

Social Services

Annual Report of the Director

Quarter 1 & 2 – 2019.20

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Director's Overview

After another challenging year in 2018/19, we are anticipating another difficult and challenging year ahead. The first half of the year has seen progress on a number of fronts; the Action Plan following the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection report for Blaenau Gwent Council in July 2018 has been progressed with a small number of actions remaining to be completed; the Strategy to Safely Reduce the Number of Children Looked After is showing some promising signs; the joint procurement with Caerphilly for domiciliary care providers has provided some resilience and officers from Blaenau Gwent have led on a co-produced commissioning strategy for advocacy for adults.

The Strategy to Safely Reduce the Number of Children Looked After 2017-2020 continues and the Supporting Change Team has been externally evaluated and shown to both prevent children going into care and been able to support some children leave care and return home successfully, this has resulted in the team being made permanent. The Family Group Conference Service has now been established to enable families to meet together, to find solutions to problems that they and their children are facing within a professionally supportive framework. The Special Guardianship Order Support Team (SGO) are also now in place and fully functional with a very clear core offer to support SGO arrangements with already good positive feedback received from families, partners and court. My Support Team (MyST) is also fully embedded and beginning to reduce the number of children in residential placements, they are also delivering practice consultations and foster carer clinics which has received very positive feedback from practitioners.

The joint procurement for Support at Home Services has continued to progress well with the procurement exercise now complete and contracts awarded with 10 providers now able to work within Blaenau Gwent giving the authority more resilience. All existing providers have been successful with the addition of 5 new providers with the new framework commencing from October 2019. A co-produced commissioning strategy, entitled 'Our Vision and Intentions for Adults Advocacy, 2019-24', has now been completed and will be launched in October 2019 and the new advocacy helpline, Gwent Access to Advocacy (GATA), was also launched and rolled out to Social Workers and Information, Advice and Assistance teams in Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire. This is a great step forward in deliver advocacy to adults across Blaenau Gwent.

The Transformation Programme to support the continued development of a 'seamless system' of care, support and wellbeing in Gwent, in response to the Welsh Government's new long term plan for health and social care 'A Healthier Wales' has seen progress. The SPACE Well-being (Single Point of Access for Children's Emotional Well-being and Mental Health) Programme hosted by Families First have shown early indications that the mental health needs of children and young people are being assessed early with the right agency taking the lead on providing the most appropriate interventions.

Compassionate Communities is also part of the Transformation Programme that aims to improve the well-being of people across Gwent. Work includes the development of IAA outreach across the Compassionate Communities within 11 GP practices and also at community and acute hospital sites, where initial positive outcomes have been reported. Compassionate Communities also includes Community Connectors actively participating in Multi-Disciplinary Team discussions and hospital discharge follow up phone calls.

The new model in the Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) Team has embedded well across the operational teams within both adults and children's with clearly scoped out roles and responsibilities. The Police now have a presence within the Children's IAA team which further strengthens their response time for safeguarding referrals. A Performance Review Annual Letter has been received from the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) which identified how service users, attending Cwm Coch, described Social Workers as very supportive and accessible. They also identified how the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service with partners had embraced the 'what matters' conversations, evidencing the MIND workers interface with the Police, Women's Aid and Cwm Coch hospital, as well as the emotional support via telephone, signposting to relevant services and cascading information within the team they provide.

Extensive work has been on-going to plan for the launch of the new Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) during Safeguarding week 11th to 14th November 2019. The Project Board responsible for the new procedures are in the process of implementing a communications strategy comprising of 3 stages: pre-launch; launch; and post launch training. Two launch events are due to take place during Safeguarding Week. A new pilot to tackle food poverty during school holidays, 'Holiday Hunger' was rolled out during the summer holidays 2019 and was delivered via the children and youth play schemes. The scheme is currently being evaluated.

Finally, Social Services budgets have been under pressure in recent years particularly as a result of the sustained increase in the number of Children Looked After, this pressure continued to impact on the budget situation within Children's Services over spending by £961K in 2018/19. There has been an additional £750K added to the Children's Services base budget to cover this pressure and considerable work has commenced with the budget currently standing at £150K under spend at the end of September 2019.

Key Statistics from Quarter 2



54.9%

Proportion of Children's Services cases supported by preventative services

225

Number of Looked After Children



Rate of older people in residential & nursing home care per 1,000 population aged 65 or over

15.26



0.33

The rate of delayed transfers of care per 1,000 population aged 75 and over



Local Political Leadership, Governance and Accountability

The structure of the Social Services Directorate provides clear levels of management and accountability; this is shown on page 5. As a whole the Council has a clear governance and accountability framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. This framework is reflected on page 6 and shows how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'.

