in partnership with us to promote the Welsh Language and this is reflected in our contracts and service level agreements.

What you told us...

Census Data (measured every 10 years)	2011	2021
% Blaenau Gwent residents described their health as "very good"	40.7	41.5
% Blaenau Gwent residents describing their health as "good"	30.7	32.7
% Blaenau Gwent residents describing their health as "very bad"	2.7	2.3
% Blaenau Gwent residents describing their health as "bad"	8.5	7
% Blaenau Gwent residents (aged five years and over) reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week	6.6%	4.2%



Key Activities

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

Practitioners and managers ensure that practice and supervision are grounded in up-to-date knowledge and evidence-based practice.



Our induction policy is being amended to include a mandatory introduction with team mentors so that new team members can immerse themselves in practicing in an outcome focussed way from the beginning of their career journey.



A new joint mentor scheme for staff with Caerphilly County Borough Council is being explored in order to extend our learning and development opportunities.

A **2 day mentor training programme** was **delivered** in June 2023 which was well attended by all children's services teams.



The newly trained mentors will be responsible for **continuing to embed outcomes practice in their respective teams** and report back to mentors group on a 6 weekly basis.



Commissioned providers have been notified of care fees and all have accepted increases offered - **feedback from care homes and domicare was extremely positive and complimentary around the process and engagement** - A further review will be undertaken later in the year to assess the impact in view of the current cost of living and inflationary pressures.



INTEGRATION - Close working with Workforce Development continues, delivering specific training programme for newly appointed senior social work practitioners to develop skills such as decision making, supervision skills, managing staff, having difficult conversations, basic coaching skills. We have commissioned additional SCW / balancing rights and responsibilities and collaborative conversations training for all staff.

Key Activities

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

The Directorate has a clear workforce strategy in place, which is having a positive impact on recruitment and sickness rates across the directorate.



Improvement in staff attendance rates are shown below and demonstrate why the status of one of our directorate risks (shown on p50) has been reduced to a medium.

Quarter 1 progress (April - June 2023)

	Quarter 1	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 23/24 Target	Trend
	22/23	23/24		
	Outturn	Outturn		
Adult Services	4.79	2.38	2.75	↓
Provider Services	9.09	5.26	5.5	↓
Childrens Services	3.54	2.25	2.75	↓



Our budget position for the reporting period is shown on page 49.



Bridging the Gap proposals have been developed for Corporate Leadership Team / member consideration.



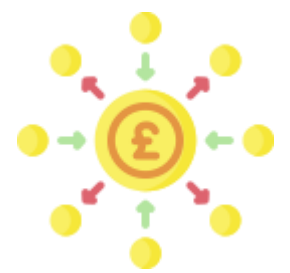
Check and challenge sessions planned for September / October with wider Corporate Leadership Team.



Meetings have taken place with Gwent Directors / Heads Of Service to review potential efficiencies via collaborative working.



A list of potential proposals are being scoped.



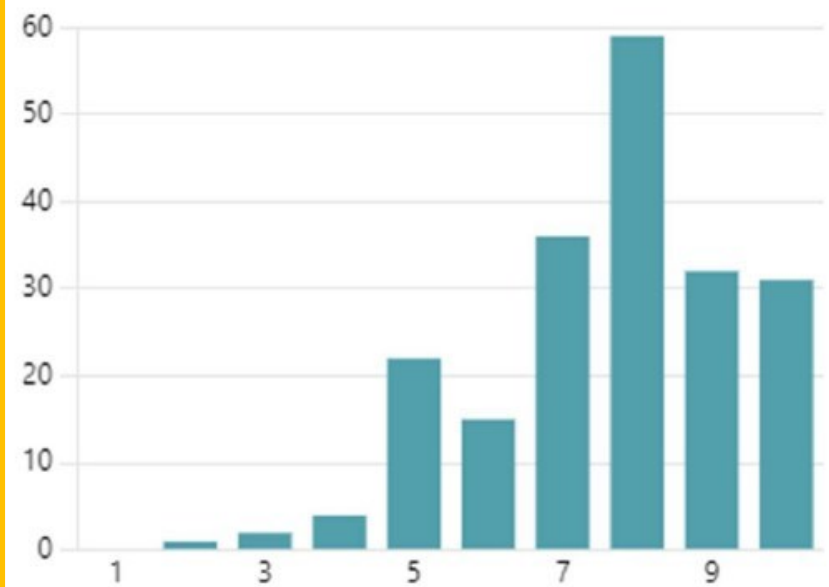
Staff in the teams within the service area have regular/monthly formal supervision, which has a pre-established agenda and is recorded. All managers are aware to include discussions on staff' wellbeing and career progression and development within their formal supervision.

Case Study – Staff Survey

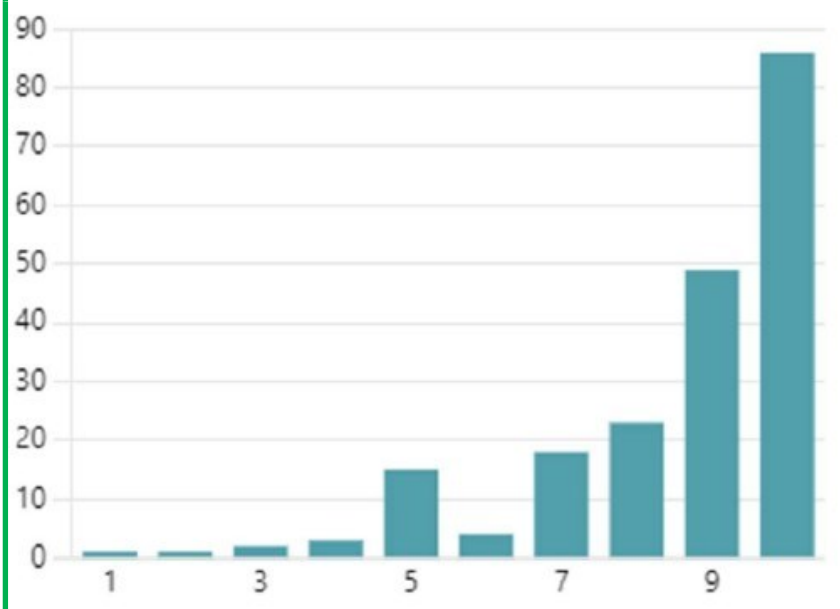
As detailed on page 15, during the reporting period a staff **survey** has been carried out to gather **staff views** on a few issues ranging from how supported staff felt in work and what they felt about levels of communication.

A full breakdown of responses will be analysed and include the following:-

When asked how staff feel about the support offered to them by the Local Authority as a whole the average response rating from 202 staff was 7.65



When asked how staff feel about the support offered to them by senior management (including Team Manager) the average response rating from 202 staff was 8.57

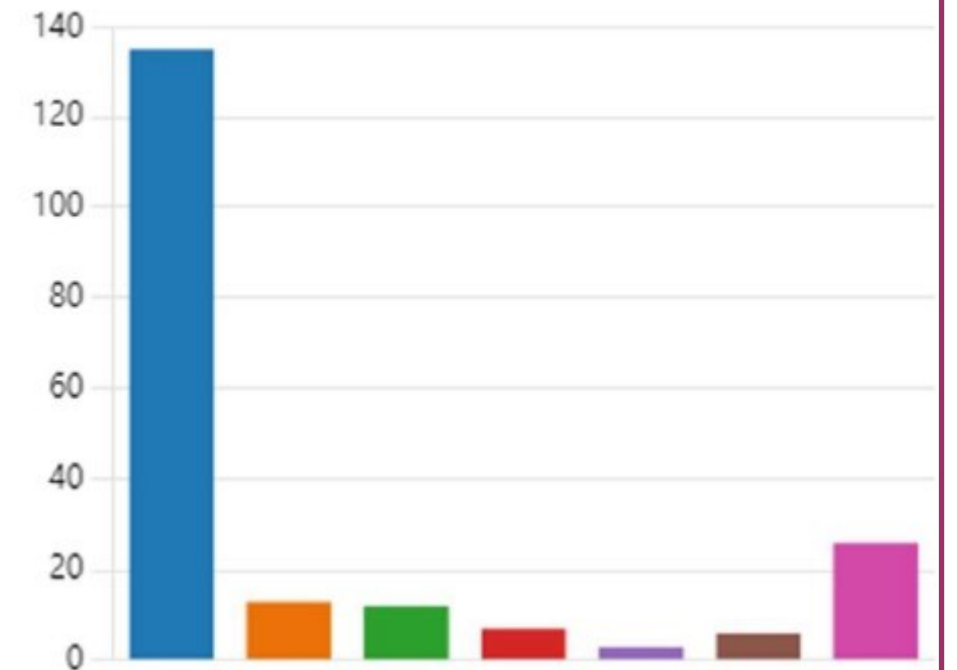


When asked How often they have had supervision/ 1-1 meetings with their line Manager in the last 12 months

the responses from 202 staff were broken down as below

- Monthly
- Bi-Monthly
- Quarterly
- Six Monthly
- Annually
- Never
- Other

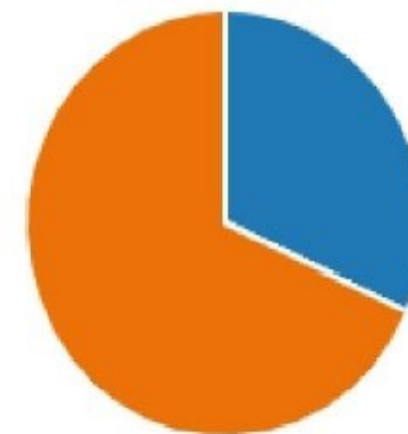
135
13
12
7
3
6
26



When asked were there any additional areas of training that would help them in their role

Out of 202 staff 64 said yes and 138 said no

- Yes 64
- No 138



Responses are currently being analysed and necessary actions implemented to ensure any required improvements are delivered.

This survey will be carried out annually and monitored accordingly

Case Study - Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection of Cwrt Mytton Care Home



A recent inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales of our residential care home Cwrt Mytton has resulted in a positive overall review stating

People receive a good quality of care and support at Cwrt Mytton. The environment is homely, clean, and decorated to a good standard. People told us they are happy living there; we saw people settled and at ease in their environment. Visiting relatives told us they are happy with the support provided. Activities, levels of engagement and stimulation require improvement to enhance people's well-being. Care staff are compassionate and respectful. The service has systems to ensure care and support is of a good standard. People benefit from individualised and current personal plans which are now reviewed regularly. The production and review of plans do not evidence people's involvement. Management is well-regarded and visible in the running of the service. Policies and procedures are in place to help protect people from harm or abuse. Staff recruitment process is not sufficiently robust. Care staff receive formal supervision and feel supported in their work. The service has auditing systems and meets the legal requirements in relation to Responsible Individual (RI) visits and quality of care reviews.



Recommended areas for improvement:-

Increase the number of activities and engagement on a day to day basis, to provide stimulation and a feeling of well-being for every person.

New 35 Recruitment system is not sufficiently robust.

New 15 Personal plans do not identify personal outcomes and how these can be achieved or evidence peoples involvement in the production and review of plans.

