

RHONDDA CYNON TAF
ANNUAL DIRECTOR OF
SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT
2022/23

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Director of Social Services – Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to publish this year's annual report. At the beginning of 2022/23, Paul Mee was the Director of Social Services, and I would like to thank him for his direction and leadership of social services before becoming the Council's Chief Executive in December 2022. I became Interim Director in December 2022.

Each year, the Statutory Director of Social Services is required under the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 to publish an annual report on how the local authority has exercised its social services functions and provides an opportunity to evaluate our performance and the action taken to further improve our services and support. This year, I have summarised my assessment of the key developments and challenges in Children's and Adult Services, emphasising the links to our Council Corporate Plan and providing examples of how our work has promoted and improved the wellbeing of those that we help. We also set out our service priorities for 2023/24.

In recent years, living and working through the pandemic, have been incredibly difficult and challenging for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf and our social services workforce. The impact of the pandemic continues to affect health and social care services and all our communities, compounded by the additional challenges caused by the cost-of-living crisis.

Our ability to keep delivering services has only been possible because of the dedication and immense efforts of our social services workforce, commissioned providers, foster carers and people who come forward to adopt children and our partner organisations. We are also fortunate to have strong corporate support from across the Council and support of colleagues from other departments and our Elected Members.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has ensured that the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf have received the care and support they need, and I hope that this report shows the results of their hard and tireless work over the past year.

Neil Elliott
Interim Director of Social Services

Children's Services Overview

In Children's Services, we contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan "**Making a difference**" and specifically the wellbeing priority "**Ensuring PEOPLE are independent, healthy and successful**" by

"Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do".

In this Section, we provide data and information to evidence key service achievements, developments, and challenges in Children's Services in 2022/23, together with our key service priorities for 2023/24, where further developments and change have been identified.

Our key achievements in 2022/23

This year has seen continued high demand, particularly at the front door and increasing complexity for Children's Services. This is expected to continue as we see the long-term impact of COVID-19 harm on children and their families. This reinforces the need to deliver against our strategic priorities that are intended to support us to manage demand and shift the balance of care. An overview of demand and related performance is set out below:

26,712 contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year (up from 24,385 2021/22)
98% of the contacts received, a decision was made by the end of the next working day (98% in 2021/22)
45% of the contacts received, advice or assistance was provided (up from 43% 2021/22)
407 children on the Child Protection Register on 31 st March (up from 378 2021/22)
5,633 new assessments completed for children (up from 5,238 in 2021/22)
4,628 within statutory timescales (up from 4,567 in 2021/22)
1,904 children with a care and support plan (up from 1902 in 2021/22)
1,264 families known to Resilient Families Service with increased resilience (up from 1065 in 2021/22)

Despite these pressures, teams across Children's Services have continued to deliver high quality safe services to vulnerable children and families, as evidenced by some of our key achievements set out below:

- In Spring 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) identified many positive aspects of our work and practice following a [review of how we support children and families subject to the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings](#) as part of a national review.
- We have continued to take forward our Children Looked After Prevention Strategy resulting in an increase in the number of families remaining together and an associated reduction in the rate of children becoming looked after.
 - At the end of March 2023, we had 624 Children Looked After compared to 655 in 2022, and 717 in 2020, leading to a further reduction in the rate of Children Looked After.
 - Our new Magu Team staffing has been established to respond to the need to improve pre-birth services and seek to reduce the number of children under one becoming looked after. In the year, we have managed the first early permanence case in Wales

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making it possible for an 8 week old baby to move straight to adopters without the disruption of an interim period with foster carers.

- Our new [Children Looked After Residential Transformation Strategy 2022-2027](#) was approved by Cabinet in February 2023. Developments underway, include:
 - opening a second new home that offers therapeutic care for up to 3 young people.
 - developing emergency accommodation for up to 3 young people.

This has resulted in an increase in use of our own children's care home accommodation rather than independent sector. The percentage of Children Looked After placed with relative carers remains consistent with that reported in 2021/22, at 34%.

- In terms of our Children Looked After, we have:
 - increased the number of Rhondda Cynon Taf Foster Carers to 286 from 281 in the previous year. There has also been an increase to 1329 users of the Council's Leisure 4 Life Foster Family Access scheme in the year.
 - worked well across Council departments on projects including Children's Looked After Team collaborate with Love Treorchy on Employment Programme
 - implemented the Basic Income Pilot alongside our care leavers.
 - extended our work under the Trauma Recovery Model and developed therapy provision alongside partners, guiding how we make sure traumatised young people can access the right therapy without delay.
 - involved staff in the update and re-set of Miskin services.
- We have implemented phase one our Children's Workforce strategy activities aimed at improving staff wellbeing and maximising the retention of staff, which has involved influencing national attraction work: [A week in the life of a social worker](#)

Children's Services Overview

How are people shaping our Services?

We have continued to strengthen participation of children and young people to promote engagement and involvement specifically with Children Looked After and partner agencies to ensure co-production and that the voice of children and young people are heard in service development and delivery.

In 2022/23, we have developed a Children's Services Participation Strategy which incorporates different communication approaches when engaging with children and young people.

In line with the Participation Strategy, all looked after children and care leavers, aged 4-25 years old, have been given the chance to take part in our 'Get Involved' [survey](#).

The Vision for the Participation Strategy:

The Participation Strategy outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments.

We have asked children what is going well, what could be better for all care experienced children and young people and how would they like to get involved with Children's Services? In total, we received 66 responses from children aged between 4 – 25 years old. We shared survey feedback with staff and we developed an [infographic](#) which includes 'You Said' and 'We Will' statements which we shared with children and young people via the YEPS website, our foster/kinship carers and Voices from Care Cymru.

Get Involved Survey - What did children tell us was important?

- Make sure that all trusted adults explain who they are. Consider leaving child friendly information such as 'All about me' profiles or a child friendly letter to the young person before meeting them or with a change of Social Worker/ key member of staff.
- Access to information. To develop information in a range of formats that can be easily accessed and shared. Young people 16+ have told us they want easy access to information for benefits, housing, tenancy support and funding entitlements.
- Children and young people have told us how they want to get involved. They would like more in person meet up events, activities with nature, sports, arts and crafts and music and drama.
- To look at different ways to keep in touch with family. Young people have told us they would like more contact with their families.
- Mental Health and wellbeing support. Young people would like further support with their mental health and wellbeing activities.

Further examples of work undertaken in 2022/23 to engage and involve care experienced children and young people were presented to the [Corporate Parenting Board in January 2023](#) and includes the following case study below:

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Supporting care experienced children and young people – The Sky's the Limit Project

This project supports care experienced children to access drama, art, sporting activities, dance, gardening, choir, film making and digital sessions created, designed and delivered by children and young people to achieve a national reach. We are supporting mental health issues by preventing and empowering children's confidence through hobbies and activities that give positive experiences.

An example of one of the sessions:

- 9 young people attended the 'Sky's the Limit' Nature workshop for 8 to 13 year olds on Saturday 22/10/22. Activities included:
 - Paint and press on to tote bags and sewing supported by Growing Space
 - Pumpkin carving, games and a nature walk.
- Some direct and email feedback included:

'I've never done sewing before and I really enjoyed the arts and crafts. I didn't realise I was good at sewing. I would definitely like to come again' (aged 11).

'Just wanted to say thank you for the event today, the children had lots of fun and kept saying how lovely it was, also both are interested in build your strength and Halloween party. If you have more info with dates and where would be great' (Foster carer via email).



In addition, we have continued to increase opportunities for young people and families to have greater say, involvement and choice in their plans and the services they receive, for example, we have:

- embedded our [Advocacy Services offer](#) in line with the National Offer, providing support to 73 young people and families during the year, where the 'active offer' for advocacy had been made. Commenced a parent advocacy pilot from January 2023.
- 42 families referred to the Family Group Meeting Service and 24 Family Group Meetings provided, to provide a structured decision making and planning process for the wider family network.
- developed a new [Family Support Website](#) aimed at making it easier for families to navigate the support that is available.

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- with the input of care experienced parents, signed up to the [Charter](#) for parents in care and leaving care.
- engaged with Parents to seek their views of what works to inform reunification work under the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy.
- involved young carers in appointments Panel and provided access to the Young Carers Card and promotional videos for the Young Carer Card are available in [English](#) and [Welsh](#).
- care experienced young people have made some short clips to explain to Councillors and staff why local care is so important to them.

As in previous years, we have carried out an annual service user survey which asked a sample of children and young, who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn, how they feel about the care and support they receive. This year 140 children completed the survey and overall responses to the survey were positive, as shown in the table below, with improvement or same results compared to last year in all but one of the thirteen service quality measures, although we recognise that performance is still below pre-pandemic levels in most of the measures.

Comments made by children and young people were generally complementary, reflecting some very positive experiences which were having a good impact on their lives. There was a variety of reasons for negative comments, including the other children living with them and neighbours.

Service quality measure
Of the 140 children and young people who responded to the survey:
90% live in a home where they are happy. (Compared to 85% in 2021/22 and 97% in 2019/20)
91% are happy with the people they live with (Compared to 89% in 2021/22 and 97% in 2019/20).
78% can do the things they like to do. (Compared to 75% in 2021/22 and 96% in 2019/20)
84% feel they belong in the area where they live. (Compared to 81% in 2021/22 and 92% in 2019/20)
90% are happy with their family, friends, and neighbours. (Compared to 91% in 2021/22 and 95% in 2019/20)
95% feel safe. (Compared to 91% in 2021/22 and 97% in 2019/20).
92% know who to speak to about their care and support. (Compared to 92% in 2021/22 and 95% in 2019/20)
88% have had the right information or advice when they needed it. (Compared to 84% in 2021/22 and 90% in 2019/20)
88% had their views about their care and support listened to. (Compared to 82% in 2021/22 and 92% in 2019/20)
97% have been able to use their everyday language. (Compared to 97% in 2021/22 and 98% in 2019/20)
94% was treated with respect. (Compared to 91% in 2021/22 and 97% in 2019/20)
92% are happy with the care and support they have had. (Compared to 91% in 2021/22 and 97% in 2019/20)
93% had advice, help and support that will prepare them for adulthood (16/17 year-olds only) (Compared to 80% in 2021/22 and 77% in 2019/20).