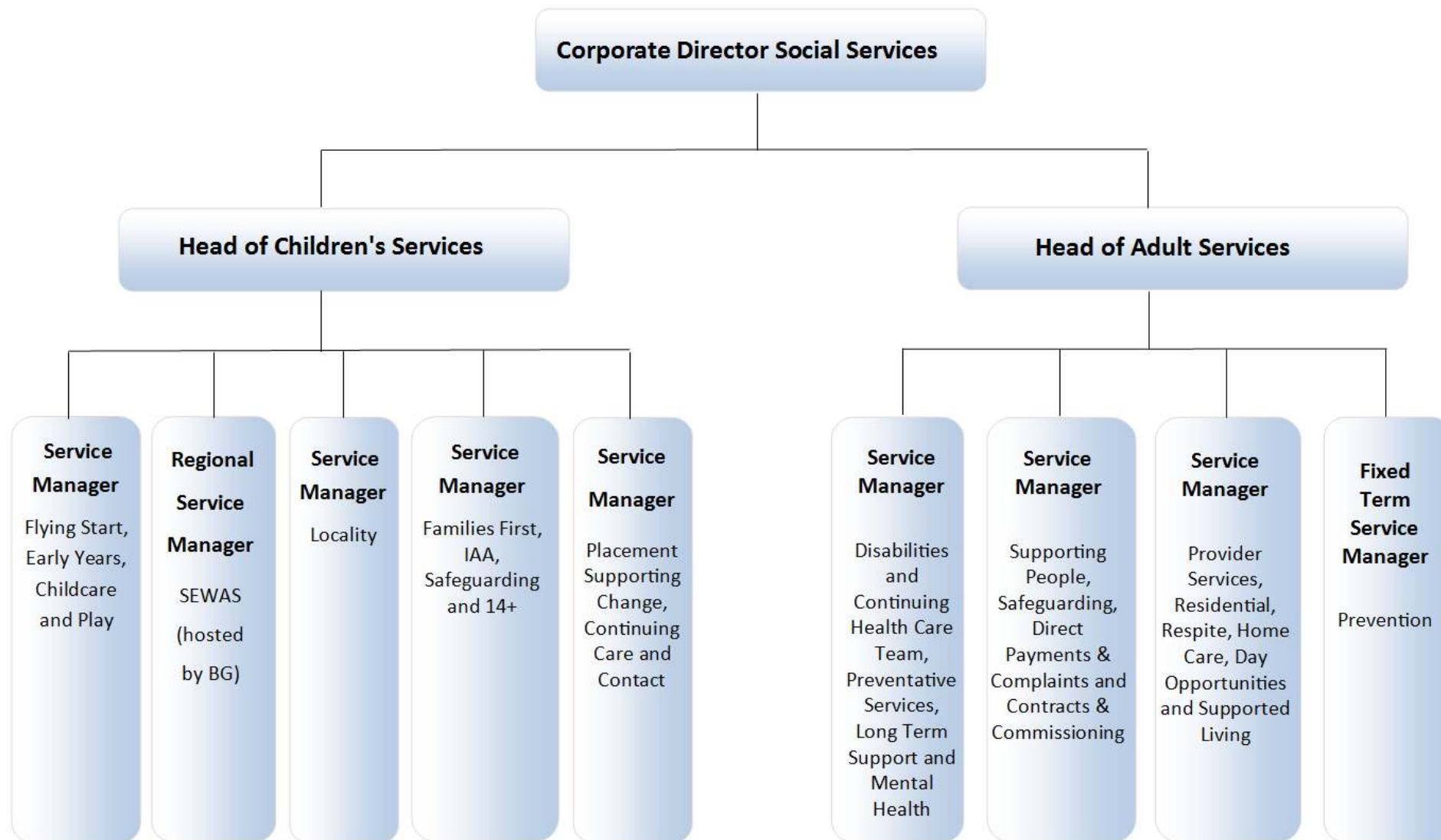
Making improvements and maintaining standards in the current difficult financial times remains a challenge, therefore it is more important than ever to focus the Council's priorities and resources on the areas that matter most to the community. The priorities for the Social Services Directorate are found on page 7 and monitoring of these is included throughout the document.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate for 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. The Directorate has one Executive Member who has portfolio responsibility for Social Services as a whole. The Directorate is scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

Blaenau Gwent 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. We work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. Some Social Services collaboration includes:

- Joint Partnership and Workforce Development Service with Caerphilly;
- 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);
- Gwent Mental Health & Learning Disabilities Partnership Team;
- South East Wales Improvement Collaboration -4C's (SEWIC);
- Gwent Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Team;
- Greater Gwent Health, Social Care and Well-being Partnership;
- Gwent Regional Collaborative (RCC) - Supporting People;
- Gwent wide agreement with National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide children's advocacy services; and
- Greater Gwent Workforce Development Board.

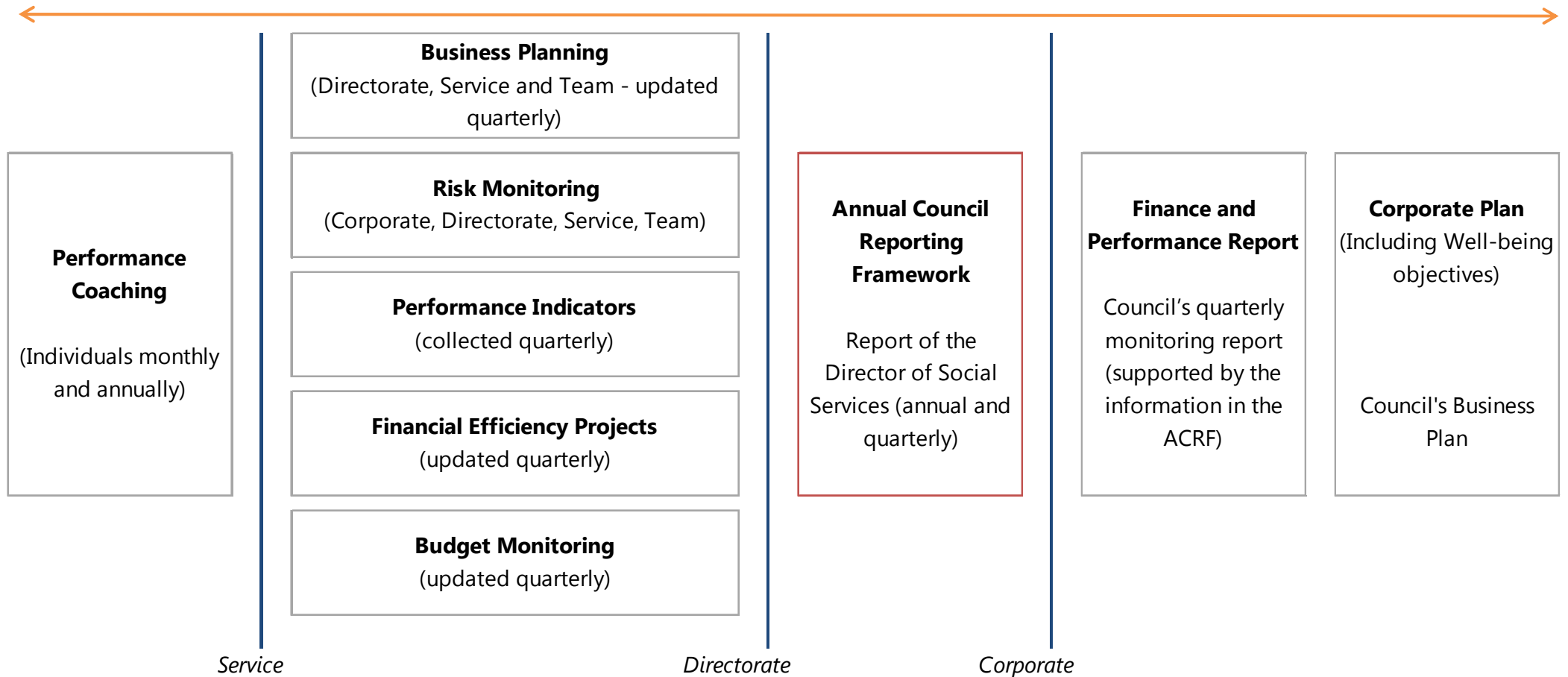
Social Services Directorate Structure



Governance and Performance Framework

The Council has in place a Performance Management Improvement Framework that sets out requirements for performance monitoring and improvement across all services and teams. 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.