The full report can be viewed here



Chapter 3 (b) - Prevention

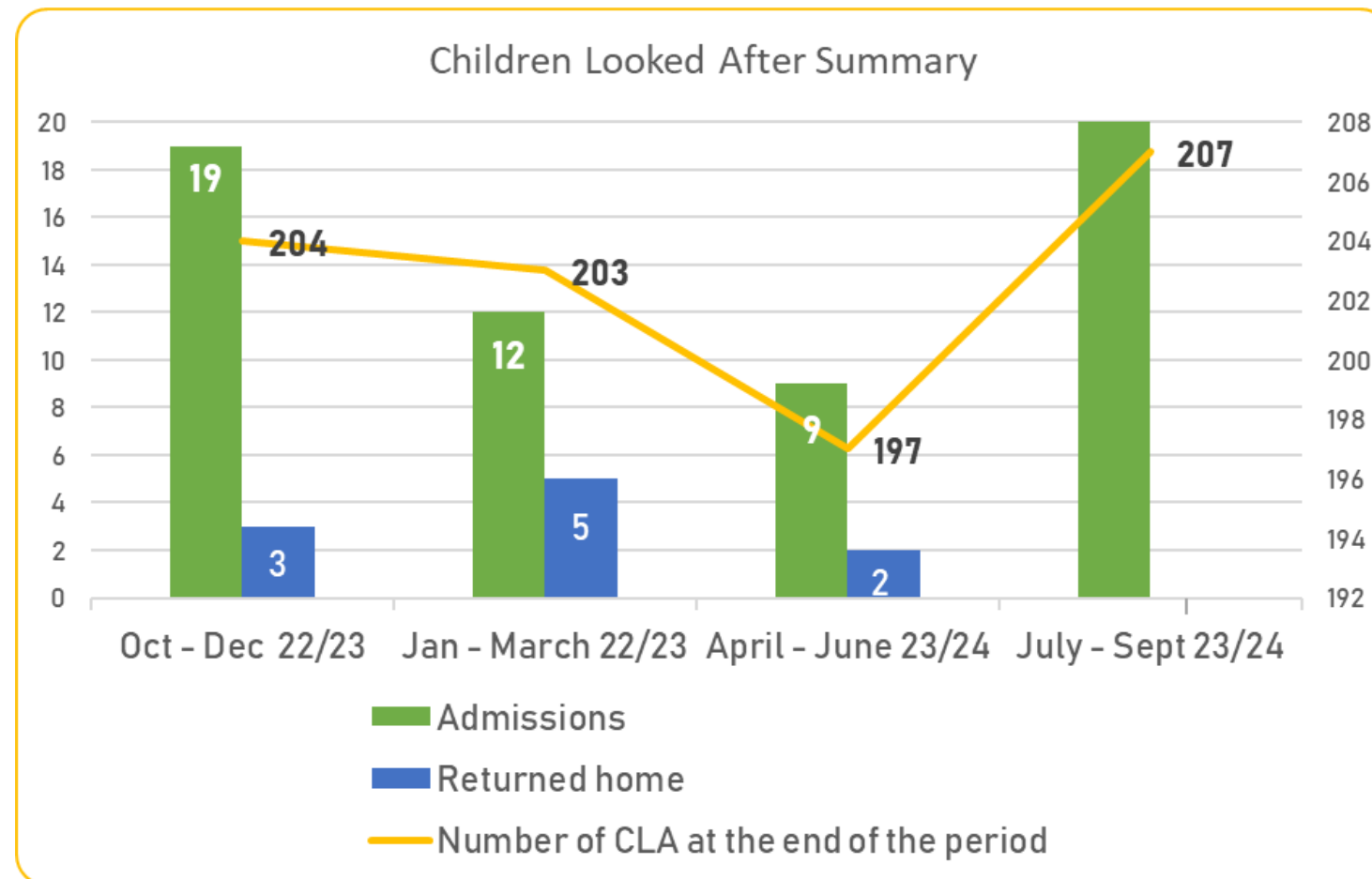
We use preventative and integrated approaches, ensuring the right care and support is there at the right time to delay or avoid the escalation of need

Quality Standard 3

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

There continues to be ongoing monitoring of **Children Looked After** numbers.

New children are still coming into care but there are also children looked after who have returned home.



- During the Quarter 1 period (April to June) 95% of Child Looked After statutory visits completed.



- During the Quarter 2 period (July to September) 87% of Child Looked After statutory visits completed.

Families First continue to work intensively to prevent cases escalation into statutory services with:

- 304 cases active at the end of September 2023;**
- 387 cases being discussed at Wellbeing panels in the last two quarters (April - September); and**
- A variety of group, community work and events have been delivered throughout the reporting period.**



- 118** young carers open to the service **benefited** from a variety of activities such as crafts, outdoor activities, games, cooking, Ninja Warrior, Fire sessions (south wales fire) YC's festival, Caerphilly adventures and Youth Club.



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

Key Activities

We support citizens with Housing Support Grant (HSG) Funded Services with the aim of **preventing homelessness** and helping people develop and maintain the necessary skills to **live as independently and self-sufficiently** as possible.

However, the **future of the HSG funding remains a significant concern** with Welsh Government announcing a standstill Housing Support Grant budget for 2023/24, despite Support Providers indicating their costs are rising considerably and their current contractual value no longer covers the costs of providing the service. This is having a detrimental impact on the delivery of current services and will also impact upon future commissioning of services.

Foster Wales Implementation of learning and development framework included the following events:

- RDM arranging regional events for staff regarding the process and foster carers regarding the policy;
- Dates for national learning events for staff have been circulated and are currently taking place;
- Promoting foster carers input for Life Journey work, attendance at workshops and training.



Learning picked up from the outcome of the Learning and Development Review:

- More flexible learning opportunities needed;
- Raise awareness of the framework as a whole;
- Greater understanding of expectations of SSW's and foster carers;
- More confidence to recognise other forms of learning;
- Develop systems that support seeking learning opportunities;
- Develop systems that ease recording plans/tracking learning;
- Gaps in some areas of learning for foster carers.

INTEGRATION - Ongoing partnership working with Supporting People enables the use of local cost effective semi-independent placements for those young people aged 16+ which require an out of home provision.

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

Key Activities

Residential placements for Children Looked After has remained stable during the reporting period. There is regular attendance at residential meeting by 14 + team manager to enable wider scrutiny of care planning for those children in residential placements.

Outreach remains popular and is delivering positive outcomes for users of the service. <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/services-that-are-provided-by-the-council/day-services-provision-day-centres/>

Modernisation refurbishment at Bert Denning office space and Lake View has commenced to integrate Community Meals, which are delivered via electric vehicles as of July as part of the Councils strategy to deliver a sustainable service and reduce carbon emissions. .



Statutory Assessment Team continue to work hard to manage demand for placements through robust assessments of children and families with only a minimal number of children requiring accommodation within their period of intervention.

During the reporting period (April–September) there were **810 new assessments completed** for children.

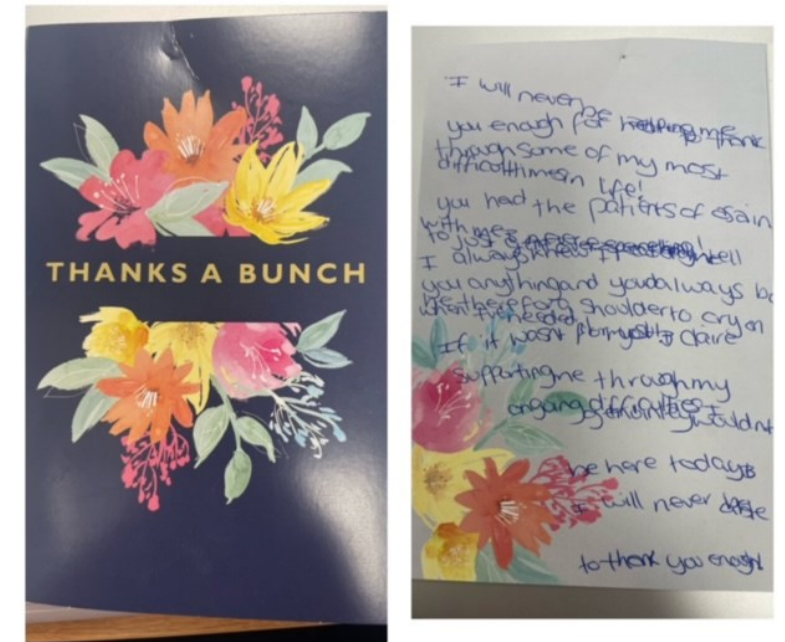


The mediation service has proven invaluable as a preventative service, preventing family breakdowns and reducing the number of children requiring out of home placements either via Children Looked After route or experiencing homelessness. Both mediation posts are fixed term via Supporting People and Regional Innovation Fund grant money and there is no identified resource at this juncture to make these roles permanent.



What you told us...

Thank you both for your support with TM and the excellent joint working and communication.



I'm only contacting to say thank you so much for your hard work and support throughout this difficult time and id like to say I'm very sorry for saying id never forgive you for saying neglect at the conference, I've already forgiven you. You're an amazing social worker and I'm glad and grateful for you coming into our lives and kicking me up the bum, means the world to me.

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

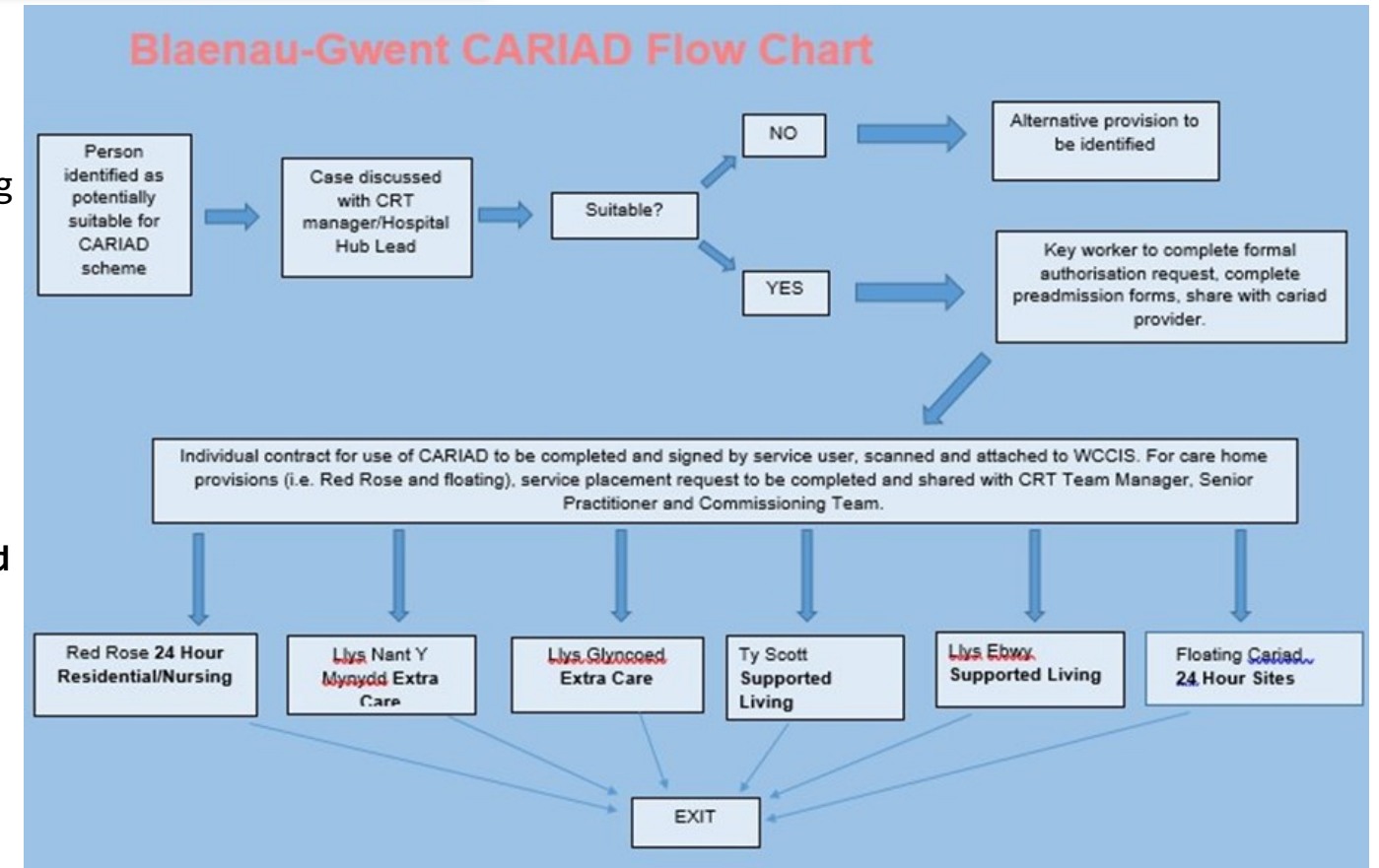
Key Activities



CARIAD (Collaborative Assessment Reducing Interventions, Admissions and Delayed transfers of care) scheme (sometimes referred to as the step up/step down scheme) is a way of enabling people to ‘step-down’ from hospital when their treatment has finished and they no longer need to be there, but may require a further period of assessment in an alternative setting. Similarly, in order to avoid admission to hospital, the CARIAD scheme can also be ‘stepped up’ from their homes to be cared for in a different setting with additional support.

This CARIAD process and bed provision has been reviewed and is being managed by Senior social work practitioner in the Hospital hub Community Resource Team. The flow chart here has been shared with wards at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan for ease of reference.

CARIAD usage has improved and is working effectively as part of our hospital discharge pathways.



My Support Team (MyST) involvement with a number of 14+ young people to consider residential step down or residential avoidance is ongoing -

this is reviewed through monthly meetings between MyST and 14+ managers, monthly meeting between Service Manager and MyST Manager as well as MyST steering group. Quarterly data is provided on cost saving and avoidance. And the table here shows figures for the period April 2023 to September 2023.....