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Children's Services compliments and complaints

The Social Services statutory compliments and complaints process provides the opportunity for service users and their families and carers to provide feedback. The following table summarises the number of complaints and compliments received this year and in the three previous years.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of complaints received	59	29	47	70
Number of compliments received	59	92	116	75

As in previous years, the number of complaints for Children's Services in overall terms remain low although there has been an increase compared to last year. When, occasionally, we have not been able to meet people's expectations, we use the feedback to learn what we can do better and, where necessary, we make changes to do this.

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Our developments and improvements

Excellent Practice leading to better outcomes

In Spring 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) [reviewed how we support children and families subject to the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings](#) as part of a national review. The [review](#) identified many positive aspects of our work including:

- the framework that we have established and the supporting documentation that supports timely decision making.
- child focussed, thorough and timely care and support assessments.
- prevention of breakdown and maintenance of the family unification is at the forefront of practice.
- good quality, readily available legal advice.
- families subject to legal planning and pre-proceedings work are given extensive support and opportunities to make effective changes, before further legal action is taken, even where the legal threshold for intervention has been reached.
- children and families benefit from a good range of established provision, such as Resilient Families Service, the Information, Advice and Assistance Team and the Miskin service.
- timely safeguarding action is taken where there is a risk of harm, with swift entry to the Public Law Outline process where needed. Effective support from partners within the safeguarding process was evidenced by well attended strategy meetings and initial case conferences.

It was acknowledged that in common with other Local Authorities that there are challenges of increased demand and difficulties in recruitment and retention that are impacting our work. They identified that there is more work to be done to improve some of our communication by making sure that easy to understand supporting information is for available for parents and carers. It is also important that we continue to further promote advocacy for parents and carers.

Early intervention and prevention

We have continued to improve access to timely information, advice and assistance to facilitate improved access to, and engagement in, early intervention and prevention services for children, young people and families. A review and redesign of our Information, Advice and Assistance has commenced to ensure we can continue to provide a high quality service with changing needs and demand following the pandemic and will be completed in 2023/34.

We launched the new Rhondda Cynon Taf Families Website www.rctfamilies.co.uk in October 2022. It has been promoted to staff within the Council and our relevant partners, including schools, childcare providers and community partners and has received nearly

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18,000 views so far with the Tips for Parents and Programmes and Courses being the most popular.

We want to make better use of our Children and Family Centres, so we are currently reviewing the capacity and ability to develop multi-use areas and evaluate building capacity to support the development of an access plan for community groups, during daytime, evenings and weekends going forward. As part of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Families Website and other social media opportunities, the promotion and profile of Children and Family Centres is being raised, showing the resources available and signposting to sources of advice and support in community settings.

Making best use of our Children and Family Centres

Utilising the Winter Hardship Fund, we held 3 open/information days in our Children's Centres in Aman, Penrhys and Rhydyfelin to promote access to the centres and better understand what the local communities would like to see in the future. Supported by local partners, community groups and schools we offered a range of interactive activities for children and young people ranging from 0-11 & 11+. There were several information stands for families on a range of topics (CAB, energy saving & Police) where they could seek advice and where to go for further support.

We provided free food and drinks and issued a family pack containing ingredients for 2 meals per family that attended. We also distributed some of the family packs to the wider community through locally identified families who needed some extra support.

In total across the 3 events, 160 adults and 250 children were supported with 91 volunteers involved in the delivery of the events.

We have continued to focus our services on early intervention and prevention to improve the life outcomes for children in Rhondda Cynon Taf and have been embedding a suite of 16+ Support Projects that are being offered to young people including the **Becoming Independent Project**

Becoming Independent Project - Ysgol Nantgwyn

The aim of the Ysgol Nantgwyn "Becoming Independent Programme" was to engage and provide information, advice, guidance and support to young people who are leaving or transitioning from school into college, and to support those young people that potentially become homeless in the future based on Welsh government targets, specifically LGBTQI+, and generational family homelessness, in order to provide or enhance life skills and experiences that will support young people in their independence, whether at home with their family or in independent living accommodation in the future.

Our 16+ support team delivered programme to a total of 7 young people, age from 13 to 16. Feedback was positive and the young people asked if we could go back to do a sexual health/porn awareness session to the whole class. This is currently being arranged with support from a Sexual Health Nurse.

and the **Reducing Risk of Youth Homelessness** to provide targeted support to those children and young people who are at risk of youth homelessness. Children Looked After are

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one of the Welsh Government's targeted groups to provide early intervention and prevention in the fight against youth homelessness. With links already formed prior to and over the pandemic with the 16+ Looked After Children's team we discussed activities that the young people may participate in to maintain the links and to support the young people with any advice and guidance they need regarding housing and homelessness.

Reducing Risk of Youth Homelessness Project

This project was set up to support Children Looked After aged 16+ with advice and guidance to prevent youth homelessness. These young people were allowed the opportunity to design, prepare and decorate the main wall inside the chill out room at the 16+ drop-in centre using a graffiti style of artistry, allowing any new children attending the centre to add to the art wall in the future or allow those that participated the option of taking their art with them when they progressed on.

The project was a success in that the young people attending the sessions all engaged in some part to complete the artwork with an extra session planned in to allow the provider time to display the art in the centre. As a follow up and to maintain the link, regular activities are to be planned to support the 16+ team as requested by the young people.



We have delivered sessions in youth clubs focusing on independent life-skills such as cookery, finance sessions and CV writing, and safety. Sessions have been held in colleges with a focus on wellbeing, sexual health, exam stress, bullying, drug awareness, trafficking and exploitation. The team have also offered support at drop-in sessions at the job centres in Porth, Llantrisant, Tonypany, Treorchy and Pontypridd. In total we delivered 50 sessions in 2022/23 in schools, colleges and for home schooled children and 248 participants attended.

In 2022/23, we have appointed an additional Mental Health & Wellbeing Officer to increase capacity in YEPS to meet the increased demand. We are also revising existing Children and Communities Grant contracts with providers to understand areas that could be improved to encourage more to join the Approved Providers List. This supports the delivery of integrated support pathways supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people and families.

We have begun work to establish a Safe Spaces Scheme across the county borough and we will take this forward in 2023/24. We have also continued to provide [YEPS mobile hubs](#) which regularly visit areas across the County Borough, at evenings, after school and during school holidays, offering information, advice and guidance as well as a range of activities to

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complement the existing Local Authority and voluntary organisations youth clubs. The services are aimed to provide support for young people aged between 11 and 25.

Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPs) 'Around the World in a Day' Cultural event

Utilising funding available via the Winter Hardship Fund, YEPS organised an event for young people and their families as part of the RCT anti-Racism agenda in a bid to raise cultural awareness. Several cultural activities were offered, one of which was sampling different foods from around the world. The aims of the event were to:

- identify young people to form an RCT wide Ethnic Minority forum group.
- raise awareness of Ethnic Minority cultures and experiences within RCT through workshops and activities
- educate people on the impact of racism on individuals as well as the wider community.
- create a platform for young people and staff to have a safe space to share their experiences, gain support, give feedback, and share best practices to become anti racist

In total, 118 children attended the event, with each receiving a warm drink and snack.

We have continued to provide support to families as early as possible to increase resilience and prevent the need for statutory services. In 2022/23, we engaged with 1264 families who increased their resilience after completing work with our Resilient Families Service.

Resilient Families Service

The family consisted of mother, father and 2 children under 5 and expecting their third child imminently. A referral was made by the families Health Visitor for support to address the families housing situation as well as parental mental health and wellbeing. Also, additional support was requested in relation to the family being able to meet challenges which may impact upon the children's wellbeing.

Family plan goals were identified to source carpets and other required items for their new home and to improve the father's emotional wellbeing, exploring his thoughts and feelings and share any worries. Following the intervention, the family's resilience improved from a score of 59 to a score of 39 and feedback from the family and professionals was positive:

"Thanks we are now cleaning more and working together better" Father.

"You have motivated us. Thanks for all the stuff you got us. Its been great to speak to you. I feel better as I have cleared the room upstairs. Me working on that 1 day a week has improved my wellbeing" Mother.

"...Thank you for all your support" Health Visitor

"... I can't believe how much work you have carried out with this family!" RFS Midwife

"..The family have been fantastic to work with and I will miss them. I have got to know the family really well with 12 visits to their home. They have taken on board every single piece of information shared" RFS Intervention worker.

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Children Looked After

We have continued to provide support for families so that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. As part of this support we have continued to deliver our [Children Looked After \(CLA\) Prevention Strategy 2022/25](#), resulting in reduction in the rate of children becoming looked after. As a result, we have reduced the number of children who are looked after and moved from previously being the Council with the second highest rate of Children Looked After in Wales to being in 4th position in July 2022 to 6th position in May 2023 from where we strive to see further progress. Despite a downward trend of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR), the number of children has increased from 378 in 2021/22 to 407 in 2022/23. This is lower than pre-pandemic levels, but we will continue to focus our support to reduce the number of children on the CPR.