Golden Thread - How information is reported through the organisation



Departmental Priorities 2019/20 – What we are trying to achieve

Departmental Priorities 2018/22 (To be reviewed annually)

- To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own well-being.
- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them.
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater.
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support.
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities.
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.
- To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of poverty.
- To ensure effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the Council's financial resilience.
- Ensure long-term sustainability is at the forefront of our thinking and decision-making, enabling us to work better with people, communities and each other, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

Children's Services Priorities 2018/22 (To be reviewed annually)

- Enhance screening and IAA provision (Front door) – Children.
- Support and encourage a cultural change across Children's Services by ensuring that community members have a say in what matters to them.
- Implementation of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy.
- Implement the Safe reduction of looked after children Strategy 2017-2020.
- Improve outcomes for Looked after Children.
- To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements.
- All teams to ensure the children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded.
- Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget.
- Children's Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles.
- Ensure that all children in Blaenau Gwent have the best start in life (Early years)

Adult Services Priorities 2018/22 (To be reviewed annually)

- Enhance screening and IAA Adult Services support at our front door - in line with recommendations within the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014.
- Support and encourage a cultural change across Adult Services by ensuring that citizens have a say in what matters to them.
- Ensure that preventative support is available to citizens - promoting personal independence and reducing dependencies.
- Ensure that we provide / commission modern, high quality care and support provision that meet both current and future well-being needs of our citizens.
- To develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes.
- Ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded.
- Develop and maximise opportunities for partnership working across Welsh Government Flexibilities Grants and Welfare Reform related programmes.
- Manage the Adult Services core budget and grant programmes to ensure that expenditure comes within budget.
- Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles.
- Support our local environment; the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and our duty as a council and as an Adult Services Department

Quality Standards 2019/20

Social Services work to undertake actions in order to help people to achieve well-being. The Quality Standards below describe the activities of Social Services that contribute to the achievement of well-being. These activities must be undertaken in order to discharge duties under the Act and secure well-being for people who need care and support and carers who need support.

Quality Standard 1 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.

Self-Assessment –

The new model in the Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) Team has embedded well across the operational teams, with clearly scoped out roles and responsibilities. The Police now have a presence within the IAA which further strengthens their response time for safeguarding referrals to be dealt with within the timescales required under the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. Negotiations are ongoing where it is hoped an education representative will also be co-located into the IAA Team in order to ensure that the requirements under the safeguarding procedures are realised.

The National Youth Advocacy Service is now in a position to offer independent visitors as part of their advocacy service and are in attendance at Children Looked After reviews, Child Protection Conferences and Secure Review Meetings.

Over the course of Carers week, awareness raising events and activities took place in venues across the borough along with an information and advice session for Carers of people with learning disabilities. These were all delivered and supported by the Carers Lead Officer, GP Engagement Officers and the Voluntary Sector such as Carers Trust Service / Age Cymru.

A co-produced commissioning strategy, titled 'Our Vision and Intentions for Adults Advocacy, 2019-24', has now been completed and will be launched in October 2019 and the new advocacy helpline, Gwent Access to Advocacy (GATA), was also launched and rolled out to Social Workers and Information, Advice and Assistance teams in Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire.

Compassionate Communities is a Welsh Government transformation funded programme that aims to improve the well-being of people across Gwent. Work includes the development of IAA outreach across the Compassionate Communities within 11 GP practices and also at community and acute hospital sites, where initial positive outcomes have been reported. Compassionate Communities also includes Community Connectors actively participating in Multi-Disciplinary Team discussions and hospital discharge follow up phone calls. Bids have been submitted to Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to extend service provision over the winter months to support winter discharges and pressures around potential Delayed Transfers of Care.

Quality Standard 2 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support and relevant partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being.

Self-Assessment –

The SPACE Well-being (Single Point of Access for Children's Emotional Well-being and Mental Health) Programme is hosted by Families First and early indications show that the mental health needs of children and young people are being assessed early with the right agency taking the lead on providing the most appropriate interventions. At the end of quarter 2, 313 referrals had been received into the SPACE Well-being panel since the service started in April 2019.

A new service is available to young people who are struggling with their mental health and emotional well-being. This has been advertised on the Blaenau Gwent website to provide an understanding of the services available to young people across Gwent. The website features a wealth of information suitable for young people themselves, parents and carers, and professionals working with children and young people.

When the Mental Capacity Act 2019 is implemented it will provide 'Liberty Protection Safeguards' (LPS) - a new system to replace the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS). It is expected to be implemented in spring 2020 and guidance regarding this has been circulated to staff. A task and finish group has been set up to look at what needs to be done Gwent wide in order to prepare for the introduction of The Liberty Protection Safeguards Policy. Multi-agency work is necessary to ensure all staff in all settings have the appropriate training and information around Liberty Protection Safeguards as this will impact on all agencies.

A newly recruited Adult Mental Health Practitioner is currently being shadowed and the mental health Shared Lives Project has gone live offering adults in need of care and support the opportunity to be supported in a friendly, homely environment within the local community.

A Performance Review Annual Letter has been received from the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) which identified how service users, attending Cwm Coch, described Social Workers as very supportive and accessible. They also identified how the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service with partners had embraced the 'what matters' conversations, evidencing the MIND workers interface with the Police, Women's Aid and Cwm Coch hospital, as well as the emotional support via telephone, signposting to relevant services and cascading information within the team they provide.

Quality Standard 3 - Local Authorities must take appropriate steps to protect and safeguard people who need care and support and carers who need support from abuse and neglect or any other kinds of harm.

Self-Assessment –

Work continues to ensure that DBS Compliance for Children's Services is in place and extensive work has started to plan for the launch of the new Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) during Safeguarding week 11th to 14th November 2019. The Project Board responsible for the new procedures are in the process of implementing a communications strategy comprising of 3 stages: pre-launch; launch; and post launch training. Two launch events are due to take place during Safeguarding Week and the Safeguarding Procedures Training Group have also produced a FAQ sheet identifying key changes for practitioners during launch week. Other support materials include a video and user friendly marketing leaflets.

Barnardo's "Open closed door" program continues to provide services to 20 families in Blaenau Gwent, including young people and children who are exposed to domestic violence. The sexual exploitation risk assessment framework (SERAF) document to assess Child Sexual Exploitation is under review and its likely replacement is currently being piloted by Newport City Council.

A participation event has been held with the Local Authorities to explore the view of the older Children Looked After (CLA) population in the use of language by the department. This follows feedback on an event held in England where CLA highlighted derogatory terms used in CLA case recordings/documents etc. The outcome of the event is imminent and findings will be reported and changes made accordingly.