Year to Date
Blaenau Gwent Total Savings
£677,870
Blaenau Gwent Cost Avoidance
£261,524

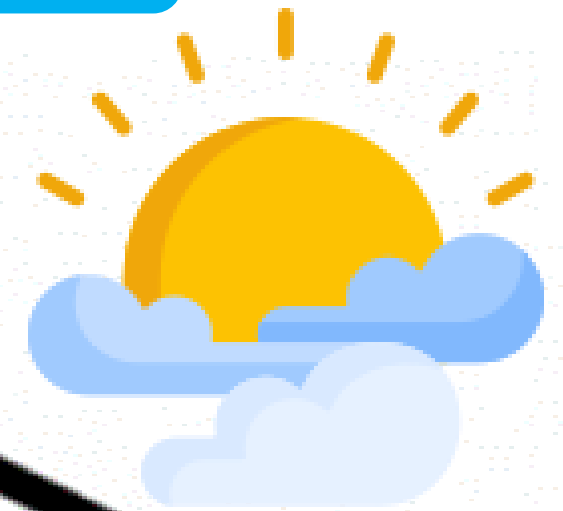


LONG TERM - Generic MyST foster carers are yet to be recruited to act as realistic options for step down placements for complex children or as avoidant placements for those children who may escalate to residential placements.

What you told us...

Just popping you a quick message, to say thank you so much for all your kindness towards me and Maya she has definitely found a real happiness in group.

Case Study – Residential provision for Children Looked After within Blaenau Gwent



Currently the Local Authority is dependent on residential care through neighbouring local authorities if space is available, but predominantly through private providers. This means placements can be out of county and takes young people away from family, school and social networks.

In its Programme for Government, Welsh Ministers made a commitment to ‘eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children by the end of the Senedd term.’ To help with this, the Health and Social Care Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund was set up by the Welsh Government which can be used to invest in local authority residential homes to ensure they are able to meet individuals more complex needs closer to home.

Following a successful bid to this Welsh Government Radical Reform grant, Blaenau Gwent was provided with money to purchase two detached 5 bedroom houses, at a cost of approximately £900,000 along with a further £700,000 for refurbishment costs.

The houses are located next to each other on a private lane on Picton Road in Dukestown, Tredegar and following the necessary works will be **fit for purpose buildings providing a residential home that will house a maximum of 4 children**. The home will have no age restrictions and it will depend on match/suitability/assessment of risk etc. The **2nd house will be for 2 emergency beds and 3 independent living units** (these will be **specifically for our Local Authority Young People who want to try independent living**).

Now that the houses have been purchased, a local residents committee has been set up and plans drawn up for the refurbishment works. The development of this residential provision is now ongoing with the approval / sign off of building adaptations to ensure regulation compliance and progression to tender and procurement for the works which will be completed by a private provider as the scale of works will require a project manager.

This exciting project, which is **planned for completion by April 2024**, will ensure we are well placed to meet requirements following the eliminate agenda (It will become law from 2026 that LA’s cannot place children looked after in for profit care providers) and Blaenau Gwent will house **an appropriate, cost effective property within the borough to provide, safe, high-quality care for our local children.**

Quality Standard 4

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

Our preventative measures include wide-scale measures aimed at the wider population as well as targeted interventions for individuals



A longitudinal study we commissioned to be undertaken by Worcester university has started with meetings arranged with families, children, young adults and carers open to the Disability Team and who are going through transition services.

The study involves researching a cohort of about 15 children and young adults (aged 14-24) open to the Disability (0-25) Team and following them over the next 5 years through the transition process, during their teenage years, and beyond into adulthood (until 25).

The purpose of the study is to gather data on services available for this cohort, challenges and opportunities in order to inform our service delivery in the long term.

The study is progressing well, with initial contact being made by the team with the families and sessions being arranged to mop out those



Provider managers have commenced engagement with **Coleg Gwent (Ebbw Vale Campus) Health and Social Care students** and will be offering work based placements to approximately **11 students during the 2023/24 academic year**. This will enable our tenants / residents to engage with the students and in addition we are planning for students from the Hair and Beauty courses to provide sessions at our Care Homes.



South East Wales Adoption Service
Achieving More Together
Gwasaneth Mabwysiadu Deddwyrain Cymru
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd!

Understanding the child days and trauma nurture timelines are completed for children ages 18 months + this provides adoptive families with enhanced analysis of the impact a child's early year may have on them which assists in the preparation for parents and informs support planning.

The aim is that all children will have a trauma nurture timeline prior to adoption but currently unable to meet this timeline.



The focus for our work with carers

Blaenau Gwent and its partner organisations continue to work together to achieve the following outcomes:

- Carers will be respected as care partners and will have access to the services they need to support them in their caring role.
- Carers will be able to have a life of their own alongside their caring role.
- Carers will be supported so that they are not forced into financial hardship by their caring role.
- Carers health and well-being will be promoted to assist them to stay mentally and physically well and their dignity respected.
- Children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to optimise their abilities.

The delivery of activities specifically for young carers has continued during the reporting period and include the following



Weekly Youth Club;



Young Carers Forum;



Driving lessons; and



Duke of Edinburgh.



https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/media/giym2kzb_blaenau_gwent_young_carers.pdf



Children Looked After (CLA) mentors continue to ensure Personal Education Plan's are up to date.

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

Support is offered to promote successful transitions between key stages. Exclusion and destinations of school leavers continue to be monitored alongside academic achievements. Children Looked After education team will report on this years learners destinations, attainment and exclusions in December and will be recorded in the end of year report.



The Local Authority celebrated 5 care leavers who secured their places to study at University following receipt of their A-Level results in August..

What you told us...



i can't thank you enough for all you do. In my parent assessment they asked me to name people I trust and I said you. You never judge me, and I can be honest with you. However big or small my problems are I feel so much better when I've spoken to you. Thank you for helping me.



Currently there are more children waiting than adopters available.

Recruitment of adopters is an area of improvement needed for the service.



As a directorate we continue to contribute to the safe reduction of looked after children strategy -As at end of September 2023, there were 17 children subject to placement with parents and 3 in kinship placements in the 14+ team.

This demonstrated a reduction since the beginning of the year.

The team are actively working on progressing two discharges of Care Order's to Special Guardianship Order's - a sibling group placed with Independent fostering agency carers. This is in partnership with the Special Guardianship Order team.

In addition to this, the 14+ team are involved with the Eliminate profit Task & Finish which has recently sent letters to Independent Fostering Agency carers who are caring for our Children Looked After children currently to consider whether they would consider an application for a Special guardianship order.



Delivery of services and outcomes are proportionate, targeted, and sustainable, and supported through the promotion of social enterprises, co-operatives, user-led services and the third sector.

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



The pace of the cycles of the National Transfer Scheme are increasing meaning **Blaenau Gwent is assuming responsibility for UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) children more frequently.**



APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2023
= 8 CHILDREN



APRIL 2022 - MARCH 2023
- 7 CHILDREN

There are no independent placement options for these children which means we are relying on Internal Fostering Agency placements often considerably out of county (Nottingham, London, Birmingham).

Post 18 planning will be significantly impacted by the placement of these children.

As an authority we recognise that the support provided by unpaid carers is vital in allowing some citizens to continue living independently at home and we continue to provide support to ensure that the carers wellbeing is also maintained.....

The opportunity of **free training** is offered to all unpaid carers who want to influence decisions or organisation on behalf of carers in their local area.

Blaenau Gwent provide **free carers wellbeing groups** allowing carers to meet with like-minded peers, where they can form support networks and also learn new skills

carers WALES **gofalwyr CYMRU**

Speak up for unpaid carers!

Represent carers in Wales training
by Carers Wales

Free training for all unpaid carers who want to influence services, decisions, or organisations on behalf of carers in their local area, region or Wales-wide.

- How to get involved
- How to be influential in meetings
- The policy developments you need to know about

Regular training offered at introductory and advanced levels

Sign up on **Eventbrite** or email info@carerswales.org



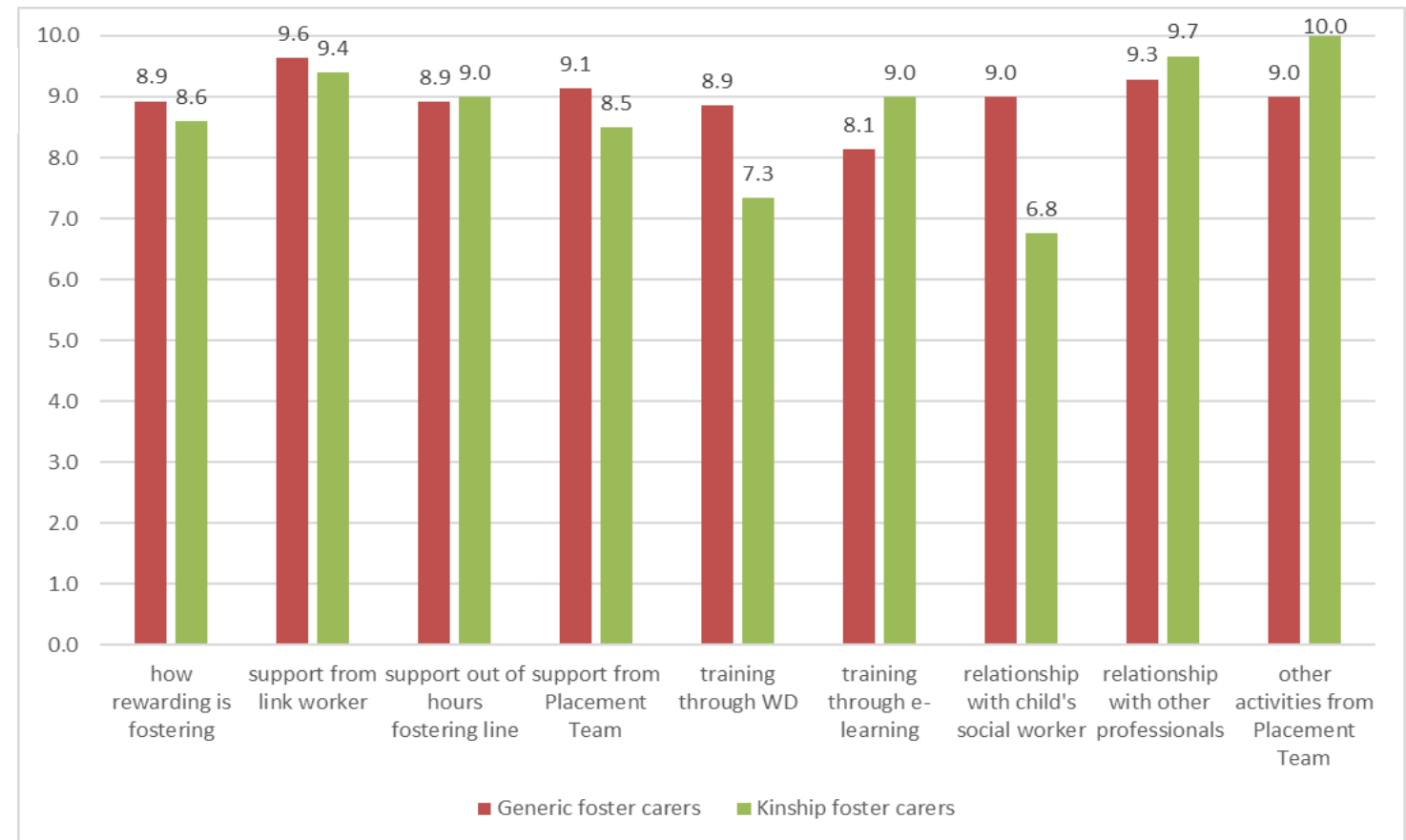
<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/events/blaenau-gwent-free-carers-wellbeing-groups-1/>

What you told us...