A key aspect of the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy 2022/25 is providing better pre-birth support our most vulnerable families including those who are themselves care or social care experienced or have had another child already removed from their care. The new MAGU Team is aimed at delivering an integrated health and social care pathway for pregnant women and their families across early intervention and edge of care services, that focuses on building skills and resilience and thereby reducing risk. Integrated health and social care services will be available to women from 12 weeks of pregnancy through to the child's first birthday. This will improve pre-birth services and seek to reduce the number of children under one and children of parents who themselves are care leavers becoming looked after. The team is now fully staffed and has started to take on new cases.

Another key aspect of the CLA Prevention Strategy is improving support for kinship carers and special guardians. Following a pilot in 2021/22, we commissioned [Kinship Cymru](#) to offer a [Kinship Connected](#) service to improve outcomes for special guardians and other kinship carers in the county borough. Kinship Connected helps kinship carers develop long-term supportive networks which result in a more stable and supportive environment in which the children in their care can thrive. The support includes one to one support, peer support, advice, support to access grants and free online workshops to ensure that the kinship carers have the help that they need to support the children that they look after.

Kinship Connected Project

"I have received everything, and the iPad is really good. Thank you so much for everything you have done for me and the children – it has really made a difference. I am most grateful, thank you" A special guardian for two grandsons aged 12 and 14.

"It was absolutely wonderful, the children and I enjoyed every minute of being away, I was given a loan of a mobility scooter and was able to go out on my own at times and have some time to enjoy." Elderly grandmother caring for four grandchildren, two under the age of 15 who have behavioural issues.

"The Kinship project worker is always there if I need her to chat to, she always gives me a call to catch up and see if there's anything she can do. Having the support has made a difference for my family as it has given me tools to help manage my grandson's outbursts." Step-grandmother aged 54.

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"I will always access the (peer) group as well as I feel I have made friends when before was so lonely now I am not so much" Grandmother aged 46

"I cannot recommend the support offered by Kinship Cymru enough, and really hope the service continues and hope that we can continue working alongside each other in the future with different families. It was also positive that I could also contact the project worker with any queries too, and she would always get back to me." Social Worker RCTCBC

Through our work around early intervention and prevention, we have also established a Therapy Panel alongside partners, which coordinates access to therapy and enhances trauma informed and therapeutic approaches within children's services to make sure traumatised young people and their carers can access the right therapeutic support and guidance without delay.

For those children that cannot remain with their families, we want to make sure that they can be looked after closer to home. We are continuing to work with providers to develop placement sufficiency close to home, making sure that the Council provides the accommodation and support that our looked after children need. This year a [Residential Children's Services Strategy](#) and action plan for the next 5 year has been agreed by Cabinet in [February 2023](#). The central purpose of the Strategy is to develop Council owned and run residential care at pace. This will lead to better outcomes for young people and is in line with the Government's intention to legislate to remove profit from care. This work has begun, and we have applied to register Willowford House as a children's home to accommodate 3 young people and have re-registered Ystrad Fechan as a children's home to accommodate up to 3 children and young people.

Whilst registration is pending, it has been necessary to place a small number of young people in an Operating Without Registration setting where the unacceptable alternative would be to provide no accommodation and care for the young person concerned. This is due to increased demand, increasing complexity of need and scarcity of registered children's homes.

We are also working with [Foster Wales](#) to increase the [recruitment of foster carers](#) in Rhondda Cynon Taf, in particular, those who are able to support children with more complex needs. Enquiries are increasing and 13 new foster carers have been approved to date against a target of 19 but more work is needed to improve ongoing recruitment of foster carers.

We are also developing a revised Housing Options model for care-leavers to whom the Council owes a corporate parenting duty in order that they can leave care placements in a safe, planned way which avoids homelessness wherever possible. Two dedicated Housing Solutions Officers have been appointed and a referral pathway document has been drafted.

Young Carers

In 2022/23, the Young Carers Support service contract was retendered and awarded to [Action For Children](#) (AFC). AFC provide regular monthly support groups for young carers, as well as specific events through the year to allow young carers to experience new things and have a break from their caring role. As part of the new contract, AFC will offer support to Sibling Carers. We also continue to promote the opportunities available to Young Carers as part of

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our quarterly [Carers newsletter](#) including access to our Young Carers card. The [Young Carers Annual Report 2022/23](#) provides more information about how we support these children.

Young Carers Support in numbers.

129 Young Carers accessing support.

110 Young Carer referrals.

133 Young Carer assessments.

65 Young Carer Cards issued.

70 Young Carer Groups held, 439 attendees.

31 Young Carer events held, 421 attendees.

114 Sibling Carers and 28 Sibling Carer events, 465 attendees.

Early Years

We have been delivering the Early Years Transformation agenda to ensure early years services are universally available and specialist services are targeted by need and not geographical location.

We made a full contribution to ensure the second stage of the [evaluation](#) of the Early Years Transformation Programme, which focused on the systems and processes which underpin the model, was completed on time. We are now beginning to see progress in overcoming organisational and cultural barriers inherent in truly integrated deliver models, attributable to the strong leadership and management from Community Wellbeing and Resilience Families Service working alongside the Health Board to deliver the first model of its kind in Wales. The evaluation commented on the integration journey so far:

“Our own recent research in England has highlighted that making big change happen in this space is typically a three-to-five year endeavor, as integration involves relationships between multiple systems with many moving parts. Given the scale of ambition of the Resilient Families Service, we think the progress made already in early intervention integration puts RCT ahead of many local areas.” [Beyond Boundaries](#) (2022).

The recommendations from this evaluation are being used to improve both structural and technical aspects of the pilot.

We are also working with Health to produce an Early Years Vulnerability Profile that will enable us to plan services based on need. Central to the development of the profile is the sharing of health data with the Council. The technical side of the data transfer and testing is complete however, full information sharing protocols are yet to be agreed. We continue to pilot the new integrated Early Years delivery model in Rhondda Cynon Taf on behalf of the region which is being externally evaluated. The data continues to be reviewed and reported on a regular basis to Senior Managers in the Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

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Why is the Early Years Transformation agenda important? What does the data tell us?

In the period between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, 10,657 children were supported through the Resilience & Wellbeing Health Programme in RCT. A total of 1557 children received a 20-month Schedule of Growing Skills (SOGS) assessment in this period.

An example of the impact that the Early Years transformation agenda is having on families is demonstrated by our speech and language referrals. Of the 488 referrals that we received from health visitors following an age 20 month Schedule of Growing Skills assessment, 67% were from non-Flying Start geographical areas, and 33% from Flying Start geographical areas, demonstrating the importance of identifying children according to need rather than according to geographical location.

What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy - Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after.
- We will deliver the Residential Transformation Strategy - Making sure that the Council provides the accommodation and support that our looked after children need.
- We will deliver the Participation strategy which outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments.
- We will ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services' workforce is motivated, engaged and valued; staff have the capacity, skills, competence and confidence to meet the needs of children and families.

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In Adult Services, we contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan "Making a difference" and specifically the wellbeing priority "Ensuring PEOPLE are independent, healthy and successful" by:

"Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life".

"Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs".

In this Section, we provide data and information to evidence key service achievements, developments, and challenges in Adult Services in 2022/23, together with our key service priorities for 2023/24, where further developments and change have been identified.

Our key achievements in 2022/23

Adult Services has faced continued high demand for care and support during 2022/23. While this levelled off towards the end of the year, volume and complexity of casework remains higher than pre pandemic levels and combined with challenges in staff recruitment and retention have continued to put pressures on the health and social market, in particular the availability of care provision. Supporting our care providers and addressing our recruitment and retention issues remain a key priority for the coming year. An overview of demand and related performance is set out below:

14,013 contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year (up from 11,923 in 2021/22)
Of which, 11,444 were new contacts received (new for 2022/23 no trend data available)
76% of the new contacts received, advice or assistance was provided (new for 2022/23 no trend data available)
8,315 new assessments completed for adults during the year (down from 8,452 2021/22)
Of which, 1490 (18%) had a care and support plan outcome, (up from 1284 (15%) in 2021/22)
4,260 adults with a care and support plan on 31st March 2023 (up from 4,117 in 2021/22)
2,890 reviews completed in the year (down from 3438 in 2021/22)
Of which, 40% were completed on time (up from 32% in 2021/22)
1,087 reablement packages completed during the year (down from 1,290 in 2021/22)
Of which, 62% returned to self-caring following intervention (down from 67% in 2021/22)
79.3% of adults supported in the community during the year (up from 78% in 2021/22)
2,027 services for adults started during the year (up from 1,780 in 2021/22). Of which, <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 505 were residential care placements• 1,235 were domiciliary care packages• 287 were for respite support

Despite this context, good progress has been made on delivering service improvements to help us meet the current and future challenges, as evidenced by some of our key achievements set out below:

