



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW OF THE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE SERVICE

29th APRIL 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR GARETH CAPLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Author: Colette Limbrick, Head of Early Help

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an overview of the transformation that is planned in relation to the Information, Advice, and Assistance (IAA) Service and seek agreement to approve and adopt the proposed IAA Review Strategy referred to below as Right Help, Right Time, and Right Place.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Agrees to adopt the 'Right Help, Right Time, Right Place' Strategy, and its implementation plan, noting its ambition to deliver sustainable better access to the right help for vulnerable families whose needs are predicted to continue to increase.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Demand for Children's Services had seen an increase in recent years, and change is required. The correlation between families accessing the right help at the right time and reduced community needs for care and support services is well established. Children's Services is seeking to transform the offer of IAA in a way that is sustainable in the context of likely continuing high levels of demand, and with the ambition of providing better services for families and improved outcomes for children. It is aligned with digital transformation, and place-based transformations that will be taking place over the next few years.



4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Our vision for this strategy is to provide a service that helps **prevent** problems getting worse by **allowing people to make informed decisions, take independent measures to support their wellbeing, and where necessary receive support and interventions** that ensure children and young people are **protected from harm and abuse**. We will work closely with our partners, and communities, to ensure that children and families can access trusted and high-quality information, advice, and assistance as close to their initial point of contact as possible. The work included in this report forms part of a system of change, it's one of 5 areas of transformation being progressed by Children's Services in line with the Council's vision and corporate plans, Government Policy as well as service values and purpose. The other 4 areas of transformation are Workforce, Children Looked After Prevention, Residential Transformation and Participation.

Legal Duty

- 4.2 The Social Services and Well-Being Act sets out a Council's duty to provide IAA at Part 2 [part-2-code-of-practice-general-functions.pdf \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/part-2-code-of-practice-general-functions.pdf). IAA represents the front door for well-being services for families, and is a core component within Children's Services. The IAA service provides information about support from services including community based, and local partner services. In addition to the provision of information, the service offers advice through the undertaking of 'What Matters Most' conversations, where families are assisted with making informed decisions about how to access their own support from the range of early help services, and it is identified whether there is a role for social services. The IAA Service can, with consent, connect families to the Resilient Families Service for early intervention support, and the Enquiries and Assessment Team for further assessment where there is a safeguarding concern or more complex needs. The Service also triage any safeguarding concerns and will refer to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as required.

Meeting Need

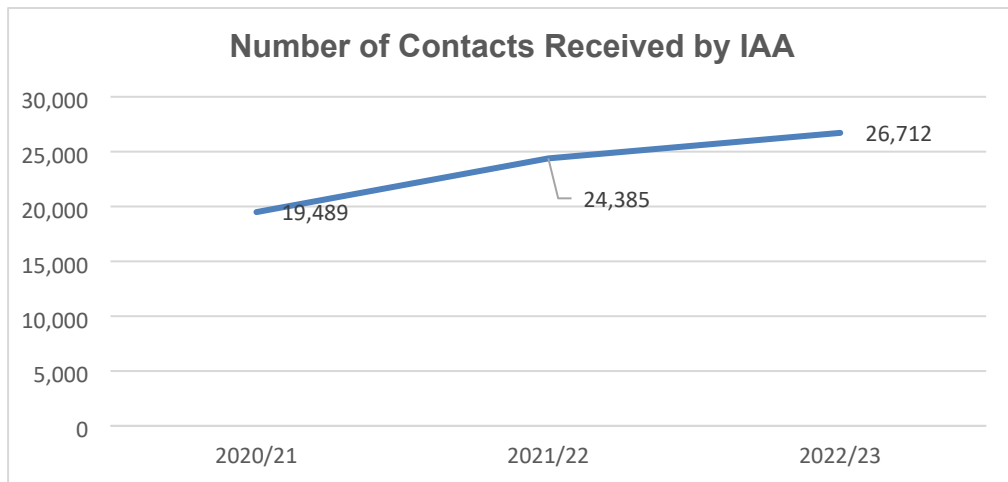
- 4.3 Ongoing increases in demand illustrated in the chart below and resulting pressures on service delivery, made it a prudent time to conduct a review of the IAA Service. We asked the Institute of Public Care to co-produce a review enabling us to reflect on what has been learnt over the last 3 years and identify what we need to do to develop the strongest possible approach to the provision of IAA, and Early Help, in Children Services.