Foster carer, offered her thanks for the diligent work done in relation to contact and was thankful that was always punctual in contacting her about arrangements and confirming when family members were to attend etc. 'She is always friendly and professional in her approach to carers and family members. Would you please pass this on to her and offer our thanks for making family time run smoothly'

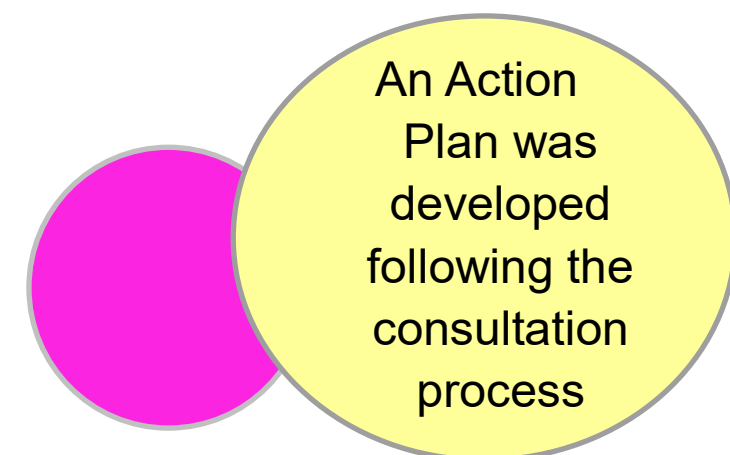
Case Study - Foster Carer Consultation

A **consultation process** is carried out annually from which feed-back informs **future improvements/changes to the fostering service**. On 31st March 2023 in Blaenau Gwent there were 44 generic foster carers households and 24 kinship foster carers households (with children in placement). All foster carers were sent a letter (and email) from the service manager with a questionnaire and were invited to respond anonymously either completing the hard copy of the questionnaire or the survey developed in Microsoft Forms. In total we had a **28% response rate** of which 14 questionnaires (**32%**) were off **generic foster carers** and 5 (**21%**) questionnaires from **kinship foster carers**. This response rate is an improvement on the previous two years when it was 11.4% in 2022 and 16.9% in 2021. **The responses as a whole are positive, as it can be seen in the graph to the right:**



The lower average scoring of **6.8** for kinship foster carers in terms of satisfaction of relationship with the child's social worker is given by a low scoring of 1 (out of 10) from one individual. The scoring was followed by the following comments: *"I have rated this very low due to low communication and people skills and very poor decision making. Lack of knowledge when dealing with kinship families. I must add that I have a new social worker since end of December so cannot comment on this relationship and communication at present"*. As the foster carer gave her name these comments are being looked into.

Comparing data from consultations 2022/2023



Case Study – Supporting Adults with disabilities in The 'Stute Café'



Social Services have recently launched the opening of a **Community Café based at the Blaina Institute, High Street Blaina.**

The department have been working in partnership with Blaina Community Institute Limited, to develop a catering enterprise within our Community Options Service (day service).



The café will support adults with disabilities to have placements as part of their day activity offer - giving the catering students an opportunity to develop invaluable life, social and future work skills within the world of catering and hospitality.

It will also give us an opportunity to showcase the delicious cakes and other goodies that are produced by our talented Social Care team as part of our existing Community Meals light snacks and afternoon tea service – which already provides nutritious and tasty treats to the most vulnerable and isolated people in Blaenau Gwent. The Café offers both sit in or takeaway service and has access to free Wi-Fi.



The Café opened for the first service on Tuesday 5th September with a formal launch opening party planned in early October 23 as a way of thanking all our Blaenau Gwent Corporate colleagues, Blaina Community Institute Ltd and Aneurin Leisure Trust who have supported the team at Community Options Social Services to get our latest venture finally open.



Chapter 3(c) - Partnership & Integration

Quality Standard 5

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



Effective collaboration and partnership working assists us in identifying existing needs and shape and commission future sustainable services.



Barnardos has delivered the following during the reporting period with funding from the Local Authority:

- Young Person healthy relationships – 6 weeks,
- Young Person confidence club – 4 weeks,
- Young Person 'My Voice, My Choice' programme – 4 weeks,
- Family sensory play – 4 weeks,
- Parent nurture programme – 10 weeks and
- a 'Big Breakfast' event to celebrate carers week.



Teams work tirelessly within multi agency partnerships to manage some challenging young people who are embroiled in anti social and criminal behaviour. Plans of support are being managed at multiple layers of intervention to work to reduce the likelihood of further prosecution of these Children Looked After children.

We are exploring options for Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Children Services to access hydrotherapy pool etc at Bert Denning Centre.

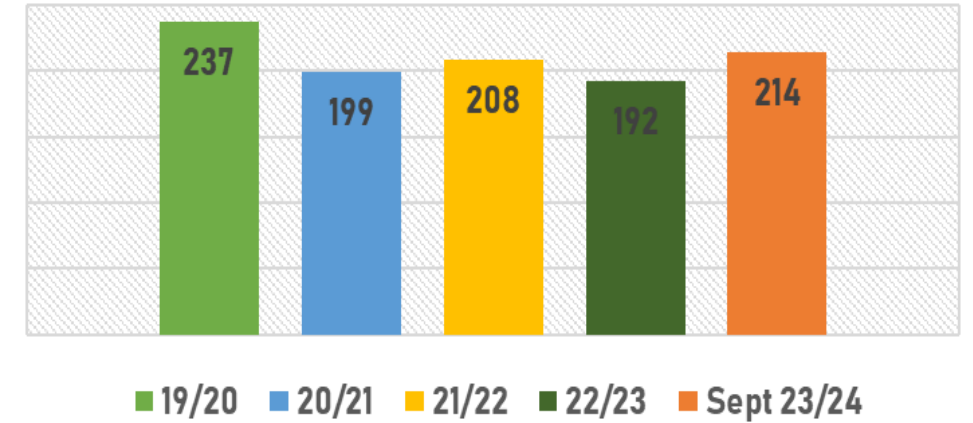


Discussions have been held with Torfaen County Borough Council to consider joint working with Bettercare Occupational Therapy to support Blaenau Gwent Community Resource Team with Bettercare discussions and decisions.

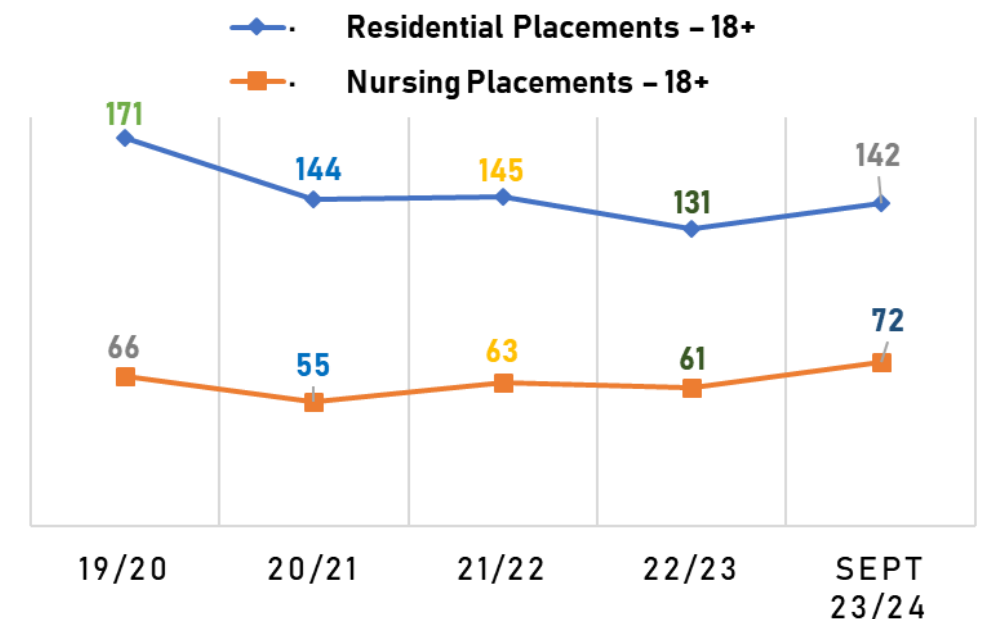
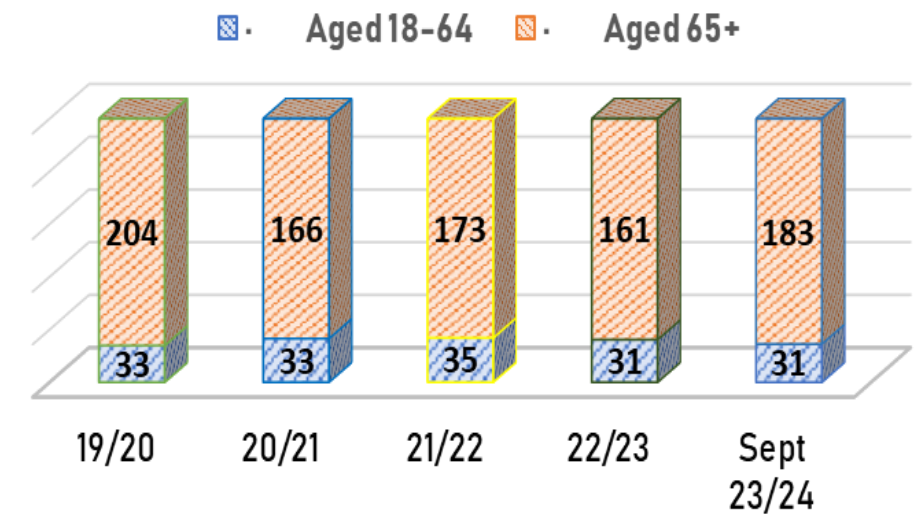


Effective partnership working delivers high quality care & outcomes for our adult clients in residential & nursing home care

The number of adult clients in residential & nursing home care (as at):



AGE RANGE OF THE ABOVE



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

What you told us...

A **Gwent Dementia Action Plan** has been **developed** and aligns to the 20 All Wales Dementia Pathway of Standards which will also include performance measures.



Workstream subgroups have been developed to take forward this programme of work which includes the following workstreams:

- Engagement;
- Memory Assessment Service/Dementia Connector role;
- Dementia Friendly Hospital Charter; and
- Education/Workforce and Measurement/Performance.


The recruitment of 2 support officers with Alzheimers UK is also in progress.

Developments at **Cwrt Mytton Residential Care Home** have now began with architects visiting - looking to develop a **centre of excellence for dementia care**. As part of this process there are plans to visit similar facilities in Wales who share similar plans/visions and priorities as us and learn from them on what works well.

Just wanted to say how grateful we are for the professionalism, care & compassion you showed to X on her discharge from hospital. You made a difficult time so much easier for both of us and Mam



Identified lack of move on accommodation in the community for single persons is impacting on affordable housing options for care leavers. This is also negatively impacting on young people remaining within supported accommodation longer thus reducing the movement within these supported living schemes. To alleviate this issue there is an accommodation task and finish group which sits under the Corporate Parenting Action Plan

 – we have tried to work with Registered Social Landlords and housing strategy as well as our housing department.



A Gwent wide 'whole-system' approach is in operation to support people who are experiencing a mental health crisis and includes:

- Mental Health 111- point of contact live 28th November, this provides a point of contact that is accessible for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis or emotional distress within Gwent - also for family/friends and carers
- Emergency Department support service has been introduced at Grange University Hospital Emergency Department, peer support workers provide support to those in emotional distress, preventing escalation and improve quality of mental health support services. Alternatives to hospital
- Mental Health Shared Lives service continues to be successful in minimising those in crisis being admitted to psychiatric units and also supporting earlier discharge. Citizens report improved satisfaction.
- Crisis Support House, Ty Cynnal for those who meet requirements of a safe stay

The complex issues being identified with some young people (risk taking, challenging behaviour and Mental Health needs) are also acting as significant barriers to accessing supported/ semi-supported accommodation options in the borough currently.

Case Study – Foster Care Fortnight May 2023

Foster Wales has supported regionally with events for the Fostering Fortnight including-

- Video of local care experienced young people;
- Digital Ivan featuring video driving around the region during the bank holiday weekend;
- Boosted social media ad of the video;
- approaching local businesses with specially created Foster Wales paper chain people asking them to lend their support and become a 'Fostering Friendly' employer -making it easier for their employees to combine fostering and working.
- Video of staff in those businesses holding up the chains was created and promoted;
- Social media tiles including localised content from foster carers;
- Radio advert on Capitol Radio;
- National 3 peaks challenge;
- 2 regional press releases.

The events triggered a higher number of fostering enquiries with **10 Foster Care enquiries followed up by 5 home visits and 1 new fostering household approved by the Panel during quarter 2.**

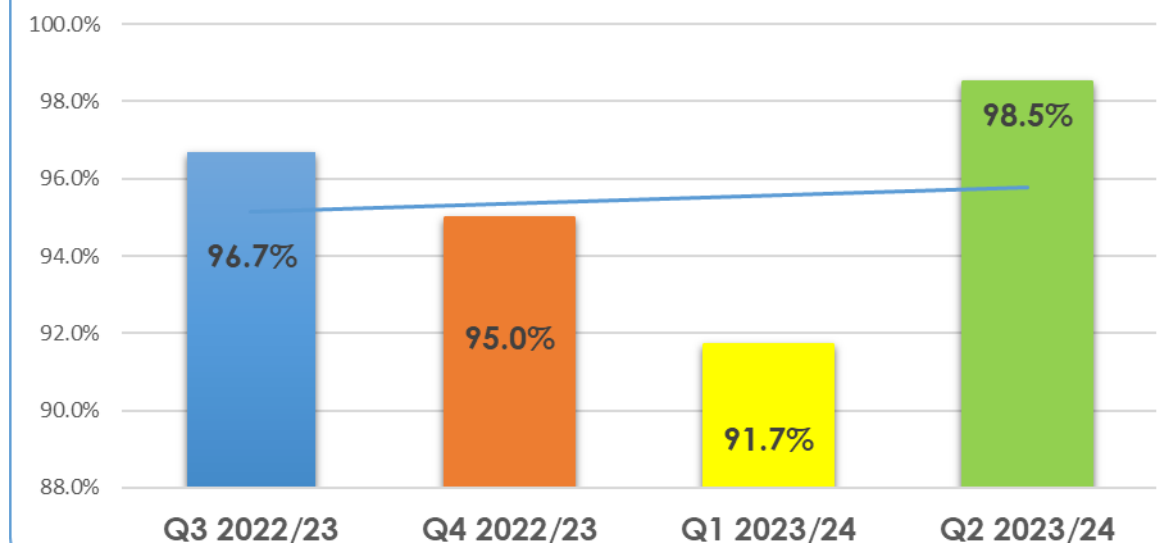
Right click and open hyperlink - foster wales calls on welsh employers to support foster carers.....