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- Following a huge effort by our Teams to tackle waiting lists in 2022/23, that had increased following the pandemic, we have reduced the following assessment waiting lists during the year:
 - Care and Support: from 339 in April 2022 to 186 in March 2023.
 - ACE (Occupational Therapy) from 735 in April 2022 to 201 in March 2023.
 - DoLS from 414 in April 2022 to 255 in March 2023.
- In addition, we have reduced the number of people waiting a home care package from 82 in April 2022 to 40 in March 2023. Despite this improving trend, home care capacity still needs to increase to meet demand and therefore we launched a new project with [Community Catalyst](#) to support people and local partners to develop small enterprises and ventures that can provide real choice and increase the number and range of homecare and support options for local people.
- We have continued to work closely with Health to introduce a new hospital discharge approach since January 2023 called “Discharge to Recover then Assess” to improve the flow of patients through hospitals, supporting people to be discharged from hospital as soon as they are well enough. The introduction of this new approach along with continued investment in our award winning Stay Well@Home Service and new investment to increase the capacity of our Hospital Social Work Team has positively avoided an in-patient admission or supported the safe discharge of, on average, 48 people per week.
- Through our Lifeline Service we have continued to support 3777 people, so they can continue to live safely and independently at home. As part of our Lifeline+ Services, our Mobile Responder Service attended 6,972 visits and avoided 5,737 conveyances to hospital. The target of a response within 1 hour is consistently met for over 90% of visits.
- In [February 2023](#), Cabinet agreed a projected £60m capital investment in four new state-of-the-art care accommodation in Treorchy, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and Church Village to modernise our residential care accommodation and meet people’s changing needs, as well as retaining five Council care homes. We have also:
 - opened Elm Road in Llanhari creating new bespoke accommodation for autistic adults in November 2022.
 - developed proposals for redevelopment of the former Bronllwyn Care Home in Gelli to provide new specialist accommodation with care to support people with learning disabilities in adulthood and older age – construction planned for Summer 2023, following planning consent in April 2023.
 - commissioned the development of bespoke supported living for people with complex mental health needs at Abergoki in Treorchy - due to open in Spring 2023.
- We have continued to take forward our “My Day My Way” learning disability transformation programme, co-producing a new operating and service offer for day services opportunities, which was presented to Scrutiny in March 2023. As part of this work, we have developed Ty Draw to provide new community daytime support for adults with learning disabilities and Café 50 to offer supported employment opportunities.

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How are people shaping our services?

Individual service areas have well-established processes for collecting feedback as part of their quality assurance processes. Below are some examples of service related engagement and service user involvement undertaken in 2022/23 and how these have shaped our services:

- residents in the Council's care homes are encouraged to provide comments and suggestions through resident meetings and comments/suggestion boxes to inform service improvement. Some examples of how this feedback has shaped services include:
 - menus being updated based on changes requested by residents.
 - types of entertainment and activities offered including trips to the seaside.
 - being involved in choosing the colour schemes of some of our residential care homes following redecoration.
- introduced 'Magic Moments' in Older People Day Services to capture examples of service user and staff experience in our day centres. This has resulted in both staff and service users gaining a sense of value and purpose, capturing how we have worked together to help achieve service users' personal goals and outcomes.

Magic Moments' at Cwmni Dda Day Centre

Cwmni Dda has been supporting a man who had experienced life changing events. His wife had died and following this, he decided to move in with his daughter. The change in his living circumstances combined with a progression in his dementia meant a change to his social activities, which centred around going out to pubs and live music events which he enjoyed attending with his wife. The remaining family did not have the capacity to provide this level of support and he could not attend independently.

Initially when attending Cwmni Dda, he found it difficult to settle. Filling in his life history with the team, he told them that he was a musician and had travelled nationwide with a band that were very successful.

As a result, staff were able to access a guitar for the 'music corner'. The man picked it up but struggled to play at first, however, staff encouraged him to persevere and over a series of visits, he managed to tune the guitar and started to play recognisable tunes. Staff observed that he was starting to move to the rhythm and tapping his feet and it was evident that he was quite a showman! They have continued to encourage him, and he has now progressed to taking requests for specific tunes.

This has been a very positive outcome, enabling the man to pursue an activity that appears to have given him a new sense of purpose. It has also enabled him to settle in at Cwmni Dda. From a health perspective, encouraging him to use hands, has enabled him to retain dexterity and the ability to co-ordinate his movements. so encouraging activity can help to retain skills for longer.

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- Co-production has continued to be a central part of Learning Disability Transformation Programme during the year, and it has significantly shaped how things are done. Council Officers have been involving people in their work, by listening to and acting upon a wider range of views and opinions when developing learning disability services.

Between June to November 2022 the Learning Disability Transformation Programme developed a co-produced model for gathering and analysing engagement data called [My Day, My Way](#). A multi-stakeholder ‘task and finish’ was established- to draw out key themes from the data gathered and to produce a report, using [video](#) and other accessible methods to communicate the findings.

These findings have helped to develop a Day Services Strategy which was presented to Scrutiny in March 2023 and to Cabinet in the Spring of 2023, whereby a model of day opportunities was proposed.



“By using methods such as face-to-face interaction, roadshows, video storytelling and online meetings, as well as eye gaze technology for those with complex communication needs, we have been able to actively involve as many individuals as possible during the development of the Daytime Services Strategy”- Council Officer.

“Coproduction should be used all the time, I felt valued during the project” – A person with a learning disability.

In addition, the “RCT Transformers” citizen panel, made up of people with a learning disability, carers, parents, and others has continued. By working in equal partnership with those who draw on our services, has ensured that all voices that may not necessarily be part another interest group, can be heard. RCT Transformers has been involved in the “My Day, My Way” Transformation Programme and is currently supporting the development of our supported living retender process as part of the “My Home, My Way” programme.

- led the engagement with people living with dementia to co-produce a job description, personal specification and care pathway for a new Dementia Connector role. This role is required to meet the All-Wales dementia pathway standards, but to ensure the role reflected local needs, its responsibilities and function originated from the experience and perspective of local people. Starting with an engagement event to explore peoples experience the outcome was further tested in a face-to-face survey with a wider cohort of people. A pilot across the region to introduce the connector role is in progress.

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- used Neighbourhood Network meetings to better understand local need and to identify where additional support is required locally.

Dementia Café Pilot Project – Gilfach Goch

Through a Dementia Listens Campaign and conversations with a range of local partners and residents at Taf Ely Neighbourhood Network meetings to better understand local need and to identify where additional support is required locally, it was identified that there is a lack of provision for those with dementia and their carers.

Feedback included:

“There’s isn’t anywhere for us to signpost people to locally if they have dementia.”

“There is no support for people with dementia in this area, when my mum needed help there was nothing.”

“There needs to be more help support and opportunities for carers and more things for families who care for someone with dementia to do.”

“Something informal could work, there are dementia cafes in other areas, perhaps this could be replicated.”

Following this feedback, we consulted with the NHS Memory Team, Age Connect and the Alzheimer’s Society and a pilot project was initiated to give local people with dementia and their carers somewhere safe to go, where they will be able to access a range of information, opportunities, advice, and support helping people with dementia and their families to better maintain health, wellbeing, social connections.

The project increased local capacity to meet identified need and gaps in dementia provision in Gilfach Goch. A community café now acts as a hub for information and advice, helping people access appropriate local support and more opportunities .

7 people with dementia and 5 carers are attending the group and benefitting so far. They were referred to the group via local partnership working with the relevant groups and agencies.

Feedback has been positive:

“It’s wonderful to have a group like this on the doorstep.”

“It is great to have somewhere locally to come to get support as a Carer and heart-warming to see the delight on my partners face when playing games and making friends with others.”

- In addition, we engaged with:
 - service users, carers and staff and providers to contribute to the revised specification for advocacy service and the revised specification for the direct payments advisory service.
 - carers to understand expectations for alternative forms of respite which alongside further engagement will inform the development of a new carers respite service specification for tender later in 2023.

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As in previous years, we carried out an annual service user survey which asked a sample of adults aged 18 and over, who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn, how they feel about the care and support that they receive. This year 465 people responded to our survey. Overall, performance compared to last year is mixed with half of the service quality measures improving or remaining the same compared to last year and half showing a reduction in performance, with the majority still below pre-pandemic levels. We note that there is work to do when communicating with service users. We will focus on this during our review of the Information, Advice and Assistance Service in 2023/24 to ensure that service users have the information that they need.

Service quality measure
Of the 465 adults who responded to the survey:
92% live in a home that supports their wellbeing. (Compared to 92% in 21/22 and 92% in 19/20)
65% feel a part of their community. (Compared to 63% in 21/22 and 77% in 19/20)
93% are happy with their family, friends, and neighbours. (Compared to 94% in 21/22 and 96% in 19/20)
91% feel safe. (Compared to 91% in 21/22 and 95% in 19/20)
78% know who to speak to about their care and support. (Compared to 87% in 21/22 and 87% in 19/20)
86% had the right information or advice when they needed it. (Compared to 88% in 21/22 and 88% in 19/20)
96% have been able to use their everyday language. (Compared to 98% in 2021/22 and 99% in 2019/20)
96% was treated with dignity and respect. (Compared to 98% in 2021/22 and 99% in 2019/20)
96% are happy with the care and support they have had. (Compared to 94% in 21/22 and 97% in 19/20)
60% chose to live in a residential care home. (Compared to 64% in 2021/22 and 57% in 2019/20).

25 carers completed a carers questionnaire in 2023. 44% of carers agreed with the statement 'I can do the things that are important to me' and 52% said they could sometimes do the things that are important to them. 58% said that they felt part of their community and 21% said they sometimes felt part of their community. Comments received indicate that carers can feel isolated and unable to access the things that they would like to. We will continue to offer support for carers including a review of our respite provision.

Adult Services compliments and complaints

The Social Services statutory compliments and complaints process provides opportunity for service users and their families to provide feedback. The following table summarises the number of complaints and compliments received this and in the three previous years.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of complaints received	54	25	63	57
Number of compliments received	93	91	66	70

As in previous years, the number of complaints for Adult Services in overall terms remain comparatively low in contrast to the number of people that access services. When,

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occasionally, we have not been able to meet people's expectations, we use the feedback to learn what we can do better and, where necessary, we make changes to do this.