SEWAS have a steady flow of enquires but still not enough adopters to meet the demands for the number of children being referred to the service, particularly those children with complex needs. The rolling recruitment strategy to maximise the number of adopters available continues. This year, in addition to attendance at all major events, SEWAS were present at the Pride of Gwent awards and have repeated advertisements on Congress theatre tickets, radio and social media activity. There are now additional priorities to aid recruitment i.e. a standalone website, embedding the new adoption register and implementing the new stage 1 and 2 process for assessment. These should improve recruitment and the timeliness of assessments. SEWAS continue to work in collaboration with voluntary adoption agencies to avoid delay for children.

Regular risk management meetings are held as part of any safeguarding or care and support planning interventions. These meetings are multi-agency and are very effective in preventing young people's needs escalating. This model is underpinned by the principles as outlined in the safe reduction of CLA strategy and in applying the strengths based model of practice.

Quality Standard 4 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support to learn, develop and participate in society.

Self-Assessment –

The Childcare Offer is now fully rolled out and exploration into why some parents are not accessing the offer is likely to take place shortly.

A new pilot to tackle food poverty during school holidays, 'Holiday Hunger' was rolled out during the summer holidays 2019 and was delivered via the children and youth play schemes. Questionnaires are currently being collated and evaluated in order to feedback to the Welsh Government as well as the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) who are piloting a model of intervention for adopted children in schools, the work is still in its infancy but going well.

The Safeguarding /Children Looked After (CLA) Education Team are developing a framework for CLA child friendly schools, which will include a good practice guide and self-evaluation tool for schools. The task and finish group comprising of representatives from Social Services, Education and schools has met with a focus on questions for consultation with young people and training to raise awareness of CLA for whole school staffing groups.

Main focus of activity has been the supporting of the ABUHB Compassionate Communities work stream. To date this has been positive and work is ongoing to develop a sustainable social care model within the GP surgeries. This is in addition to the usual Community Connectors presence at the GP waiting areas working to re-connect people back into their communities. The Community Connectors also work with many groups and organisations within communities to help people find activities and groups that can benefit their own well-being. The team manager IAA and lead connector are also participating in the overarching project board on the Neighbourhood Care Network foot print.

Quality Standard 5 - Local Authorities must support local people who need care and support and carers who need support to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.

Self-Assessment –

Welsh Government investment monies are being used to improve the current service provision within the South East Wales Adoption Services (SEWAS). There is now increased capacity in the service to deliver more direct work, birth parent support, sibling contact and improving adoption support plans. A number of additional posts have been developed including a dedicated social work post to improve 'life journey' work, a TESSA (therapeutic educational support services in adoption) psychology post to provide peer support for adopters and capacity has also been increased to implement a young person's service to ensure the voice of children can be heard.

The Supporting Change Team has continued working with families in order to prevent children coming into Local Authority care, support rehabilitation to birth families or prevent foster placements breakdown. The Family Group Conference Service is now active and enables families to meet together, to find solutions to problems that they and their children are facing, within a professionally supportive framework.

The Special Guardianship Order Support Team (SGO) is now in place and fully functional with a very clear core offer and strategy to approach SGO arrangements within Blaenau Gwent. The team and their services have already received positive feedback from families, partners and court and are in the process of delivering further awareness sessions for Blaenau Gwent staff.

My Support Team (MyST) is also fully embedded and, alongside direct work for a limited number of cases, MyST has also started delivering practice consultations and foster carer clinics with very positive feedback from practitioners. Respite with Local Authority foster carers is increasingly used as a strategy to prevent children becoming looked after with an increase of referrals from the previous quarter.

Memory drives have been purchased in order for children in care aged 10-18 to have access to equipment to store life story information (photos, films, other memories) with support from their carers. These have been provided to either foster carers or social workers for children in Independent Fostering Agencies, or residential placements, with a clear message regarding their use and purpose.

Quality Standard 6 - Local Authorities must work with and support people who need care and support and carers who need to support to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

Self-Assessment –

A Performance Review annual letter from the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) was published which highlighted the joint working with Monmouthshire on the MyST team as well as the commitment to return children from residential care to live closer to home.

Discussions are currently ongoing within the Housing Solutions Team to determine if an out of hour's service is required for the Housing First Scheme.

Independent Reviewing Officer's continue to face challenges when reviewing a child's Care Plan in relation to movements from Residential Placements to Foster Care. These challenges include a lack of suitable placements, a lack of robust planning in relation to introductions to new Foster Carers, geographical distances between residential placement and foster carers and children who have been in a residential placement for a long period of time (as some find it difficult to adapt to moving to foster care and establishing 'normal' family relationships as the child does not always want to leave the residential placement).

The joint procurement for Support at Home Services has continued to progress well with a further event for Providers taking place in Caerphilly's Council Chamber to support those considering or wishing to submit a bid. The procurement exercise i.e. evaluations; selections; presentations and interviews has now been concluded and contract award letters have been issued to 10 providers for Blaenau Gwent. All existing providers have been successful with the addition of 5 new providers. Plans are now in place to meet with all providers and social workers ready to commence the new framework from October 2019.

The Housing Support Grant is an important early intervention grant programme which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation, or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation. The new Housing Support Grant Guidance which sets out the governance framework for local authorities to operate and administer the grant is out for consultation until 29th November 2019.

Children's Services Priorities

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Enhance screening and IAA provision (Front door) – Children.	As the IAA team are the front door for children's services it is crucial it is appropriately staffed to meet service demand. The view of the Service Manager overseeing the IAA Team is that the current team is under resourced. The Head of Service has asked for a report on workload activity to evidence the work of the team which will assist further discussion in relation the resources required to ensure timely decision making within the team.	Green	Amber		
Support and encourage a cultural change across Children's Services by ensuring that community members have a say in what matters to them.	<p>An internal case audit was devised in September 2019 with the theme, 'The Voice of the Child'. A total of 18 cases were randomly chosen and each case audit was completed by a Team Manager and/or Senior Practitioner, and IRO. The findings will be reported in October 2019.</p> <p>The Safeguarding /CLA education team are developing a framework for CLA child friendly schools, which will include a good practice guide and self-evaluation tool for schools. A task and finish group has been established whereby it was agreed that the child's voice should help inform these documents and it was agreed for NYAS to support this work.</p> <p>Progress has been made in terms of consultation with foster carers and a questionnaire is under development and due to be sent out prior to Christmas. Information Sharing Groups for foster carers continue to include consultation on a variety of topics giving the carers an opportunity to influence policies and procedures and further strategic work in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>Monthly meetings continue with mentors for outcome focused work and there is evidence of change in practice. Each team is able to bring examples of use in practice of specific tools that enable and empower families to be included more in the decision making process and intervention from SSD. Children's senior management team recognise the need to further embed this outcomes approach and are planning a workshop with Team Managers to create a plan to achieve this</p>	Green	Green		