At the end of the reporting Period (April–September) we had **73 approved foster carers**, 29 of which were kinship carers.

This equates to the same number as at the end of 22/23. However during the reporting period **10 foster carers were newly appointed and 10 foster carers de-registered.**

Percentage of Foster Carers that have an up to date review.



Case Study - Partnership working with schools, Cwm Sensory Garden & Hub open day & Sofrydd Flying Start.

The Cwm Sensory Garden and hub open day held provided an opportunity for children aged 0-5 and their families residing in those areas to explore the sensory garden, engage with staff, and see what activities, programmes and support is available at the hub.

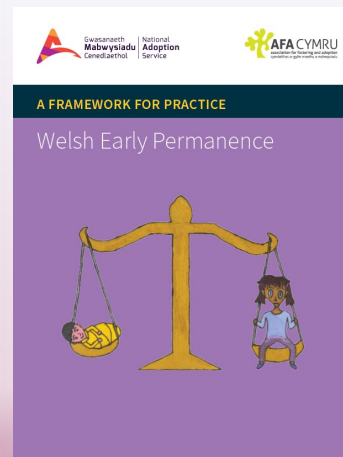


Extensive building work has been carried out at Sofrydd Flying Start Hub including an extension. These improvements raise the standard to now align with other Flying Start hubs.



Quality Standard 6

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



Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) is the care planning option that provides a child with a secure base as early as possible, when weeks and months really do matter; it enables healthy brain development and attachment through safe, predictable relationships with sensitive adults, and minimises the distressing moves that cause further trauma. WEP is the umbrella term given to the practice of placing children, with foster carers who are also approved as prospective adoptive parents. The WEP carer supports the child in the same way as other mainstream foster carers, undertaking all fostering tasks, including facilitating contact. If the child's care plan becomes that of adoption, WEP carers have the capacity to go on to offer that child a long-term permanent home.

Welsh early permanence is now being considered within care planning processes in Blaenau Gwent. **First WEP adopter was approved** in this period with a potential link with a Blaenau Gwent child.

Life journey work coordinator is providing therapeutic sessions to a Blaenau Gwent placed child - this is proving beneficial to the success of what is a second adoption placement for this young person. This specialised training has been invaluable for this specific family.

More widely the coordinator is **sharing her knowledge and skills with the adoption support team** so the ideas, skills and techniques can be used in their work.



Life journey work coordinator also held **training for family time workers** in July and this was well attended across the 5 South East Wales Adoption Service Local Authorities and included 2 workers from Blaenau Gwent. The coordinator also ran **putting the puzzle together training** in the period.

Blaenau Gwent had 5 children matched for adoption in the reporting period and **100%** had their **life journey material available within timescale.**

Need to identify a life journey work champion for Blaenau Gwent



Earlier conversations at matching stage for children with adopters are taking place regarding potential post adoption contact with an **emphasis on promoting contact with siblings**. Contact agreements now reflect this.

There has been a **11 meetings for birth parents with prospective adopters** during the reporting period, an increase which evidences the change in

SEWAS continues to utilise **in house psychology support provision** for any additional needs outside those that the team can meet. This along with referrals to Pathways provision run by adoption UK funded by Welsh government investment grant **enables families to access specialised support** avoiding a need to source external provision wherever possible.

<https://www.adoptcymru.com/> - NAS

<https://southeastwalesadoption.co.uk/> - keeping it local - SEWAS

We are now collating data regarding contact that is set up for adopted children, this data is manually collated and further **work is needed to support childcare social workers to complete agreements in a timely manner**

Our **new Promoting Independence pods** at Augusta Respite Centre are developing well following an allocation of funding from the Welsh Government Regional Integration Fund (RIF) grant. They are due to open in the Autumn of 2023 and will provide opportunities for people with a learning disability to experience independent living in a safe environment. Final orders of furniture / assistive technology etc has been completed and we are now awaiting delivery.

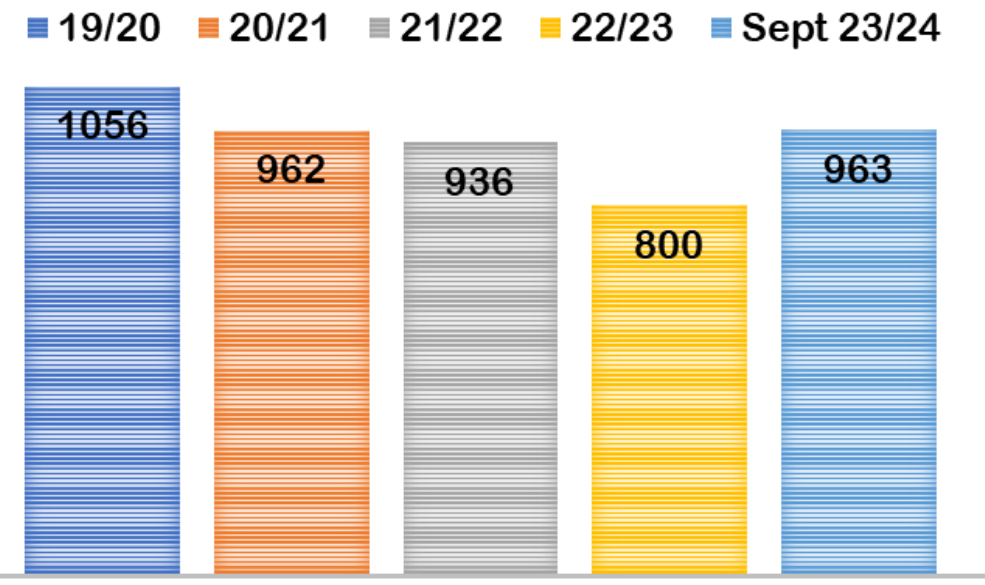


People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners

Short Breaks, sometimes called respite, provide parents and carers with a break from caring for a few hours in the day or an overnight stay. Short breaks can help prevent family breakdowns and ease the stresses of everyday family life. We provide a range of short break services in collaboration with partners.

Whilst there is no formal respite/short breaks strategy in place for children with disabilities, we have provision of regular respite for 7 children :-

-  1 with Local Authority foster carers
-  1 with commercial residential Placement
-  6 with Augusta House.



The number of adults with a Care & Support Plan

What you told us...



To Tracey
 Thank you so much for supporting me + Freya over the past few weeks.
 THANK YOU
 also thanks so much for teaching me new techniques to battle Freya's meltdowns
 Love
 Tyler + Freya

PIC•COLLAGE

Case Study - Coronation Weekend

The Early Years Childcare and Play Team invited children and parents to Blaina Integrated Children's Centre for a garden party to celebrate the Kings Coronation on 4th May. 25 children and parents enjoyed sensory play, stories, arts and crafts and outdoor games followed by a picnic outside in the play area. Lots of fun was had by all and families were able to take their crafts home to decorate their own houses and gardens ready for the Coronation weekend.



Case Study - 14 Plus Team Win Social Care Wales Accolade Award

Our Children's Services 14 Plus Team have won the prestigious **Social Care Wales 2022 Accolade Award** in the category of 'Building brighter futures for children and families'.

The Award was won by the team for showcasing an excellent example of social care practice for a project titled 'A Place to Grow'.

This is a great achievement and recognition of the team's commitment for high level of support and services being delivered to this cohort (currently 123 young carers identified and registered by the service).

The project is aimed to:

- Provide a safe space for Children Looked After, care leavers & children in need of care & support;
- To empower and help develop sustainable life skills;
- Be a part of the local community;
- As well as giving them a safe space to visit and enjoy as their own.



L-R) Simon Burch - Social Care Wales Board Member, Nicola Williams, Alison Ramshaw, Beth Thomas; Aimee Evans, Hannah Watts & Sue Evans - Chief Executive of Social Care Wales

The award has recognised the 14 Plus project as an excellent example of social care practice; keeping a person-centred practice at the very heart of their work and improving outcomes for our children, young people and their families.



Chapter 3(d) - Well-being

Key Activities

The well-being of people needing our care and support and carers needing support is paramount to service delivery and this includes respecting their culture, beliefs and other personal characteristics, and respecting their wishes and feelings

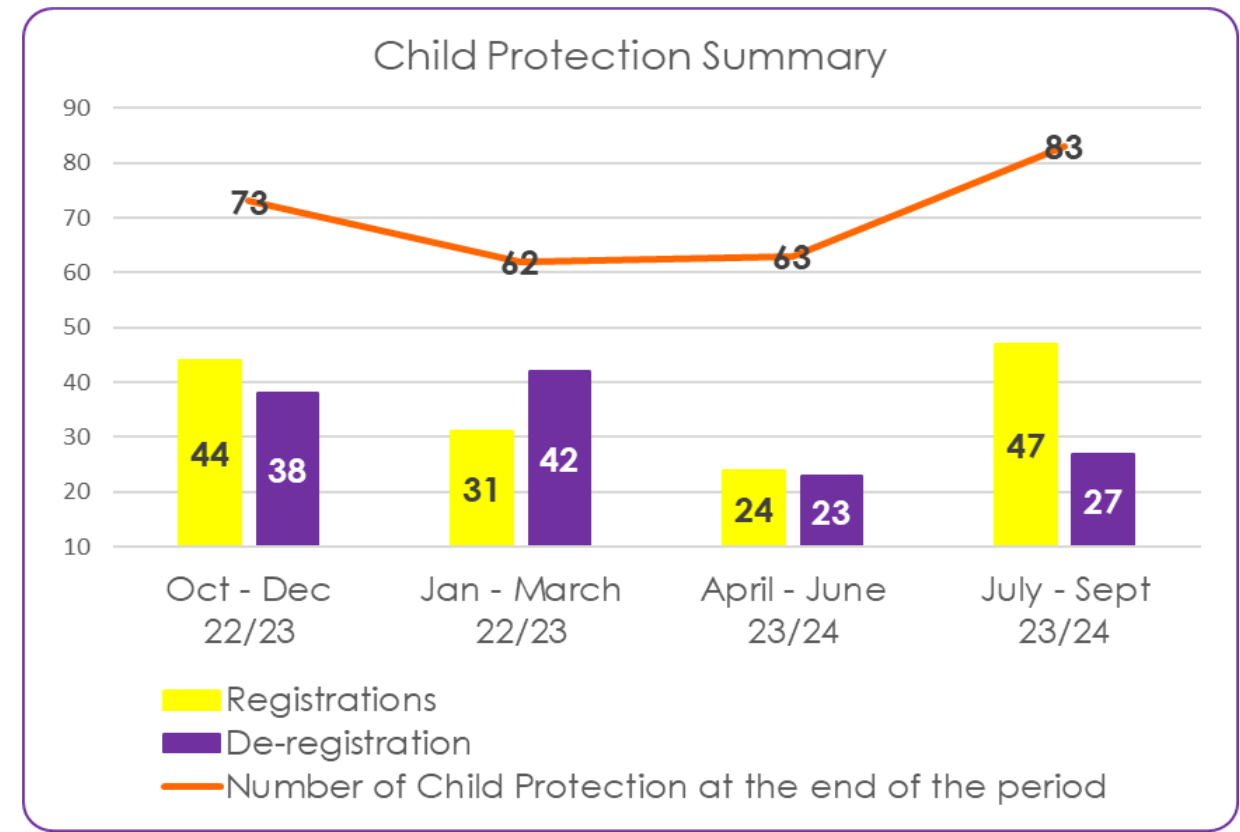


The Department recognises the importance of having robust and sustainable **Safeguarding Teams across both Adult and Children Services** to ensure we not only meet our legislative requirements, but that we are also able to protect our most vulnerable citizens.