Our developments and improvements?

Developing new accommodation options

We have continued taking forward the Council's review on the future shape of residential care for older people to ensure we create the right model of service delivery to respond to increasing demand and changing needs in the long term. In [February 2023](#), following extensive consultation with existing care home residents and their families, staff and the wider public, Cabinet agreed [proposals to modernise local residential care services](#) including a major £60 million capital investment in four state-of-the-art care accommodation in Treorchy, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and Church Village, modernising residential care services and meet people's changing need in the long term while retaining five Council care homes.

Construction started on new extra care housing at Danyminydd in Porth in Spring 2022 but stopped due to the main contractor entering administration in Winter 2022. We are working with Linc Cymru, our extra care housing development partner to recommence work on site in Summer 2023 following retender of a new contractor. Extra care housing offers older people with a care and support need the opportunity to live independently in their community. and prevent or delay the need for a move to a care home.

Case Study – Extra Care

Mum and daughter, who has a learning disability and is unable to live independently have always lived with together. They were living in a first floor flat - Mum's mobility had deteriorated and was struggling to use the stairs so trips out were very limited. Mum and daughter wanted to continue living together and to be able to take their cat with them.

They were supported to move to a flat in our extra care scheme at Maesyffynon and the general outcome is that it has given both 'a new lease of life'. Maesyffynon has supported them to continue living together, enabling them to remain living in the community safely. They have the reassurance that someone is around during the day and night especially if either were feeling unwell or fell and therefore could reduce future dependency on services.

Both now have opportunities to socialise with other residents which is having a positive impact on their overall wellbeing. They have nutritious regular meals in the on-site restaurant. As the extra care flat is on one level, the risk of falling on the stairs has been removed. Extra care may prevent future admission to a more specialist placement in the event that mum is no longer able to support her daughter. Maesyffynon will offer a home for life without the worry of having to move.

Working with [Trivallis](#), we opened a [supported accommodation scheme](#) in Llanhari following a refurbishment of Elm Road accommodation. This scheme provides a safe and high quality environment for adults with learning disabilities and autism. Assessments have been completed and individuals have started to move into their new modern accommodation. A similar supported living scheme in Treorchy is under construction in partnership with [Cynon Taf Housing Association](#) and is due to be completed in Spring 2023.

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In July 2022, Cabinet approved development of a new specialist care accommodation for people with a learning disability in adulthood and older age, to be built on the [former Bronllwyn Care Home in Gelli. Construction of the new care accommodation is due to commence in Summer 2023.](#)

Support to remain independent.

We have continued to invest in reablement services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. In 2022/23, we completed 1,087 packages of reablement, with 62% of people returning to self-caring following intervention.

In 2022/23, we completed our ACE (Occupational Therapy) Team remodelling and following a huge effort by the Team we have reduced the ACE waiting from 735 in April 2022 to 201 in March 2023 that had developed during the pandemic.

As a result, demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) have increased with 687 referrals received in 2022/23 compared to 461 referrals in 2019/20, up by 49%. DFGs are a non-repayable grant available to finance the cost of adaptations to properties to be able to aid vulnerable or disabled persons to live independently in their home. Examples, include provision of appropriate toilet and bathing facilities and alterations to improve access to and within the property, e.g. ramps, rails, stair lifts etc. The number of DFGs completed increased to 336 in 2022/23 from 211 in 2021/22.

Customer feedback, once a DFG and housing adaptation has been completed, includes:

- 96% of individuals agree that they feel more confident and independent.
- 93% agree that their quality of life has improved and 98% were overall satisfied.

In addition, we have commissioned Cwm Taf Care and Repair to provide minor repairs up to the value of £500 via their in-house Handyperson Service and deliver minor adaptations via the Council's "ENABLE" programme. The type of work completed would cover:

- Undertaking minor home repairs which make them safe and comfortable.
- Preventing health problems caused by poor housing and heating.
- Preventing accidents, slips, trips and falls from hazardous housing.
- Undertaking adaptations to housing to minimise the necessity for residential care, hospital admission and facilitate speedier hospital discharge.

In 2022/23, our commissioned Handyperson Service supported 383 vulnerable people to receive repairs and adaptations to their home and 971 minor adaptations were delivered through our ENABLE programme.

Mrs C had an outside toilet that was not working and due to her medical condition, she had difficulty using the stairs to access the toilet in her upstairs bathroom. Mrs C asked for an assessment for a downstairs toilet in order for her to make it to the toilet on time.

Mrs C had the outside toilet repaired, although due to safety, Mrs C was advised not to use the facility during the winter months or when alone as it is an outbuilding. During our assessment, a stairlift was recommended, so that Mrs C was able to access her existing indoor facilities safely. During the assessment it was also identified that Mrs C was unable to access the shower cubicle due to a very high step in place, this had caused her to have

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a previous fall and didn't use it. It was also recommended that the shower cubicle be removed and replaced with a level access shower.

Mrs C was delighted with the outcome of her assessment and is now able to access her essential facilities safely and independently.

Our approach to Information, Advice and Assistance has remained largely unchanged since the introduction of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act and a review and redesign of our service was needed to ensure we can continue to provide a high quality service with changing needs and demand following the pandemic. During 2022/23, a series of engagement events with key stakeholders, including staff and external agencies, was completed and the findings used as the cornerstone for the redesign of new offer.

A new working model was developed during a series of workshops, and this will be presented to key stakeholders in 2023/24 to ensure it accurately reflects their views. Once implemented, it is envisaged the new offer will allow us to:

- support people more effectively to find solutions within their networks and communities.
- work more cohesively and intensively with people during a crisis whilst adopting an enabling approach.
- provide seamless transition to further assessments of care and support needs.

Following the implementation of the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, social work services for adults were restructured in 2017, which included changes to social work services for people with a learning disability. We created a new Care & Support Service, who worked with a wide range of individuals with long term care and support needs, including older people with mental health problems, people with a physical or sensory disability and people living with learning disabilities, who had less complex needs, along with a dedicated Complex Learning Disability Team.

Following the restructure, we continued to seek the views of those affected by these changes through a range of consultation and engagement methods. This included people with a learning disability, their parents and carers, RCT staff and partner organisations. Through these conversations, we recognised that people wanted a specific social work service for people with a learning disability. As a consequence, in 2022/23, we entered into a remodelling exercise which resulted in the creation of two new specialist learning disability teams and seven long term locality based Adult Teams. Through working effectively with all our staff through a process of change we succeeded in completing this remodelling in April 2023. Whilst, still in its infancy, feedback from those who use our services are positive and we will be reviewing the impact throughout 2023/24.

During the year, following another huge effort from our Social Work Teams we have reduced our Care and Support waiting list from 735 to 339 in April 2022 to 186 in March 2023 that had developed during the pandemic.

We have continued to maximise use of technology in 2022/23 and develop digital projects to enhance people's independence and assist with care and support delivery, alongside work to an Adult Services Digital Strategy and work plan, which will be finalised next year.

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In January 2023, we commenced a pilot '[Just checking](#)' project across our Supported Living Services to explore opportunities available for adults with a learning disability to live more independently and safely within their supported living homes. Whilst, still in its infancy, the project is progressing well, and we will be reviewing the impact in 2023/24.

During 2022/23 more than 1,200 new installations of technology equipment to enable independent living were completed. Of these, around 350 installations were for a bespoke Telecare package linked to a care and support plan, aimed at meeting people's care and support needs in innovative and enabling ways by using technology and remote monitoring.

The remainder of the installations were for one of our Lifeline packages, in order for people to live safely and independently at home, allowing people to connect remotely to our Lifeline Monitoring Centre in urgent situations, for example if they fall at home. At the end of March 2023, there were 3,777 live Lifeline connections.

Building on the existing Lifeline Service, we have expanded our enhanced Lifeline+ Services, and continued to provide the offer of additional support of a 24/7, 365 days a year mobile responder service. As part of our responder service offer, we will provide assistance in an attempt to avoid conveyances to hospital. During 2022/23 the Responders attended 6,972 visits and avoided 5,737 conveyances to hospital. The target of a response within 1 hour is consistently met for over 90% of visits.

Carers

We have continued to support unpaid carers to balance their caring roles and maintain quality of life. In 2022/23, 300 carer assessments for adults were undertaken during the year, compared to 485 in 2021/22. The role of unpaid carers intensified during the pandemic, which led to an increase in people requesting support from Adult Services during. Numbers have now dropped due to less demand.

During the year, we have involved unpaid carers and other relevant stakeholders to co-produce a new outcomes-based Carer Short Break Service, which replaces our existing Sitting Service. The new offer aspires to enhance our current respite options for unpaid carers by increasing choice and control for individuals through the use of direct payments, and by encouraging more creative, innovative ideas for Carer Short Breaks. Implementation and further development of the offer will continue into 2023/24 to increase the availability and variety of options.

The Carers Support Project

The Carers Support Project (CSP) has continued to offer high quality services in the form of information and carer short breaks and have successfully linked in with more than 40 third sector organisations to support their delivery:

- Total number of unpaid carers subscribed to CSP - 2706
- Unpaid carers receiving specialist counselling support - 150
- Number of CSP carer short break events – 107, with 1976 attendees

We have started to develop workstreams that align more closely with the Welsh Government Strategy for Unpaid Carers, ensuring that moving forward we can deliver on

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the new National Priorities. In readiness, we have started a consultation process with unpaid carers, which so far has focussed on the type of support they feel benefits them in their caring role, checking what we are doing well, how we can improve and the barriers they face. Our evaluation of the work offered by CSP has also shifted to include outcomes more closely reflecting desired Welsh Government outcomes.