Children's Services Priorities

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Implementation of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy	<p>The prevention and early intervention strategy is in the first 6 months of its 3 year delivery plan. There is still a significant amount of work to be done to achieve the objectives of this strategy. Owing to developments with the flexibilities grant and Children and Communities Grant (CCG) from Welsh Government, there are significant changes to be made which need to be captured as part of this strategy.</p> <p>The actions under the strategy will be reviewed in Quarter 3 to include the work of the CCG.</p>	Amber	Amber		
Implement the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy 2017-2020.	<p>Significant progress continues to be made under the CLA reduction strategy. The strategy is being independently evaluated by Worcester University. We expect the evaluation report to be ready early in Quarter 4 which will support the development of the new CLA reduction strategy which will come into being in the summer of 2020.</p>	Green	Green		
Improve outcomes for Looked after Children.	<p>The 2019/20 Corporate parenting action plan continues to be implemented. The corporate parenting board met in Quarter 2 and focussed on 2 specific areas. These included the work the MyST Team were doing in Blaenau Gwent and the work being done under the National Foster Framework not only in Blaenau Gwent but regionally and nationally.</p> <p>A full progress on MyST is due to be presented to scrutiny committee in Quarter 4.</p>	Green	Green		
To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements.	<p>Monthly meetings continue with mentors for outcome focused work and there is evidence of change in practice. This enables families to be empowered so that they are included more in the decision making process and intervention from Social Services.</p> <p>Information Sharing Groups for foster carers continue to include consultation on a variety of topics giving the carers an opportunity to influence policies and procedures and further strategic work in Blaenau Gwent. Evaluation of SCT was completed and an Action Plan was developed to implement the recommendations of this report. Progress has been made already with an anticipated completion by Christmas.</p>	Green	Green		

Children's Services Priorities

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
All teams to ensure the children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded.	<p>The all Wales Child Protection Procedures has been under review for some years. The new procedures are now complete and will be launched during early November 2019. A dissemination plan will be drafted by the safeguarding manager to ensure the procedures are understood and adhered too. The SERAF document to assess CSE is also under review and its likely replacement is currently being piloted by Newport City Council.</p> <p>An update on the action plan developed as a result of the CIW 2018 inspection was presented to scrutiny committee in quarter 2. This demonstrated good progress on the 9 recommendations made. 4 of the recommendations have been fully completed. Good progress and been made on the remaining 5 with a plan that full completion is achieved by the beginning of quarter 4.</p>	Green	Green		
Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget.	Due to the work of the MyST Team the numbers of children in residential care have decreased to 14 as at 30.9.19, however sadly we do have 1 child in secure accommodation	Green	Green		

Children's Services Priorities

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Children's Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles.	<p>The successful implementation of the Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy will lead to more positive outcomes for children on a number of levels. It will prevent children coming into care in the first place due to the work under the strategy. For those children who do come into care they will have more local placement choices enabling them to maintain attendance at their local school and contact with family and friends.</p> <p>Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation) There is extensive involvement with the children and families we work with. Their views are gathered through a number of avenues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Youth Advocacy Service; • Formally seeking their views following interventions from the supporting change team; • Formally seeking their views at each review of their plan. <p>Thinking for the Long term (forward planning) The Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy is 2 years into its 3-year lifetime. An independent evaluation is underway which will shape an amended strategy by June 2020.</p> <p>Preventative focus A large part of the Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy has a preventative focus.</p> <p>Collaboration / partnership working / Integration A number of the actions under the Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy rely on partnership working. Senior managers and staff have good working relationships with our partners which will support us in achieving the actions.</p>	Green	Green		
Ensure that all children in Blaenau Gwent have the best start in life (Early Years)	This is a new priority and more work is required.	Amber	Amber		

Children's Services Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator Description	Outturn 2018/19	Performance 2019/20				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Trend
Number of children on Child Protection Register	56	70	61	-	-	↑
Rate of Children on the Child Protection Register per 10,000 population	41	52	45	-	-	↑
The percentage of re-registrations of children on local authority Child Protection Registers (CPR)	1.87%	3.39%	4.12%	-	-	↓
The average length of time for all children who were on the CPR during the year	277	278	284	-	-	↓
Number of children looked after	222	220	225	-	-	↓
Rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 population	164	162	166	-	-	↓
The percentage of looked after children who have had three or more placements during the year	8.11%	7.3%	9.8%	-	-	↓
Proportion of children's services cases supported by preventative services	57%	61%	54.9%	-	-	↓
Percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support – children	43%	24.5%	44.6%	-	-	↓
Percentage of referrals signposted to preventative services (children)	12.8%	12.8%	13.7%	-	-	↑

Children's Services Case Studies

Safeguarding

Personal History

Child A is a child looked after, residing with foster carers. Child A has experienced significant instability in their foster placement but has been with their current carer for approximately two years.

Situation and Current Needs

Child A moved school in line with their long term care plan, enabling them to attend a school closer to their foster placement. Soon after transition to their new school, Child A started experiencing some difficulties and staff found it challenging to respond to some presenting behaviours. Child A quickly experienced fixed term exclusions and this placed significant pressure on the foster placement. A reduced timetable was implemented and this was supplemented by respite care from Children's Services and enhanced CLA mentoring session. This contributed to the foster placement being maintained during this period.

Support Received

At an early stage of the transition, it was agreed that there should be a statutory assessment of educational need. Just prior to receipt of the statement of educational need, Child A received a further exclusion and the school was clear it was unable to meet the required need.

The statement outlined that Child A should receive part-time additional support in school.

CLA education team advocated for a greater level of support than was initially proposed. This was agreed and whilst awaiting a suitable school placement, the child received an alternative package of education.

Outcome Achieved

Child A has now transitioned to an alternative mainstream secondary school, with part-time support and a statement of special educational needs. Careful transition planning has taken place and Child A has settled well, is attending school regularly and is on a full timetable with no further exclusions.

Future Plans

To remain in current foster placement and continue to attend a mainstream school setting.