Quality Standard 7

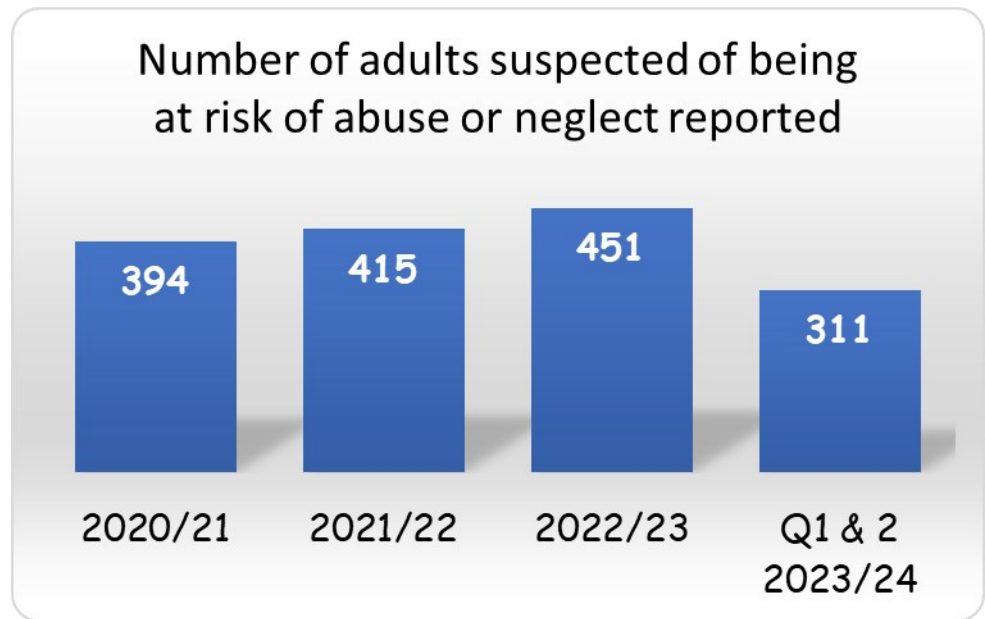
- People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm

Safeguarding Manager continues to provide quarterly Child Protection reports to quality assure Child Protection performance. Q1 & 2 Child Protection reports identified that 100% Initial Child Protection Conferences were held in timescales.



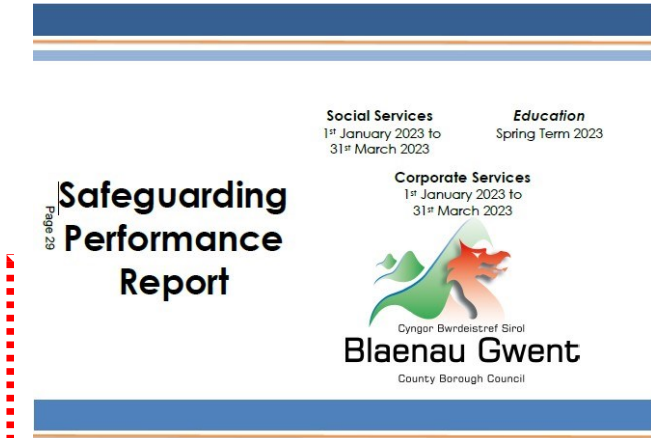
As at end of Quarter 2 there were 83 children on the Child Protection register in comparison to 63 children as at end of Quarter 1. Analysis of this data will be considered as part of Q2 Child Protection report by Safeguarding manager.

There is further work to be completed in respect of child protection conferences being more strongly aligned with outcome focussed practice which will be considered later this year with Safeguarding Team.



We have seen an **increase in adult safeguarding referrals** during 2023/24 compared to the same period of 2022/23.

April—September 2023 = 311
April—September 2022 = 246



Right click here and open hyperlink to view our most recent Safeguarding Performance Report



Key Activities

Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and are continually reviewed and improved

All newly appointed Council staff are informed of the Council's safeguarding arrangements as part of their induction programme.



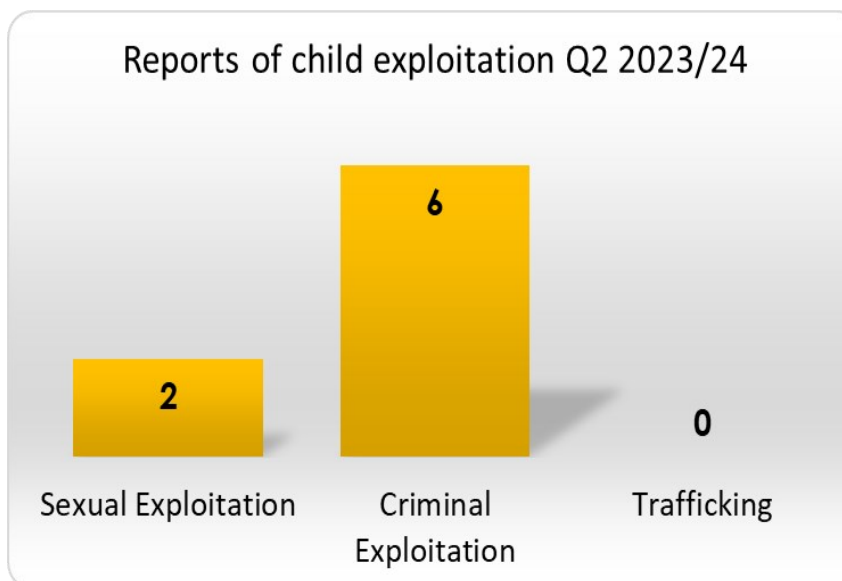
The Safeguarding Education Manager undertakes a programme of visits to all schools over a 3 year period for **Safeguarding Quality Assurance (QA)**.

All schools have now been completed during the academic year 2022-23 (September 2022—July 2023).

There is also a Safeguarding QA process in place for education services used by Blaenau Gwent to cover out of county independent settings and alternative provisions. 3 of these provisions underwent a QA visit in the reporting period (April 2023 - September 2023).



Safeguarding performance is good, **100%** of newly registered children were **visited within 10 days** of being registered.



For children on the child protection register, the average number of days they have been registered is **124.9**

Prevention/Long term - Safeguarding Education Team continue to work closely with educational establishments to meet the educational needs of children looked after. The team have appointed 2 education support workers via the Virtual Schools Grant to further enhance the educational support available to our CLA children.

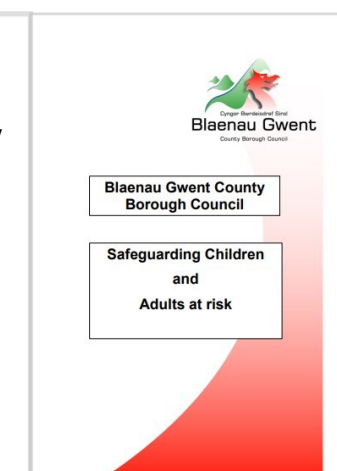
People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm



Integration - 14+ and SAT team continue to utilise Family Group Conference service within Supporting Change Team where this is appropriate and required. This has been particularly relevant for Statutory Assessment Team when considering the requirement for safeguards for families within enquiry periods.

All safeguarding referrals continue to be managed in line with the **Wales Safeguarding Procedures** and statutory requirements.

Safeguarding is recognised corporately as being everybody's responsibility. The Safeguarding Policy has recently been updated.



What you told us...

We moved into our new house today, we are only here today because of your help. Thank you so much.

No complaints, assessment went as was told and completed on time. nice and friendly all round, only minor thing was I was not informed we were under review, and not told that a meeting had been arranged by the duty team. thanks for all the support.

Key Activities

An audit framework for the Safeguarding Team to work to over the next 2 years has been proposed in order to satisfy ourselves on our practice across



The Safeguarding Manager has developed an Independent Review Officer (IRO) **good practice standards action plan** during this period to act as a framework to benchmark the IRO roles and responsibilities against. Progress against the action plan will be reported on with the annual IRO report.



As an Authority we continue to examine opportunities to deliver our S.16 responsibilities to promote Social Enterprises. As a directorate currently, we commission some social enterprises in Adult Services (Vision 21 etc) and have been working on a regional and national level to look at opportunities for social enterprise models to meet health and social care needs (Gwent micro carers / national subsidiary model for domiciliary care etc). Plus we have discussed as part of the catering enterprise model we are developing in Blaenau Gwent opportunities to develop in to either a social enterprise or Local Authority trading company as part of our commercial and income plans. The self assessment tool has been put on the November Directors meeting agenda for the suggestion of this tool to be used on a regional basis to give us a Gwent picture and enable us to progress this area of work further.



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

A Section 47 enquiry means that Childrens Social Care must carry out an investigation when they have 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'.



The majority of S47 investigations are being completed by our SAT team. Those S47 investigations in SAT or 14+ that require an extended enquiry timeframe are approved by the service manager. The IPC S47 recommendations Task & Finish Group continues to meet to ensure the recommendations are being implemented, this is chaired by the Safeguarding lead.

All staff within teams have completed the relevant level of safeguarding training.



Other Training includes: -

- training on Circle of Security parenting programme
- Non-violent resistance which is a specific way of working with children when they are angry and violent
- Attachment training and substance misuse.
- Medication training

What you told us...

When I had a phone call saying I was having a support worker I was very anxious about not knowing what was going to happen. The support worker came to my house she explained step by step how a support worker works. This made my mental health feel better that I went to the doctors to get it sorted. In the short amount of time of coming out she's been amazing and has given us the help we needed and everything that needed doing has now been achieved. She has made me feel so comfortable and has been so supporting and been so helpful with everything.

Quality Standard 8

• People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible

We consider and build upon people's personal circumstances, capabilities, networks and local Communities when providing care & support.

Digital Switchover - A TEC Position Statement which includes a project plan in relation to the digital switchover and was presented to Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in April 23 and a financial impact report has now been completed ready for submission to Senior Leadership Team in Quarter 3. The Gwent Regional Team are also in the process of developing a region paper in relation to the financial impact on the Gwent Local Authorities which is also due to be completed in Quarter 3.



TEC Cymru is looking to hold a Gwent wide event in November inviting providers of digital lifeline alarms to attend to showcase their equipment. Following the outcome of both the SLT and regional report a **project plan will be drafted to take forward the digital switchover in Blaenau Gwent.**



A cultural change is needed to consider assistive technology as a solution that enables people to achieve their outcomes and live independently and helps prevent/delay costly health and social care interventions. The development of the smart flat assists with this by further promoting assistive technology to professionals, individuals and their families/carers.

There are significant financial implications in the switchover to digital which is due to take place in 2025. It is critical we fully understand these implications on the local authority so we are able to continue to provide a service that meets the needs of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent.

Financial challenges have been identified in relation to some of the new technologies we are piloting especially if an annual subscription cost is attached. Care Providers are less likely to accept this type of technology due to the annual charge. This element has been included in the Position Paper which was presented to Senior Leadership Team in April 2023.

Varied care and support packages are provided for our carers.....



A new Bridging the Gap Flexible Time Out Service is being piloted across the Gwent Region, the pilot is in its early stages but already there has been a number of carers who have benefitted from the service, one of the Blaenau Gwent carers who has been successful with their application has been able to get some quality time out to visit family in London knowing the person they look after has been well cared for by a participating care agency.

Unpaid Carers Coffee Morning
COFFEE, TEA and ME

Please join us every Tuesday from 12-2.00pm for Free Coffee, Tea and some time to relax away from your caring responsibilities.

Come along and meet with other unpaid carers who are in very similar situations, in need of a little time for themselves to chat about anything and everything in a Non Judgmental, confidential environment.

VENUE: Brynmawr RFC, Catholic Road, Brynmawr
TIMES: Every Tuesday 12.00-2.00pm
FIRST SESSION: Tuesday 16th May 2023

For further information please contact Darren on 07977235414.
No booking necessary.

Bridging The Gap Gwent

Respite for unpaid carers in Gwent, South Wales.

NEWCIS
NEWCASTLE CARERS' SUPPORT CENTRE

Bridging The Gap Gwent (BTGG) is a short breaks scheme that provides unpaid carers a short period of rest from their caring role. A short break lets you take time out to look after yourself and helps stop you becoming exhausted and run down.

If you care for someone and reside in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport or Torfaen, you could be eligible to access the scheme. The scheme is accessible to unpaid adult carers and young carers (under 18).