A pilot with Young Adult Carers started towards the end of the year, delivering bespoke targeted support which focusses on person centred planning and individual outcomes. Development has also started in relation to a transition programme for Young Carers moving into Young Adult Carer support.

In 2022/23, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved Carer Confident Employment status and is now a Carer Confident Council, introducing a new Carer's Leave Policy and setting up a Working Carers Support Group. The Support Group offers employees (44 current employees) information, advice and support through regular events.

Direct Payments

We have continued to promote direct payments as a way of empowering people to be more independent and manage their individual care needs. The number of adults using direct payments to meet their needs have increased to 423 in 2022/23 from 412 in 2021/22.

Following engagement with service users and staff, we reviewed our direct payment policy, public information and staff guidance to simplify the process and make it more accessible for people to understand. The Policy was launched in January 2023 and a programme of training and awareness raising is progressing to support. At around the same time, we awarded the contract for direct payments support and advice to Dewis CIL a local service user led organisation and long term partner with us for this work.

In 2022/23, we have commissioned [Community Catalyst](#) to work alongside us to support local people to develop new community micro-enterprises. A micro-enterprise is a small sole trader business that is autonomous and not directly employed by the person receiving care but able to manage a direct and flexible relationship with their service users. Their development will increase the range of care and support options for service users and unpaid carers across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Our focus is initially in the [North Cynon](#) area with the intention of monitoring and evaluating progress throughout 2023/24 to inform expansion across the County Borough.

Domiciliary Care

We have continued to review and redesign our home care service model to ensure that people receive good quality home care based on the outcomes that they want to achieve whilst also ensuring that there is sufficient provision available at the right level to meet demand.

Our priority in 2022/23 has been to support our home care workforce as it recovers from the negative effects of the pandemic. The key areas of concern were supporting the recruitment and retention of staff, a situation that showed signs of improvement towards the end of 2022/23, although some areas remain problematic with regards to attracting sufficient staff to support demand.

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Despite these significant workforce challenges across the home care market, the Council has continued to receive fantastic support from our commissioned home care providers who provide, on average, around 15,000 hours of care and support each week to over 1,200 people in their homes. Together, we reduced the number of people waiting for a home care package from 82 in April 2022 to 40 in March 2023.

The Council's in-house home care service delivered around 2,900 weekly hours of care and support during the year. The service includes long term home care provision as well as short-term services such as reablement and intermediate care aimed at supporting people to regain their independence. During 2022/23, the in-house home care service also adapted to changing processes and demands by trialling a new "Home First" approach with Health to allow people to return home from hospital sooner with a package of care before receiving a full assessment of their care and support needs.

Supporting older people to live in their own home

EH was admitted to hospital in Oct 2021 following a fall. In January 2022, EH was moved into a residential care home specialising in care for people living with dementia as an interim arrangement until an appropriate package of home care was available to support her wish was to return to live in her own home.

EH's family had concerns about EH returning home and didn't feel she had the mental capacity to make the decision. The social worker was allocated to assess her capacity to make the decision about where she should live and to plan her care with her once the outcome was established.

EH was assessed as having capacity to make the decision about where she wanted to live and demonstrated that she was able to explain what support she would need at home, what the risks were and how these could be minimised. Although EH was clear in her decision making, she was worried about upsetting her family as she was aware they wanted her to remain in a care home.

The social worker completed an assessment and developed a care and support plan with EH that would meet her needs for personal care and minimise the risks associated with falling using fall detectors. Community meals were also arranged and against the families wishes EH returned to her home.

EH moved home in March 2022. Once home EH worked with the older persons memory occupational therapy and this has enabled her to develop her independent living skills and start doing even more for herself than before her hospital admission. EH is now able to use her microwave, manage her personal care and shower with the assistance of carers. EH's original package of care and support has now reduced since she returned home and her health, confidence and mobility have increased significantly.

EH remains in her own home (May 2023) and has re-started attending services at her local church once a week, her situation is stable at home, and she no longer needs her social worker involved.

Day Services

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Our five year [Learning Disability Transformation Programme](#), which was launched during 2020, has continued this year with co-production at the core of the programme. This has been recognised as [good practice](#) by the Social Care Institute for Excellence.

Building on our [My Day ,My Way](#) involvement and engagement in 2021/22 and learning from the pandemic, we have continued to inform the on-going transformation of day services so that people with a learning disability have access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities, including employment to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives. As a result of this work, we have developed a new co-produced operating and service offer for day services opportunities, which was presented for Scrutiny in March 2023 and due for Cabinet approval in Summer 2023.

Building upon the knowledge gained through working in a co-produced way we have launched My Home My Way in 2023 which, focuses upon giving more people an opportunity and a safe space to have a voice and be part of the design, delivery and implementation of Supported Living Services and the Council's tender in 2023/24.

Co-production and My Day, My Way

You can hear more about co-production and the My Day, My Way engagement project by listening to this [Podcast](#) from the Social Care Institute for Excellence or watching this [video](#) that was produced by users of the service.

From the success of My Day My Way and our current work on My Home My Way, we have recognised the importance and value of working in a co-produced way with people with lived experience to shape our services and we are currently sharing this learning across adult services.

Community Resilience

We have undertaken significant work to strengthen the relationship between the Single Point of Access Team in Adult Services and the Community Hub community resident support offer within communities so that residents can access good quality information, advice and assistance which support the social prescribing model.

Over 670 resident requests for support have been responded to in 2022/23, which may otherwise have been dealt with by statutory social services, ensuring that residents receive the support they need in a timely manner through community support. To strengthen relationships staff in Adult Services have attended awareness raising sessions to ensure that the referral pathways for resident support and the community support on offer in the community are understood and can be referred to.

Single Point of Access – Strengthening links to our Community Hubs

Following a referral via the Single Point of Access, resident support was requested for an elderly couple in their 80's. During the "What Matters" to you conversation, they explained they usually received online food deliveries, but this was no longer an option and required long term shopping support. They explained further that they had enough food to last them through to the weekend but were anxious and concerned how they would manage going forward. The Community Co-ordinator utilised links through the Neighbourhood Network and contacted Valleys Kids, who were able to provide a volunteer to attend the house on

Adult Services Overview

the same day and helped the couple complete an online order, showing them basic ICT skills and gave a small food bundle to last until the delivery. They now have regular delivery from their local superstore and Valleys Kids volunteers regularly check in on them.

“Thank you so much for listening and offering us support. Putting us in touch with valleys kids has been most useful. I would never have gone to them for help as I thought they only helped children let alone old ladies like me.” – Resident

“We are happy to support RCT Together and any resident in the area. They were so grateful and I’m glad we could help.” – Volunteer Valleys Kids

In 2022/23, we have continued to roll out [wellbeing assessments](#) for the wider community, ensuring that the Community Hubs can document and plan support around an individual’s wellbeing needs. This included the launch of a Winter Pressures Pilot with partners in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Primary Care Team and GP Cluster within the Taf area. Teams within the hub receive direct referrals from Health Colleagues within this area and Community Coordinators are then able to offer [wellbeing assessments](#) for these residents if necessary. At the end of March 2023, 53 wellbeing assessments have been requested and 21 referrals were received during the Winter Pressures pilot.

During the year, we have also collaborated on an Early Help pilot with South Wales Police which provides them with a “referral app” when they are attending calls to the public. The aim is to ensure that residents that appear vulnerable or in need of support but do not meet statutory service thresholds are able to be referred for support within the community, quickly.

The pilot ran from mid-September 2022 for two months. It was expected that 6 referrals would be received a week, however, 77 referrals were actually made by the Police. 50 wellbeing assessments were completed by our Community Co-ordinators and 38 people, who may not have otherwise had any support, were signposted for further help within the community. Following this success, the pilot will now be mainstreamed in 2023/24.

South Wales Police Early Help Referral

Following the recent death of Miss K’s partner, Police officers felt she needed further support due to her shock, anxiety and low mood. A referral was made using the early help referral ‘app’ to the Community Co-ordinators. Miss K was contacted to undertake a wellbeing assessment and have a ‘what matters’ conversation to find out if there was any support that she needed. Through the conversation it was identified that Miss K would benefit from Citizens Advice assistance on funeral costs and claiming benefits and would also benefit from speaking to somebody about how she was feeling.

Following this conversation, a referral was made to Citizens Advice Family Law and Benefits Team and an appointment was sent out 3 days later. A referral was also made to Mothers Matters who provide free counselling services to single parents. A counsellor contacted Miss K the same day and she now receives telephone counselling.

Miss K said “I’m really grateful for your help today. I just don’t know where to start with it all and was feeling so overwhelmed. Thank you for listening and putting me in touch with the support I needed”.

Hospital Discharge

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We have continued to collaborate with regional partners including the Health Board to ease hospital pressures. The winter months were particularly challenging, as experienced across the rest of Wales, and considerable effort was focussed on supporting providers to keep people in their own home where appropriate or co-ordinating a safe discharge.

From January 2023, “Discharge to Recover and Assess (D2RA)” has commenced across Cwm Taf Morgannwg to support people to leave hospital earlier (at the right time), continuing their care, recovery, and assessment for any long term needs in either their own home or a community setting (the right place). In 2022/23, significant activity was focussed on introducing the electronic system on the wards as part of D2RA, using an Electronic Transfer of Care (EToC) and developing a discharge HUB to co-ordinate the transfer of EToC referrals to community services including Adult Services. D2RA will continue to progress into 2023/24.

The introduction of this new D2RA approach along with continued investment in our award winning Stay Well@Home Service and new investment to increase the capacity of our Hospital Social Work Team has positively avoided an in-patient admission or supported the safe discharge of around 48 people per week.