Adult Services Priorities

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Enhance screening and IAA Adult Services support at our front door - in line with recommendations within the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014.	<p>Core business continues within our IAA teams and further enhancement has included the development of IAA outreach at our Community and Acute hospital sites. The wider strategic priority developments, sponsored by the Integrated Partnership Board during 2019/20 include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Development of an integrated Health and Social Care IAA team; 2) Compassionate Communities - commenced work stream as part of the integrated approaches to IAA within GP surgeries, including the increasing of social care presence; and 3) Integrated Well-being Networks (IWN) - We are currently strategically mapping our community resources via the transformation Integrated Well-being Networks. <p>The progress of our IAA work stream has been shared with Care Inspectorate Wales as part of our 6 monthly reviews.</p>	Green	Green		
Support and encourage a cultural change across Adult Services by ensuring that citizens have a say in what matters to them	<p>The key strategic actions for this priority for 2019/ 20 confirmed by Adults Departmental Team and the Integrated Partnership Board are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Confirmation and embedding of an enhanced advocacy programme (Gwent region); 2) Final review of hospital discharge service, including the potential expansion of Home First and regional approach to discharge; and 3) Continuation of cultural changes through initiatives across Adult Services. These include a new quality assurance process and a new senior practitioner post in IAA to influence care management processes and changes across provider teams in line with RISCA regulations and outcomes of recent CIW inspections. <p>The Gwent Advocacy project has gone live in Blaenau Gwent during quarter 2 and we are progressing a CIW engagement event for quarter 3 where citizens will be provided with an opportunity to discuss how, when and where interaction with Social Care should be. We continue to work with colleagues across Health, Social Care and the Third Sector to promote the importance of personal well-being and independence.</p>	Green	Green		

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Ensure that preventative support is available to citizens - promoting personal independence and reducing dependencies.	<p>The key strategic actions for this priority for 2019/ 20 confirmed by Adults Departmental Team and the Integrated Partnership Board include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the finalising of the Prevention Strategy - due December 19; and 2. the reconfiguration of the IAA / prevention teams. <p>This work commenced during quarters 1 and 2 with a review of the current IAA staffing structure, the appointment of additional support worker staff and links to the Compassionate Communities work streams.</p>	Green	Green		
Ensure that we provide / commission modern, high quality care and support provision that meet both current and future well-being needs of our citizens.	<p>The key strategic actions for this priority for 2019/ 20 confirmed by Adults Departmental Team and the Integrated Partnership Board include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the commissioning of a new domiciliary care service in conjunction with Caerphilly County Borough Council; and 2) Gwent partnership working to develop a Gwent wide approach to commissioning of care home placements - section 33 agreement/ pooled budget. <p>New domiciliary care tender has been completed and will commence 1st October 2019. The department has submitted a number of new Integrated Care Fund bids for consideration by the Regional Partnership Board panels which will enable us to 'test' new initiatives and ways of working during 2019/20 and 2020/21.</p> <p>Commissioning report (summary) for both Social Care and Supporting People has been submitted to SMT and will be tabled within the Social Services Scrutiny Committee information pack in October 2019.</p>	Green	Green		

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
To develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes.	<p>The key strategic actions for this priority for 2019/ 20 confirmed by Adults Departmental Team and the Integrated Partnership Board are mainly via the use of testing / experiments of alternative service models of provision via Gwent transformation projects, plus the development of new Blaenau Gwent posts. Adult Services staff are supporting the Bridging the Gap work steam of prevention and early intervention.</p> <p>A number of new initiatives have been implemented which have been developed using alternative models of support. This includes the recruitment to Integrated Care Fund projects 2019/20, including a new post to review alternative day activities across the Gwent region, a post to develop the Blaenau Gwent catering enterprise and a social media lead for Health and Social Care. A social work senior practitioner has commenced in the new training post to embed the 'what matters' work across Prevention Services and we have successfully secured additional capital to enhance our assistive technology offers.</p> <p>We are also developing a Dementia Reablement service which includes the opportunity to support citizens from the point of early diagnosis including support for people with complex dementia's who are residing in Care Homes. We continue to work with Corporate colleagues to remodel our Day Activities / Community Options Service including working with Third Sector partners to develop and enhance our horticulture service.</p>	Green	Green		
Ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded.	<p>The key strategic actions for this priority for 2019/ 20 confirmed by Adults Departmental Team and the Integrated Partnership Board are to ensure that the new All Wales procedures are successfully introduced across Adult Safeguarding.</p> <p>Adults Safeguarding Performance Information for the period from the 1st April 2018 to March 2019 has been submitted to the Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>We are continuing to support the development of the new Safeguarding Guidance which is due to be published during quarter 3. A safeguarding screening project has been developed in conjunction with IAA.</p>	Green	Green		

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Develop and maximise opportunities for partnership working across Welsh Government Flexibilities Grants and Welfare Reform related programmes	<p>The key strategic actions for this priority for 2019/ 20 confirmed by Adults Departmental Team and the Integrated Partnership Board include the ongoing monitoring and review of those grants within the Housing Support Grant (HSG).</p> <p>During the period all grants have been and will continue to be maximised and outcomes monitored in line with the Welsh Government guidance. All returns have been submitted to Welsh Government in line with the grant terms and conditions.</p>	Green	Green		
Manage the Adults Service core budget and grant programmes to ensure that expenditure comes within budget	<p>Integrated Care Fund capital bid and transformation / pacesetter funding for the next phase of the Information, Advice and Assistance and preventative services have been submitted for 2020/21.</p> <p>All budget savings for 2019/20 have been achieved. Budget planning and monitoring meetings have been held for Provider and Care Management teams due to estimated budget pressures for 2019/20 and reduced underspend, and staff are engaged with the Bridging the Gap work streams.</p> <p>Financial impact of Brexit is being scoped.</p>	Green	Green		

Priority Title	Self-Assessment	BRAG			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	<p>Long Term – The CIW inspection of regulated services provides a baseline of where the service areas are currently and where it needs to improve in the future. This is supplemented by internal inspections and longer term aims and objectives identified through robust business planning and regular review.</p> <p>Prevention – Adult Services continues to develop a number of preventative services to ensure that it is fit for future purpose. The preventative focus for regulated provider services is to support people to be as independent as possible for as long as possible, with timely interventions alongside internal and external professionals when required.</p> <p>Integration - integration includes the development of future services in collaboration with neighbouring local authorities, with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and third sector partners. In addition, each provider service area is working together wherever possible sharing resources, expertise, knowledge and learning.</p> <p>Collaboration – collaboration is taking place with the third sector to commission additional housing related support provision and preventative support in the long term teams via SLA's. We are collaborating with our Local Authority and ABUHB partners to develop commissioning arrangements on a Gwent wide footprint to ensure that the Care Home market is sustainable and consistent in its quality and delivery to residents across Gwent. We have developed a (5 LA's) hospital discharge service (Home First) to be funded by the health board and are looking to further expand this other parts of the Health and Social care system.</p> <p>Involvement – We aim to engage with those receiving a service through a range of methods including,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with those receiving a service and visitors. • Discussions with management and staff. • Discussions with visiting professionals. • Follow up telephone conversations where necessary. • Visits to service users in their own homes where applicable. • Up to date Inspection reports are available on line to the general public and prospective users of regulated services. 	Green	Green		