Bridging the Gap Gwent is delivered by NEWCIS on behalf of the five Gwent authorities.

btggw@newcis.org.uk | Coming Soon
www.newcis.org.uk/btg-gwent

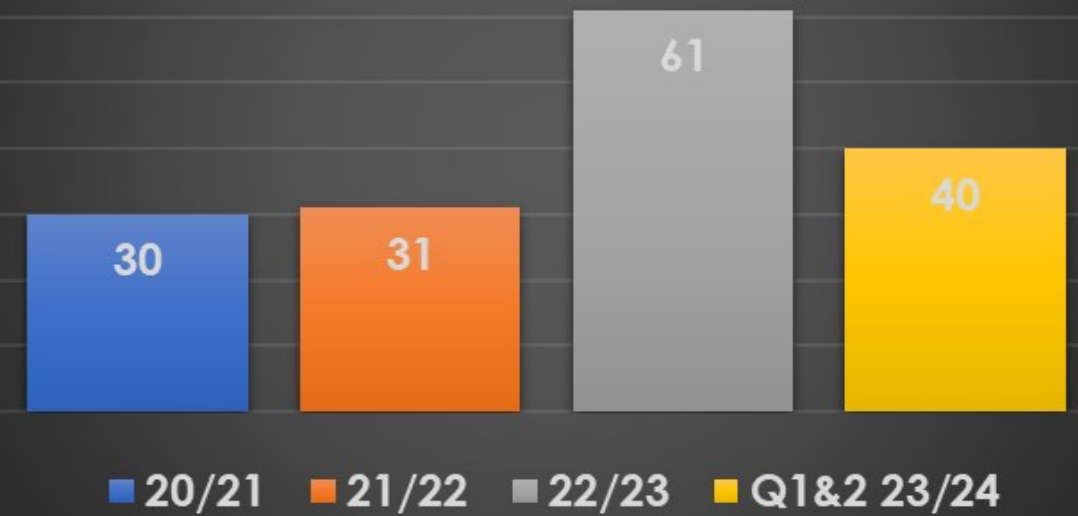
People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible

We continue to work with people to develop solutions which support their individual needs

THE NUMBER OF ADULTS PROVIDED WITH ELECTRONIC ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DURING THE YEAR



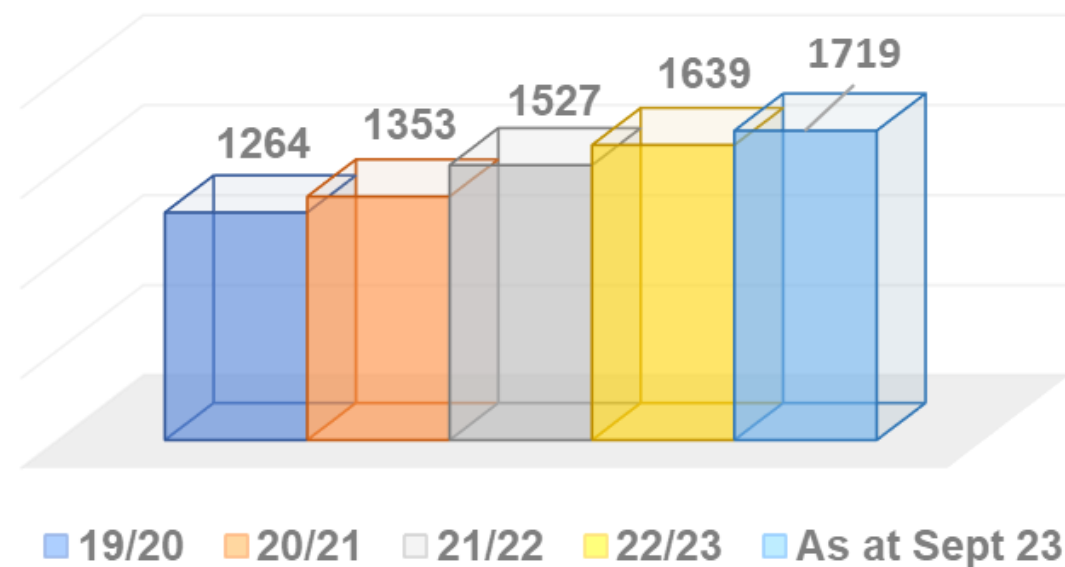
Number of Disabled Facilities Grants Completed



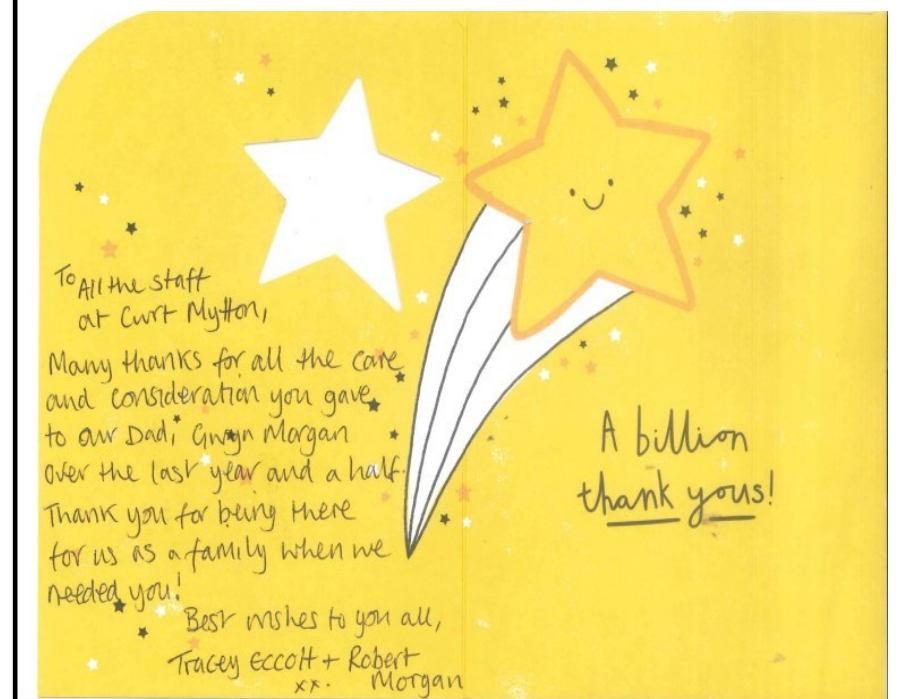
Further work needs to be done around this to ensure that all those that are no longer in receipt of equipment are ended on the system



The total number of adult clients currently in receipt of electronic assistive technology



What you told us...



Case Study - Supporting our carers

Blaenau Gwent and its partner organisations make sure that carers are treated with dignity and respect. This involves ensuring that they are recognised as people first, with the same rights as everyone else to have choice and control, quality of life, and aspirations in their own right, separate to those of the person being cared for.

We actively support and empower our carers, engaging with them regularly, taking time to listen and provide carer centre focussed events.

- We held our **annual event to celebrate Carers week** on Wednesday 7th June at Brynmawr Rugby Club, it was a great success and it was truly wonderful to see so many of our unpaid carers attend, it's our way of just thanking our unpaid carers so much for all the invaluable work they do. Its fair to say those who attended were entertained from start to finish with local performers including local magician Adam Reeves and local singing artists Sara Ashley Davies and Elvis Tribute Act Rick Jenkins, there was a raffle and a lovely buffet also provided.

Photos here are from the Carers Week event held at Brynmawr rugby club and another from the Carers Singing bowls group session which was run for our Parent Carers of Children with Disabilities.

"The carers who attended shared how they loved their time out from their caring role and would love these type of events/session to take place on a regular basis".



This year we also run an Unpaid Carers Cost of Living Grant which was extremely popular and successful, the grant offered those carers who were financially struggling an opportunity to apply for a one off grant of up to £500 to pay for emergency costs for things like white goods, food bills and household goods. The grant also offered carers wellbeing opportunities like counselling courses, gym memberships and hobby activities, along with driving lessons and driving test costs.

One of our carers who's grant application for driving lessons was successful responded by saying - "Good afternoon Tania, this is amazing news! Can you please thank everyone on the panel, this will make such a difference to mine and my sons life. I cried happy tears receiving your email as our luck has been terrible for a good year and a half now and I honestly can't thank you and your team enough. I really can't thank you enough, this will be life changing".

Chapter 4 - Other Information

How we do what we do

Structural arrangements that provide good governance and strong accountability / Local Political Leadership, Governance and Accountability

The structure of the Social Services Directorate provides clear levels of management and accountability. The Council has a clear governance and accountability framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. This framework identifies how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'. This framework is

complied with by Social Services who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

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 Cabinet or Council.

In 2023/24 the Directorate has one Executive Member with Portfolio responsibility for People and Social Services and is scrutinised by the People Scrutiny Committee, with safeguarding information also reported to this Committee. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Cabinet Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis the Director of Social Services and/or Heads of Adult and Children's Services meet with CIW to discuss achievements, performance and key challenges. CIW also undertake an annual review and evaluation of the Directorate's performance.



Chapter 4 - Other Information (continued)

How we do what we do - Audit & Inspection Progress

Care Inspectorate Wales

No new Social Services CIW Inspections have been instigated during the reporting period that were specific to Blaenau Gwent. However, A **National** study 'Rapid Review on Child Protection Arrangements' was instigated and details are below. Also, in response to previous audits carried out by CIW, recommendations for improvement were made which are then monitored as part of the corporate business planning process until fully delivered upon.

Report title: Rapid review of child protection arrangements
Local or National Report: National
Completion date: Published September 2023
Report Link: [Full report - Rapid Review of Child Protection Arrangements FINAL FOR PUBLICATION \(hiw.org.uk\)](#)

CIW made recommendations for improvement which will be reviewed and a decision taken by CLT on whether they need to be monitored as part of the corporate business planning process.

Audit Wales

No new Social Services Audit Wales Inspections have been instigated during the reporting period that were specific to Blaenau Gwent. However, in response to previous audits carried out by Audit Wales recommendations for improvement were made which are then monitored as part of the corporate business planning process until fully delivered upon. Ongoing recommendations are:-

Report title: Corporate Safeguarding Follow-up
Local or National Report: Local
Completion date: Published November 2022
Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/bg_safeguarding_follow-up.pdf

Recommendation - The Council needs to take further action to fully comply with the recommendations in the October 2019 follow-up report on corporate arrangements for safeguarding of children.

Report title: Springing Forward
Local or National Report: Local
Completion date: Published November 2022
Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/bg_sf.pdf

Recommendation - Identify the costs of delivering the assets and workforce strategies and incorporate these into the medium-term financial strategy // Collaborate with public sector partners across Gwent to evaluate the potential benefits of developing a strategic long-term approach to a single public estate. / Build on existing examples of collaborative working by developing a more systematic approach to collaboration / The Council should seek to

Report title: 'Time for Change' – Poverty in Wales
Local or National Report: National
Completion date: Published November 2022
Report Link: [https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Time for %20Change %20Poverty English.pdf](https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Time_for_%20Change_%20Poverty_English.pdf)

**Recommendation - Councils optimise their digital services by creating a single landing page on their website
 Creation of a single gateway into services**

Continued on next page

How we do what we do - Audit & Inspection Progress

Audit Wales Continued

<p>Report title: unscheduled care review Local or National Report: National Completion date: Awaiting publication</p>	<p>Awaiting final report</p>
<p>Report title: Social Enterprises Local or National Report: National Completion date: Published December 2022 Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/A_missed_opportunity_Social_Enterprises_English_0.pdf</p>	<p>Recommendation - Ensure the local authority delivers its S.16 responsibilities to promote Social Enterprises we recommend that it reports on current activity and future priorities following the evaluation of its Action Plan including the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services</p>



Arolygiaeth Gofal
Cymru
 Care Inspectorate
Wales

How we do what we do - Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

Having a skilled and motivated workforce is essential in order to provide high quality services. As part of this, the Council has a Joint Workforce Development Team with Caerphilly County Borough Council with responsibility for delivering a training and development strategy that supports development opportunities for staff at all levels in Social Services.

A full programme of learning is provided for the whole social care sector. All statutory, legislative, and registration linked requirements are planned and accounted for. The offer includes developmental opportunities for the workforce and support for resilience and well-being.

Legislative change and Welsh Government guidance has provided numerous priority themes such as More Than Just Words, Dementia Standards, reacting to the pause in the implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards, and new preferences for assessments from the Family Judiciary.

The challenges for the workforce to fully embrace learning opportunities remain high. The current recruitment environment has a major impact on the sector and forces harsh choices that without doubt impact on the capacity available to fully embrace development opportunities beyond the essentials.

The way the workforce wants to learn has changed, they expect choice and flexibility. Various initiatives within the organisation are in place to support improving digital confidence and access to digital learning. The authority underpins its approach with the recognition of barriers that exist for parts of the social care workforce, so the offer includes the traditional classroom route. Classroom activities use digital devices to provide safe space learning with facilitator and peer support:

The authority has co led the All-Wales project on securing an organisational level, fit for purpose, future proof, digital learning platform that will meet the needs of the whole sector, communities and volunteers. The authority, one of three in the first phase, continued to demonstrate nationally the power to the workforce of sharing across boundaries. The approach has encouraged all 22 local authorities to confirm their interest along with several other public organisations. The learning delivery model includes blended learning approaches, a choice of digital or face to face, and hybrid delivery. Hybrid, where participants can simultaneously join either in the classroom or virtually has been welcomed as a very supportive option by the frontline workforce.