Integrated Community Services

The partnership focus for 2022/23 has been on reducing the length of stay in hospital and introducing D2RA. However, there was also recognition that more work to strengthen community services was required. The [Regional Partnership Board](#) agreed to support an Integrated Community Services model in October 2022 with the long term aim of strengthening community services particularly for older people to reduce reliance on hospital admission and keep people at home for longer whilst also emphasising actions to reduce and prevent the long term effects of chronic conditions and ill health. Further partnership work is required to set out the implementation details for the model which will continue in 2023/24.

Mental Health

Our work to review and redesign Community Mental Health Services in partnership with Health is progressing but at a slower pace than we would like. As part of this work we will complete a review of current Mental Health Services, including older people with mental health problems and develop options to redesign our joint Service offer to meet current and future long term need and demand pressures. Redesign work will continue in 2023/24.

Safeguarding

We now know that planned Government changes to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and commencement of new Liberty Protection Safeguards will not be introduced. In 2022/23, with additional Welsh Government Grant funding, we have been able to increase the number of DoLS assessments completed compared with the previous year by 360%, reducing the DoLS waiting list from 414 in April 2022 to 255 in March 2023. We will need to consider the on-going challenge of managing DoLS assessment in 2023/24 and beyond.

Our Safeguarding Team manage all adult safeguarding reports into the Cwm Taf Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, making decisions about actions required to protect and promote the wellbeing of adults at risk of abuse or neglect in accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019. In 2022/23, our Safeguarding Team received 1,149 reports with an

Adult Services Overview

additional 2,419 Public Protection Notices from South Wales Police and 191 referrals of professionals causing concern. All reports were screened, and safeguarding procedures were triggered where necessary, resulting in 516 Safeguarding enquiries being undertaken and 282 initial multi-agency strategy meetings being held.

Safeguarding Case Study

D is 77 years old and is living with advanced dementia. She usually lives at home with her husband, who is her main carer but who is supported by their 2 daughters and granddaughter. Whilst residing in a care home for a period of respite care, D had 2 falls which her husband had been made aware of and was re-assured that she sustained no injuries, but, when she was collected by car to return home, she was taken to the car in a wheelchair and could not weight-bear. D was subsequently diagnosed with a fractured femur and required surgery to replace her hip. She was unable to give any account of how she sustained the injury because of her dementia. Her care manager reported the concern as a case of suspected neglect, as Ds husband said she could not walk when she went home but had been mobile before she was admitted.

Extensive Section 126 enquiries that included inspection of the care home records, incident reports, the falls policy, reflective accounts from staff on duty at the time of the falls and a full account from D's husband of events from his perspective, were undertaken and a strategy meeting was held. It was established that the concern of neglect could not be substantiated and that the care home had acted appropriately and in line with their policies. D's husband and daughters were upset by this outcome and could not accept that the home had acted properly when D's mobility declined. The Safeguarding Coordinator offered a Case Conference where the findings of the enquiries could be explained in more detail to the family. The offer was accepted but D's husband said he wanted the meeting at the couple's home. The Safeguarding Coordinator agreed with D's husband a plan for how this could work, and the Case Conference duly took place at the couple's home with only essential parties present, rather than the whole strategy group. D's husband commented at the end of the meeting that he "he was not pointing the finger at anyone, and he wanted to meet to see that things would improve, but now he can't see what could have improved and is happy that he has had the answers".

We have led on the development of the Regional Self-Neglect Practice Toolkit and Escalation protocol. The Rhondda Cynon Taf Panel, which is chaired by the Adult Safeguarding Service Manager and has representation from managers from relevant partners, received 29 referrals in 2022/23, with 46 since implementation of the Panels in October 2021, and is proving that it is making a real difference to the people referred and to the professionals supporting them.

Self-Neglect Case Study

S lives alone in a RSL adapted flat and has no informal support networks. She has osteoarthritis and has mobility problems and uses a mobility scooter to access the community. She presented to her GP with severely infected flea bites. S's flat was infested with fleas from her 5 cats. There was an attempt by the RSL to fumigate the flat but there was so much clutter that it was only partially effective. She was offered refuge at the local Community Hub whilst the fumigation took place. She was struggling with managing her personal care but no agencies would enter the property whilst the infestation continued.

Adult Services Overview

With support from her Housing Support worker, S managed to dispose of the worst of the clutter in her flat, so the next fumigation was successful. Discussion at Panel resulted in a social worker being allocated to complete a wellbeing assessment with S in person and with the support of her housing support worker, rather than a proportionate assessment over the phone. This resulted in S having a reablement package from Adult Services that focused on enabling her to recover her independence.

Vision Products – equipment and supported employment.

[Vision Products](#) is a supported business, within Adult Service Department in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which provides a range of diverse services including a windows manufacturing service, technology and servicing service, mobility retail shop and an Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region. It employs, trains and supports individuals with a range of disabilities and is a Disability Confident Leader. A number of people are supported through employment, traineeships, volunteering and work experience opportunities. In 2022/23, we supported 9 individuals through our various programmes at Vision Products.

One of the key areas of the business is the ICES which delivers services across Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend providing a fully managed service for Social Care, Education and Health through a Section 33 Agreement. This key service contributed to support people to live independently in the community, to have a quicker turnaround for community equipment in particular to facilitate discharge from hospital and to ensure equipment was available when people need it through the collection and recycling of equipment.

In 2022/23, ICES performance across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, included the delivery of around 23,500 items delivered, of which around 5,900 (25%) were classed urgent and just under 18,800 items no longer required were collected.

Adult Services Overview

What are our priorities for 2023/24?

1. We will continue to progress the Council's vision and strategy for care accommodation for older and vulnerable people to ensure we create the right service offer that responds to increasing demand and changing needs, enabling more people to live independently in their community.
2. We will continue to invest in services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence.
3. We will work with unpaid carers and partners to ensure respite provision is meeting their needs and the needs of individuals who use services so that people are able to live in their family homes for longer.
4. We will empower people to commission their own care and support through greater promotion of direct payments.
5. We will continue work with domiciliary care providers to ensure that people receive good quality home care based on the outcomes they want to achieve and that there is sufficient provision available at the right level to meet demand.
6. We will co-produce our day services offer for older people to improve access to outreach and community based services that will meet their needs.
7. We will co-produce the transformation of our service offer for people with a learning disability to improve access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives.
8. We will continue to work with Health to explore options for the development of an integrated community health and social care locality model.
9. We will work with Health to improve patient experience and redesign pathways to improve admission avoidance and "home first" services to ensure timely transfers between health and social care settings so that people are in the most appropriate care setting.
10. We will work with Health to complete review and redesign Community mental health services to provide responsive access and effective mental health support.
11. We will ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf Adult Services' workforce is motivated, engaged and valued; staff have the capacity, skills, competence and confidence to meet the needs of older and vulnerable people.

How we do our work?

Our workforce

Our workforce is our most important asset without whom high-quality care and support services could not be delivered without an adequate number of well trained, experienced staff with the right skills and approach needed to work with our service offers and effectively in partnership with other organisations. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is fortunate to have amongst its workforce a talented and committed group of staff – we are incredibly grateful to them.

As in previous years, challenges have continued regarding workforce recruitment and retention. Recruitment and retention remains a corporate priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf, with dedicated HR officers employed in 2022/23 to help improve recruitment and retention across Children's and Adult Services. There have been a number of positive outcomes from this focussed work as evidenced in more detail below.

In Children's Services, our Workforce Strategy includes activities aimed at improving staff wellbeing and maximising the retention of staff. Some of the initiatives that we have carried out this year include:

- running an enhanced and ongoing attraction campaign to promote practitioner recruitment. We have also launched a recruitment campaign for our Children's Residential service. This has included advertising on the local radio station & across social media, a virtual recruitment event and the creation of [residential webpages](#). We also have created 'Day in the life' videos on our [Residential Roles](#) webpage as a part of this recruitment campaign.
- trialling a new exit interview process to gather leaver feedback. Leavers are invited to complete an exit questionnaire with the option to undertake an exit interview so that 'push' factors can be better understood by management.
- undertaking an annual practitioners survey which found that overall, 69% of those that responded to the survey indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their current working arrangements. 19% were neutral, whilst 13% were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied.
- establishing a practitioner forum, providing an opportunity for practitioners to share information and knowledge. It also provides a means of staff becoming involved in service developments including the communication cycle.
- implementing structured Psychology Led Supervision and being first in Wales to implement [Schwarz rounds](#).

In Adult Services, we set up a Workforce Steering Group, chaired by the Director of Adult Services, to drive actions to improve recruitment and retention. A new Workforce Strategy for Adult Services is in development and some of initiatives undertaken this year, include:

- developing bespoke social media campaigns, initially to support recruitment in our ["Support @Home" Service](#). Results have been positive, with 79 "Support @Home" workers appointed since the campaign started in October 2022. This work will continue in 2023/24, expanding across other areas in Adult Services to support our recruitment efforts.

How we do our work?

- launching new “roundabout” advertising and contributing to two Council’s Career Fairs and organised dedicated adult direct care events with the Department for Work and Pensions and Communities at Work.
- reviewing our work experience offer with schools and colleges, for roll out in 2023/24.
- implementing the We Care “Guaranteed Interview Scheme”.
- commencing onboarding interviews to evaluate effectiveness of new staff inductions to increase retention.
- commencing enhanced exit interview processes to better understand reasons for leaving.
- supporting our in-house residential care staff to complete their first time registration in line with Social Care Wales requirements by October 2022.
- commissioning external support to work within our Care and Support Service to reset staff and management expectations around engagement and communication given the changes made following the pandemic.