Adult Services Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator Description	Outturn 2018/19	Performance 2019/20				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Trend
Rate of delayed transfer for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 and over	1.16	0.33	0.33	-	-	↔
Rate of older people in residential & nursing home care per 1,000 population aged 65 or over	14.11 (196)	15.34 (213)	15.26 (212)	-	-	↑
The number of adults (aged 18+) receiving a service in the community who receive a direct payment	127	128	122	-	-	↓
Percentage of referrals signposted to preventative services (adults)	7.1%	13%	16.2%	-	-	↑
Proportion of adult services cases supported by preventative services (New)	29.6%	32.2%	33.9%	-	-	↑
Percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within statutory timescales	93.3%	100%	97.9%	-	-	↓
Percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support - adults	64.3%	30.3%	9.5%	-	-	↑

Adult Services Case Studies

Information, Advice and Assistance Team

Personal History

MP is a 68 year old gentleman with some physical ailments owing to a previous stroke. He had recently moved to the area, lives alone and has no family living locally.

MP wanted to get out and about more often but had lost his driving license due to poor vision and was embarrassed by the fact that he now had a catheter.

Situation and Current Needs

A neighbour referred MP to the IAA Team because he was lonely and needed some support to get to his medical appointments. The neighbour receives direct payments herself and felt that MP required a direct payment of approximately 9 hours per week.

Support Received

IAA support worker undertook a couple of home visits with MP – got to know him and what he wanted to achieve. The support worker talked through some options with MP but paid particular attention to who was in MP's social network and would be able to help.

With encouragement MP contacted a good friend who said he would be more than happy to support with these things and even offered to take MP to the local pub every now and again.

MP was really happy with this and said he would feel much more comfortable if he was accompanied by someone he knew and 'trusted with his life.' He was however, worried that the friend would not take any payment for this help – something that was very important to MP as he didn't want to take his friend for granted.

I said why don't you buy him a couple of pints every now and again just to say thank you

MP was also informed about the local stroke association group.

Outcome Achieved

The IAA worker contacted MP again after a couple of weeks – the friend was proving to be an excellent support and MP felt that he needed no further support from IAA at that time.

MP is attending the stroke group and regularly chats to the community connector who also attends.

Managing Our Business

Workforce

Workforce Development activities continue to ensure support for services to:

- embed the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014; and
- implement the workforce related implications of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA).

To maximise collaborative opportunities the Workforce Development Service continues to play a leading role for the Greater Gwent Region. Blaenau Gwent and the joint Workforce Development Service is the host for the regionally awarded Social Care Wales Workforce Development Grant worth £2.016 million to Gwent. The application and financial management of the grant met all requirements and the 2019/20 bid was successful. The business style approach, driven by Blaenau Gwent, is commended by other regions.

Blaenau Gwent has influenced at both a regional and national level and through involvement in major steering and development groups have promoted its positive and forward thinking attitude to its workforce. Current projects include: providing editorial support for the formal assessment process for the new Health and Social Care Qualification Framework, leading a project involving Health to deliver a regional dementia learning framework for Gwent, showcasing the benefits of digital marketing to engage with customers and promote attendance at training events.

The Care Sector workforce continues to have free and open access to a comprehensive range of learning events and learning resources. The 2019/20 training needs analysis has directed particular emphasis on: continuing support for the domiciliary care workforce to register with Social Care Wales, supporting professionals development of outcome focused skills and practice, and preparing for changes to Safeguarding Procedures and Liberty Protection Safeguards

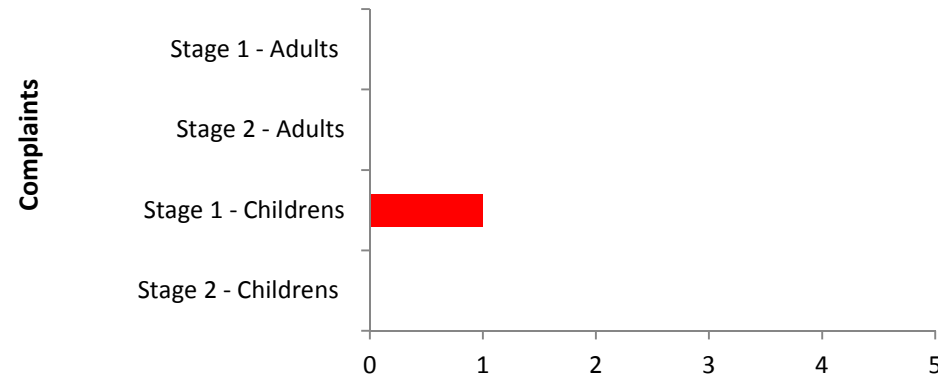
The Social Work Strategy continues to realise a return on its investment in the new Social Services Practitioner Award. A further cohort of employees are being sponsored to continue their studies and qualify as Social Workers.



Budget 2019/20 - Quarter 1 & 2 (April 2019 to September 2019)

Budget Area		Budget	Forecast	Variance	
		£	£	£	%
1	Commissioning & Social Work	3,226,040	3,198,232	27,808	0.86
2	Children Looked After	7,084,640	7,084,316	324	0
3	Family Support Services	191,240	186,602	4,638	2.43
4	Youth Justice	237,820	228,118	9,702	4.08
5	Other Children's and Family Services	2,183,800	2,131,458	52,342	2.40
6	Older People Aged 65 and Over	5,911,180	5,847,263	63,917	1.08
7	Adults under 65 with Physical Disabilities	41,800	41,650	150	0.36
8	Adults under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,449,760	3,400,723	49,037	1.42
9	Adults under 65 with Mental Health Needs	628,420	643,931	(15,511)	-2.47
10	Other Adult Services	357,430	360,596	(3,166)	-0.89
11	Community Care	15,662,660	15,677,604	(14,944)	-0.10
12	Support Service & Management Costs	921,990	921,348	642	0.07
13	Corporate Recharges	5,018,490	5,018,487	3	0
Grand Total		44,915,270	44,740,328	174,942	

Complaints and Compliments – Children’s and Adults Services



Children’s Services

In quarters 1 and 2 the total number of complaints received within children’s services was 1. The complaint was considered at stage 1 of the complaint process.

- Delay in social worker arranging a visit, lack of support and a lack of explanation, inclusion and advice

The complaint was broken down into a number of different elements out of which the majority were not upheld. Where elements of the complaint were upheld the following actions were taken to continue to learn from and improve practice: -

- Managers to remind staff of the importance of keeping families updated, visits to be undertaken promptly and to ensure adults playing a central role in children’s lives are spoken to as part of the assessment.