The engagement from the workforce with new ways of learning is exceptional and they continue to reward the community with their ongoing resilience and determination.

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 us in partnership with Caerphilly. When comparing the performance of the collaborative approach to other workforce development services in Gwent some key headlines from 2022/23 include

- Supported 63% of the internally sponsored social work students in Gwent
- Hosted 56% of the university direct entry social work students in Gwent
- 9 members of internally sponsored staff qualified as social workers
- The social care workforce in the area had access to the largest training offer provided within Gwent

Workforce stability is a key consideration within Social Services as some teams are facing staffing shortages, however, it is acknowledged that this is a Wales wide position and there is no simple solution. The department as a whole has been working hard to look at innovative ways of managing the workload within teams 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.

Social Services are working closely with Organisational Development to establish a Strategic Workforce Plan to support capacity concerns in the short, medium and longer-term as well as considering the opportunity to collaborate on a regional basis. The workforce in Social Services has been identified as a critical risk and has therefore been included on the Council's Corporate Risk Register.



How we do what we do - Effective partnership working through Regional Partnership Boards

Working in Partnership

Part 9 of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act places a key emphasis on partnership working including 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 Cabinet 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.

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. Social Services partnership arrangements include:

- **Joint Partnership and Workforce Development Service with Caerphilly**
- **Greater Gwent Workforce Development Board**
- **Regional Adoption Service**
- **South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS)**
- **South East Wales Emergency Duty Team**
- **South East Wales Adult Placement Scheme**
- **Gwent Frailty Programme Integrated Health and Social Care Teams**
- **South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB)**
- **Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GWASB)**
- **Regional Safeguarding Board covering all partners across Gwent**
- **Shared Lives scheme run on behalf of six Local Authorities and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board**
- **Gwent Mental Health & Learning Disabilities Partnership Team**
- **South East Wales Improvement Collaboration -4C's (SEWIC)**
- **Gwent Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Team**
- **Gwent Regional Collaborative (RCC) - Supporting People**
- **Gwent wide agreement with National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide children's advocacy services**



How we do what we do - Our Financial Resources and how we plan for the future

Budget 2023-24- Quarter 1 & 2 (April 2023 to September 2023)

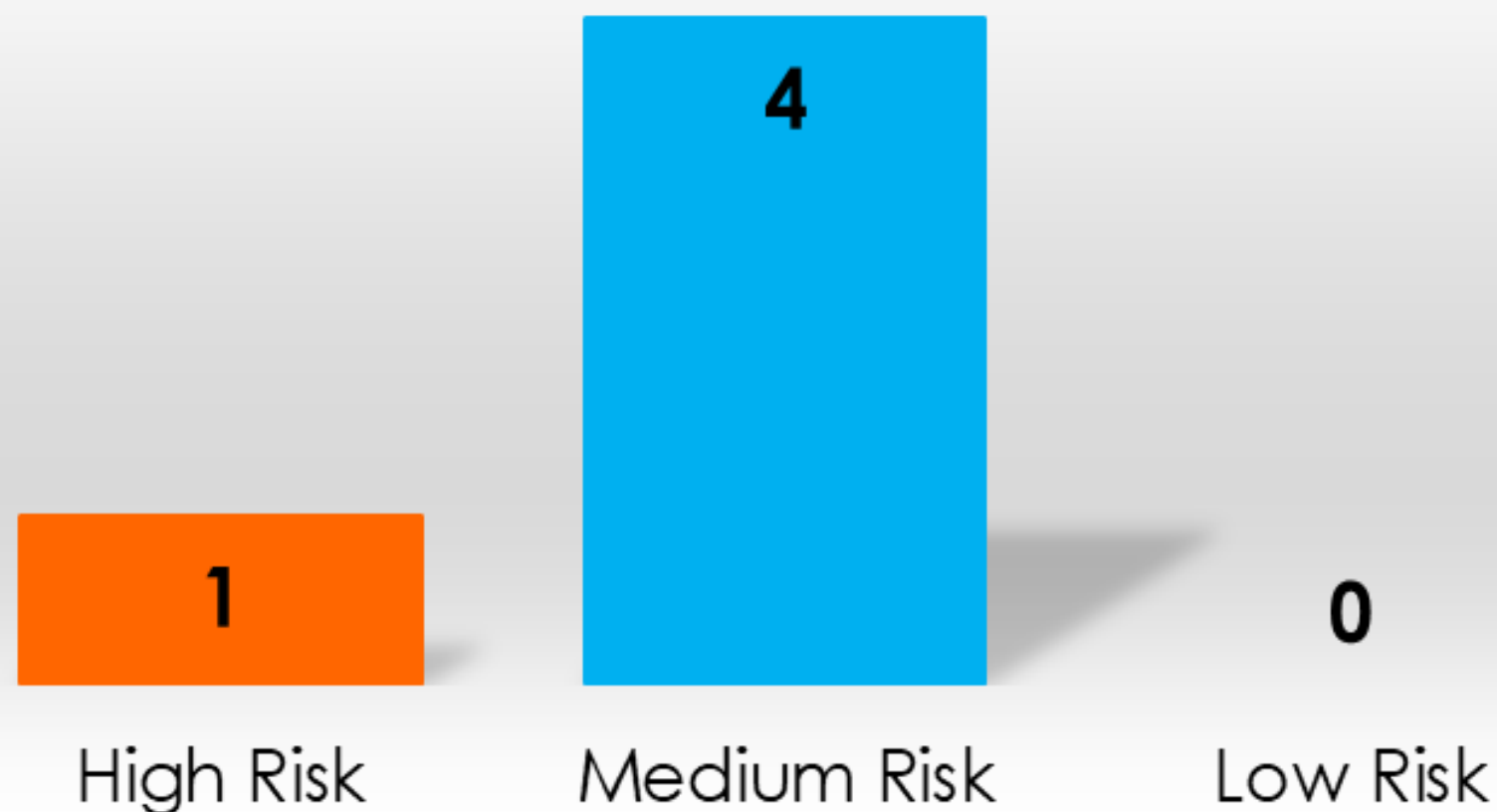
Budget Area		Budget	Forecast	Variance	
		£	£	£	%
1	Commissioning & Social Work	4,247,760	4,195,578	52,182	1.23
2	Children Looked After	7,314,350	8,790,710	(1,476,360)	(20.18)
3	Family Support Services	203,070	203,071	(1)	0
4	Youth Justice	276,080	276,023	57	0
5	Other Children's and Family Services	2,537,840	2,632,040	(94,200)	(3.71)
6	Older People Aged 65 and Over	8,034,610	7,776,765	257,845	3.21
7	Adults under 65 with Physical Disabilities	7,880	7,880	0	0
8	Adults under 65 with Learning Disabilities	4,015,310	3,840,820	174,490	4.35
9	Adults under 65 with Mental Health Needs	560,690	549,855	10,835	1.93
10	Other Adult Services	434,760	437,763	(3,003)	(0.69)
11	Community Care	20,007,270	19,651,823	355,447	1.78
12	Support Service & Management Costs	948,740	917,090	31,650	3.34
13	Corporate Recharges	5,803,660	5,803,659	1	0
Grand Total		54,392,020	55,083,076	(691,056)	

How we do what we do - Risks

In line with the Council's Risk Management Strategy Department Leadership Team review and challenge the risks on the Directorate Risk Register on a quarterly basis. As part of this process, they will consider new risks for inclusion on to the Directorate Risk Register and consider risks for escalation to the Corporate Risk Register.

The Social Services Directorate Risk Register has 5 risks, with 1 having a high residual status and the remaining 4 being medium status. These risks are detailed below and mitigating actions are in place

Social Services Directorate Risks



- There is a risk that increasingly complex needs and demand for services provided by Social Services and Education in particular for Looked After Children, will put further significant pressure on the Council's budget
- Safeguarding - Failure to ensure adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people in Blaenau Gwent.
- There is a risk that identified staffing pressures in social services will result in an inability to deliver services particularly in provider services and domiciliary care.
- Failure to improve attendance rates within Provider services will lead to an unacceptable impact on the ability to deliver services effectively.
- Instability and sustainability of the provider care home and domiciliary care market

How we do what we do - Complaints

Number of complaints received in children's services and some examples of complaints received

From 1st April 2023 to 30th September 2023 in children's services there were 4 stage 1 complaints and 2 stage 2 complaints (the 2 stage 2 complaints are both on-going investigations).

Complaints

- o Lack of communication, documents not provided in a timely manner, lack of clarity to whether photographs of injuries are required for Child Protection Enquires
- o Workers who visited family did not introduce themselves or provide identity of who they were
- o Limited communication and engagement from social services, lack of support and advice
- o Lack of professional conduct, social services not listening to the views of family members

2023/2024 examples of learning identified and actioned within Childrens services

- o Staff are reminded of the importance via supervision and training sessions of the importance of communication with families
- o Staff are reminded of the importance of sending out documents within the relevant timeframe
- o Recommendation to develop procedures relating to the use of photographs in Child Protection Enquires so that there is a clear practice structure which can be used as a point of reference for Local Authority staff as well as any other agency e.g. childcare/education settings
- o Recommendation that managers with case management responsibility remain vigilant to the allocation of work to practitioners where this is a planned absence from work as this will likely impact on the quality of engagement with families due to the lack of physical presence for visits/communication.
- o Staff are reminded of the importance of signposting families to access advice from other agencies e.g. citizens advice, etc. when there are new arrangements in place such as caring for a relative as part of a family arrangement

Number of complaints received in adults services and some examples of complaints received

From 1st April 2023 to 30th September 2023 in adults services there were no complaints received.

Chapter 5 - Looking forward / Areas for progression

Delivery and monitoring of the overarching departmental / corporate priorities (See page 9) continues daily in order to provide effective services to our citizens. To assist effective delivery of these overarching priorities, specific areas for progression have been highlighted throughout this report to support our continual monitoring of performance and are detailed below:-

- Continue to deliver our workforce strategy whilst giving due consideration to necessary staffing improvements highlighted in complaint feedback ie communication /clarification and identification/clear practice structure / timeliness /continuity of staff /partnership working and engagement;
- Continue to implement the children looked after strategy and monitor numbers to ensure a downward trend;
- Deliver and monitor the Information, Advice and Assistance action plan to meet demand in the most efficient way;
- Deliver improvements detailed in staff survey action plan and repeat survey next year to measure the progress that has made;
- Continue to work on recruitment and retention strategies;
- Progress the exploration of partnership working with neighbouring authorities to include a joint mentor scheme for staff with Caerphilly CBC in order to extend our learning and development opportunities and Bettercare occupational therapy opportunities with Torfaen County Borough Council ;
- Carry out a further review of commissioned providers care fees to assess the impact in view of the current cost of living and inflationary pressures;
- Budget and Grant consideration to continue and improvement proposals to be scoped and implemented;
- Deliver recommended improvements following all Care Inspectorate Wales and Audit Wales Inspections;
- Work towards meeting target of all children having a trauma nurture timeline prior to adoption;
- Continued delivery of Gwent Dementia Action Plan and progress development of centre of excellence for dementia care at Cwrt Mytton;
- Improve on timelines for delivering foster care reviews;
- Need to identify a life journey work champion for Blaenau Gwent;
- Analysis of increase in child protection numbers to be considered as part of Q2 Child Protection report by Safeguarding manager;
- Child protection conferences to be more strongly aligned with outcome focussed practice;
- Progress suggestion that Section 16 social enterprises self assessment tool be used on a regional basis to give us a Gwent picture and enable us to progress this area of work further; and
- Following the outcome of both the SLT and regional report, Draft a project plan to take forward the digital switchover in Blaenau Gwent.
- Further work needs to be done around the numbers in receipt of assistive technology ensuring that system is up to date.



Chapter 6 - 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/en/council/policies-plans-strategies/blaenau-gwent-corporate-plan-2022-27/>
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/>

Balancing Rights and Responsibilities Programme Evaluation, October 2022



Appendix B.docx

Internal Audit Corporate Safeguarding Report
Audit Wales Safeguarding Report <https://www.audit.wales/publication/blaenau-gwent-county-borough-council-corporate-safeguarding-follow>
Safeguarding Performance Report April 2022 – June 2022 <https://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/documents/s12813/Appendix%201.pdf?LLL=0>

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 Blynyddol 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