In addition to the above and in response to our ongoing workforce recruitment and retention challenges, we have:

- increased our investment in our “Growing our Own” supporting 8 home grown students in 2022/23 and a further 8 in 2023/24.
- supported 7 apprentices in 2022/23 and created 15 new apprentices to work in our direct work services in 2023/24.
- continue to partner with universities – supporting around 60 student work based placements across social care

We remain concerned regarding the morale and resilience of our workforce as the impact of staffing pressures increase due to workforce challenges, increased demand and complexity, and it is therefore important to continue to prioritise staff wellbeing.

In 2022/23, “Care First” the Council’s new confidential support intervention, open for all RCT staff was launched. They offer a 24-hour helpline, where staff can speak to a counsellor for any work or personal issues. The website also offers a wide range of online support.

Workforce recruitment and retention, wellbeing and resilience will remain priority areas, as part of our Childrens and Adults Workforce Strategies, with continued focus over the coming year.

How we do our work?

Welsh Language

We continue to be committed to giving people the opportunity to receive services delivered and/or funded by us in Welsh and expect our services to provide the Active Offer, which means providing a service in Welsh without anyone having to ask for it, on every occasion. Our approach reflects the Welsh Language Standards and the Welsh Government's "More than Just Words" Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health and Social Services.

People who prefer to receive services and support through the medium of Welsh are highlighted in our system. The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year was 5,633. There was evidence of the active offer of Welsh in 1,713 cases (30%). The offer was accepted in 6 cases. In Adult Services, the total number of new assessments completed during the year was 8315. There was evidence of the active offer of the Welsh language in 8,199 cases (98.6%). The offer was accepted in 46 cases.

Our Finances

2022/23 has been an extremely challenging year financially for the Council and in particular social services as increased demand and complexity along with the cost-of-living crisis and high inflation placed substantial pressure on our care providers and service costs.

The net budget for social services for the year was £162.9 million, but the added pressure on the service, mainly relating to increased placement costs across Children's and Adult Services, resulted in an overspend of £0.563million following the draw-down of approved earmarked reserves (one-off funding) set aside to manage the risk of additional in-year costs in the above service areas. In the year, we have made use of national grants to manage some service pressures as well as to develop our services in an innovative way and in partnerships, as referenced throughout this report. Capital funding was also received to progress our accommodation modernisation programmes in both Children's and Adults Services.

Due to the financial position facing public services, there will be substantial pressures across the Council and social care for 2023/24 and beyond. That brings its own challenges, and we will build on work completed in 2022/23 to continue to review the financial situation of Social Services, including short and medium efficiencies, as part of the Council's medium term financial plan this year.

How we do our work?

Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability

The Council's political and corporate leadership is strong. Social Services continues to be a high priority, receiving strong and proactive support from the Cabinet Members for both Adults and Children's services.

We are accountable through a variety of mechanisms including monthly performance reviews and quality assurance checks, regular discussions with Cabinet Members and senior staff using the data we collect, reports to Council Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees, and Corporate Parenting meetings, and engagement with staff.

Our Partnerships

Partnership working is key to the delivery of high quality and responsive services. We continue to work closely with key partners on an individual and strategic level to improve services and to achieve efficiencies.

We continue to play a significant part in the:

- Regional Partnership Board
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board
- Regional Learning Disability and other sub-groups
- Cwm Taf Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Partnership
- ICES Partnership Board

In addition, we have a strong record of partnership working and we describe throughout the some of the services and initiatives that we have developed with our partners.

However, as set out in last year's report, there continues to be a need to develop and implement new plans that accelerate the pace of integration of health and social care services with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. Whilst progress is being made, we currently face challenges in achieving the integrated approach that is required to ensure the health and social system is delivering the outcomes we need and that these essential services are sustainable going forward. This will continue to be addressed as we plan our approach in 2023/24.

Promoting and improving the wellbeing of those we help – The six quality standards.

The tables below demonstrate how our priorities are delivering the six quality standards and where more information can be found in the main body of this report:

Quality Standard 1 - Working with people to define and co-produce personal wellbeing outcomes that people wish to achieve.	
Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Reduce waiting times in Adult Services and monitored performance monthly.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Waiting times
Review and redesign our Information, Advice & Assistance Service in both Adult Services and Children's Services to ensure it meets changing needs and increasing demand	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Adults IAA Further information can be found by clicking this link: Children's IAA
Ensure effective working arrangements with South Wales Police to implement the new legislative framework set by Section 1 of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 (Children Wales Act) which came into force on 21 March 2022.	We have established effective working arrangements with South Wales Police to implement the new legislative framework. Referrals have been low, and no issues have been identified from the legislation and its implementation
Our 2023/24 Priorities	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will continue to invest in services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. 2. We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy - Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. 	

Promoting and improving the wellbeing of those we help – The six quality standards.

Quality Standard 2 - Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing.	
Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Complete development and implementation of Home First and discharge to recover to assess hospital model that enables timely and safe discharge	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Hospital Discharge
Complete work with Health to agree new model of sustainable integrated primary and community services and implement	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Integrated Community Services
Work with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to review and redesign community and older people mental health services to provide more responsive access and effective joined up mental health support	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Mental Health
Embed then evaluate the work of the Therapy Panel, which coordinates access to therapy and enhances trauma informed and therapeutic approaches within children's services	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Therapy Panel
Our 2023/24 Priorities	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will continue to work with Health to explore options for the development of an integrated community health and social care locality model. 2. Work with Health to improve patient experience and redesign pathways to improve admission avoidance and "home first" services to ensure timely transfers between health and social care settings so that people are in the most appropriate care setting. 3. Work with Health to complete review and redesign Community mental health services to provide responsive access and effective mental health support. 4. We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy - Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. 	

Promoting and improving the wellbeing of those we help – The six quality standards.

Quality Standard 3 - Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect, or harm	
Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Continue development of, and progress on, the implementation of the MAGU project to integrate health and social care services available to women from 12 weeks of pregnancy through to the child's first birthday.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: MAGU
Continue to prepare for the commencement of the Liberty Protection Safeguards, equipping staff with the necessary knowledge and skills and ensuring effective delivery of obligations such as assessments.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Safeguarding
Our 2023/24 Priorities	
1. We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy - Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after.	

Promoting and improving the wellbeing of those we help – The six quality standards.

Quality Standard 4 - Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society.	
Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Complete development of our new co-produced day service offer for people with a learning disability to improve access community based services and volunteering and employment opportunities	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Day Services
Develop an engagement and coproduction plan for Adult Services, building on the work already undertaken through the Learning Disability Transformation Programme	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Co-production
Finalise and commence implementation of Children's Services Participation Strategy	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Participation Strategy
In line with the recommendations of the report by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru which was published at the end of the financial year, we will take action to increase the take-up of social care by people from minority ethnic communities.	We are embarking on a process of cultural competence with a view to increasing awareness about the needs of the BAME community in RCT, and ensure that our responses are informed and attuned.
Our 2023/24 Priorities	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will co-produce our day services offer for older people to improve access to outreach and community based services that will meet their needs. 2. We will co-produce the transformation of our service offer for people with a learning disability to improve access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives. 3. We will deliver the Participation strategy which outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments. 	

Promoting and improving the wellbeing of those we help – The six quality standards.

Quality Standard 5 - Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family, and personal relationships.	
Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Make a contribution to ensure the second stage of the evaluation of the early Years Transformation Programme, which is focusing on the systems and processes which underpin the model, and it was completed on time.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Early Years
To further develop the relationship between the Single Point of Access and Preventative Services in Adult Services with the Community Hubs to promote a Social Prescribing approach.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Community Resilience
To roll out Wellbeing Assessments for the wider community, this will ensure that the Community Hubs can document and plan support around an individual's wellbeing needs	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Community Resilience
Our 2023/24 Priorities	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will work with unpaid carers and partners to ensure respite provision is meeting their needs and the needs of individuals who use services so that people are able to live in their family homes for longer. 2. We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy - Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. 	

Promoting and improving the wellbeing of those we help – The six quality standards.

Quality Standard 6 - Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.	
Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Continue to work with Linc to deliver the Council's extra care housing development programme	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Developing new accommodation options
Continue to review and develop proposals for the ongoing redevelopment and modernisation of the Council's residential care homes to ensure we create the right model of service to respond to changes in demand and need.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Developing new accommodation options
Complete Supported Accommodation Strategy and work with Housing Providers to continue build modern fit for purpose supported housing options for vulnerable people	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Developing new accommodation options
Develop commissioning intent to shape a sustainable home care market in line redesigned service model	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Domiciliary Care
Commission Community Catalyst to support people and local partners to develop small enterprises that can provide real choice and increase the number and range of homecare and support options	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Direct Payments
Continue to implement the Residential Action Plan and Feasibility Study for looked after children	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Residential Strategy
Our 2023/24 Priorities	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will continue to progress the Council's vision and strategy for care accommodation for older and vulnerable people to ensure we create the right service offer that responds to increasing demand and changing needs, enabling more people to live independently in their community. 2. We will continue work with domiciliary care providers to ensure that people receive good quality home care based on the outcomes they want to achieve and that there is sufficient provision available at the right level to meet demand. 3. We will empower people to commission their own care and support through greater promotion of direct payments. 4. We will work with unpaid carers and partners to ensure respite provision is meeting their needs and the needs of individuals who use services so that people are able to live in their family homes for longer 5. Deliver the Children's Residential Transformation Strategy - Making sure that the Council provides the accommodation and support that our looked after children need. 	