Additional to this, the department received 31 contacts from people who expressed they had matters they wanted to resolve quickly, and they wanted independent support to do so, however they did not want to make a ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ complaint at that time. In all cases a resolution was agreed without the need to escalate the matter further.

Adult Services

In quarters 1 and 2 the total number of complaints received within Adult Services was 0.

The department received 11 contacts from people who expressed that they had matters they wanted to resolve quickly, and they wanted independent support to do so, however they did not want to make a ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ complaint at that time. In all cases a resolution was agreed without the need to escalate the matter further.

Social Services Directorate Risk Register

Risk Description	Quarter 2 Update (July – September 2019)	Status
<p>There is a risk that increasingly complex needs and demand for services provided by Social Services, in particular for Looked After Children, will put further significant pressure on the Council's budget.</p> <p>**** Corporate Risk *****</p>	<p>This remains a volatile area and it impossible to predict an ideal number of children looked after per head of population. The population of children looked after is affected by multiple variables outside the immediate control of the local authority and, in that respect, we must be both proactive and reactive. The Children's Services IAA is implementing the principle of Early Action Together; this places an officer from Gwent Police in our IAA service which, in turn, enables multi-agency screening of referrals. Having a police presence in the IAA service also enables us to undertake basic checks and swifter risk assessment of extended family when it is deemed too risky for children to remain in the care of their parents. ICF funding has been used to develop a 'Mediation Worker' post for those young people and their families experiencing significant relationship tensions. This is intended to prevent family breakdown being a reason for young becoming looked after. The Supporting Change Team continues to provide intensive support services for those children identified as being at risk of becoming Looked After and quarterly monitoring undertaken by the senior management team is demonstrating the efficacy of the team's work. The MyST (My Support Team) is now fully operational and working at capacity. The remit of the team is to work intensively with children who are in residential provision with the aim of helping them return to a foster placement or family environment if possible. The team also works with children, families and carers where there is a risk of having to move to residential provision with the aim of preventing that escalation. Our Placement Team continues its recruitment process and we continue to work collaboratively to commission high quality foster placements for our children looked after. The newly developed Special Guardianship Support Team already shows that foster placements are being converted to Special Guardianship placements thus reducing the numbers of children Looked After by the Local Authority.</p>	<p>Critical</p>

Risk Description	Quarter 2 Update (July – September 2019)	Status
<p>Failure to comply and meet with the new legislative changes under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs) following Supreme Court Judgement will result in a failure to meet statutory obligations under the Mental Capacity Act. 2005</p>	<p>Work continues to ensure staff are fully supported and aware of the new legislation and changes required for practice. This has included staff from across Children and Adult Services. A presentation has been delivered to a number of Regional Partnership Board (RPB) planning groups including the Gwent Adult Strategic Planning Group (GASP) and the Gwent Safeguarding Board including all partners – Health / Local Authorities / Police/ Probation etc. Once the training packages and promotional materials are available a communications strategy will be developed to disseminate to all parties</p>	Medium
<p>Safeguarding - Failure to ensure adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people in Blaenau Gwent</p>	<p>Review of new safeguarding screening arrangements have been undertaken and revised process at the IAA/ front door has been put in place. Work to update the Safeguarding Procedures has continued throughout Quarter 2 and it is intended that they will be launched in Q3 during National Safeguarding Week (in November 2019).</p>	High
<p>There is a risk that ineffective information governance arrangements (particularly in joint working arrangements) could lead to personal or sensitive information being inappropriately disclosed to third parties</p>	<p>There is no additional information to report from Adult Services, However, It is acknowledged that the information managed within Children's Social Services is of a highly sensitive nature and staff are aware of the need to ensure that this is securely managed. In quarter 2 there were 4 alleged data breaches. All were investigated. On investigation one was deemed not to be a data breach. The action taken to contain, investigate and manage the other three meant that referral to the ICO was not felt necessary. There are always lessons to be learned however and data security will be provided to 2 specific teams in Q3 and will then form the basis of regular training on our established timetable of Monday morning training.</p>	High
<p>If the Directorate does not have the appropriate capacity and capability in the workforce will result in an unacceptable impact on the ability to deliver services effectively.</p>	<p>There are no new issues to report however quality recruitment is challenging across professional posts including Social Workers / Therapists etc. This is particularly challenging where we are recruiting to fixed term grant funded posts.</p>	Medium

Risk Description	Quarter 2 Update (July – September 2019)	Status
<p>Failure to improve attendance rates within the Directorate will lead to an unacceptable impact on the ability to deliver services effectively.</p>	<p>We are currently reviewing the actions noted in the recent Organisational Development (OD) report. We are analysing the 'hot spot' areas and will develop specific action plans for these areas. This includes working with OD and Occupational Health to prioritise referrals and managing capability and disciplinary processes. In Children's Services absence monitoring is done in individual teams and we are monitoring compliance with the Absence Management Procedure.</p>	Medium
<p>The ICT provision supporting the department is not resilient and fails to provide assurance requirements in terms of operational functionality and data security.</p>	<p>The risk which prompted this has been mitigated due to swift action by the department. View of the department is that generally this is a corporate risk and as such should be on the Corporate Risk Register</p> <p>DMcC raised this as a risk at CLT and it was agreed that PJ meet with ALC to develop a Commercial Directorate Risk Register where this risk would sit, the risk could then be evaluated as to whether it required escalation to the Corporate Risk Register.</p>	Medium

Glossary

ABUHB – Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

ACRF – Annual Council Reporting Framework

BG – Blaenau Gwent

CCG – Children & Communities Grant

CIW – Care Inspectorate for Wales

CLA – Children looked After

CSE – Child Sexual Exploitation

DoLS – Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

GATA – Gwent Access to Advocacy

GP – General Practitioner

GWASB – Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board

HSG – Housing Support Grant

IAA – Information, Advice and Assistance

IRO – Independent Reviewing Officer

LA – Local Authority

LPS - Liberty Protection Safeguards

MYST – My Support Team

NYAS – National Youth Advocacy Service

Quarter 1 – April to June

Quarter 2 – July to September

Quarter 3 – October to December

Quarter 4 – January to March

RCC – Regional Collaborative Committee

RISCA - Regulation and Inspection Social Care Act

SERAF - sexual exploitation risk assessment framework

SEWAS – South East Wales Adoption Service

SEWIC – South East Wales Improvement Collaboration

SEWSCB – South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board

SGO - Special Guardianship Order

SLA – Service Level Agreement

SPACE - Single Point of Access for Children’s Emotional Well-being and Mental Health

SMT – Senior Management Team

TESSA - therapeutic educational support services in adoption

The ‘Act’ or SSWB Act – Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

Contact Details

If you require any further information or have any feedback you wish to share, please:

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