Contacts received by IAA

4.4 As shown on the charts below, there has been a 25% increase in contacts between 2020/21 and 2021/22, and 10% increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23, representing a 37% increase between 2020/21 and 2022/23

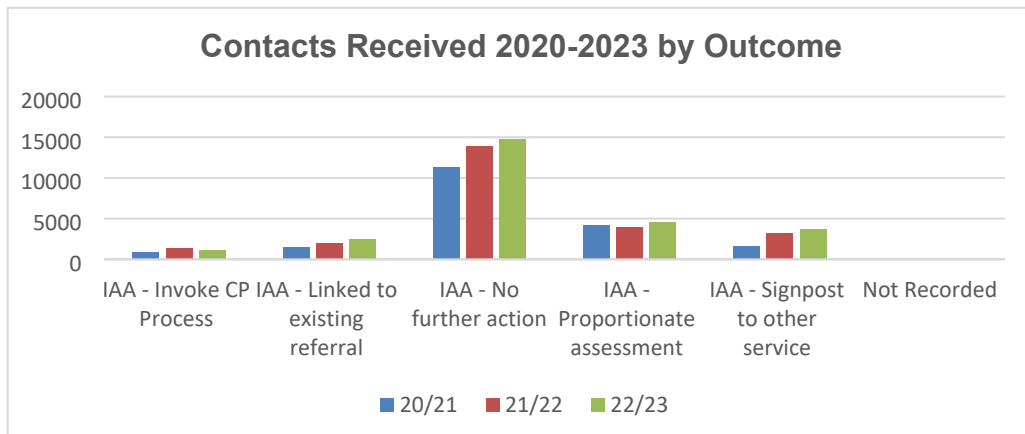
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of contacts received by IAA	19,489	24,385	26,712



Outcome of contacts received

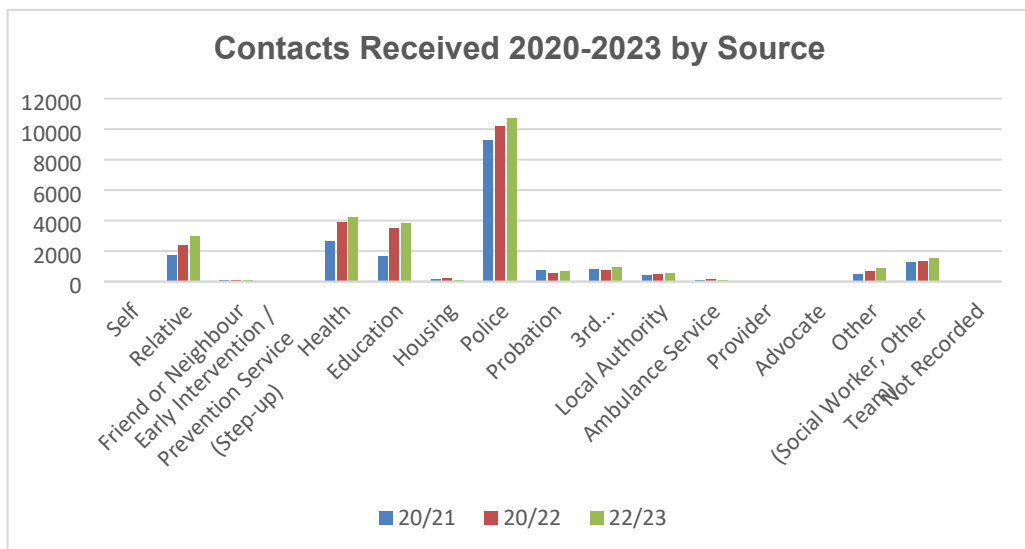
4.5 There has been a 30% increase in contacts that do not proceed to proportionate assessment (referenced as no further action in the chart below), between 20/21 and 22/23. There has been a 132% increase in contacts that are signposted to other services.

4.6 This data supports the need to ensure that families are as quickly as possible connected to the right help, in the right place, at the right time, where there is no need for a referral into Children's Services.



Referral source

4.7 As shown the chart below, Police, Health, and Education submit the highest number of referrals, followed by relatives. There has been a 5% increase in referrals from the Police, a 7% increase from Health, and a 9% increase from Education, between 2021/22 and 2022/23.



Co-occurring transformation work

4.8 At the time of writing Children’s Services have been consulted or contributed to other related strategic work involving partners in a cultural shift with the aim of working alongside communities to find better ways of meeting need locally, sustainably and with more choice and involvement. This provides a welcome context in which to connect with partners who are in change-mode but equally a level of complexity where we will need to interface well, and also seek to avoid duplication. Those initiatives are:



**Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) £5 Million
Awarded to Reduce Health Inequality (rctcbc.gov.uk)**

- 4.9 The purpose of the HDRC is to provide essential capacity and develop local authority capability to advance evidence-based practice, to generate knowledge to inform decisions, and to test and innovate to improve the health of our populations. The HDRC will focus on improving the outcomes that can be achieved against priorities in the Corporate Plan. Of relevance to the Right Help, Right Time, and Right Place strategy are:
- Striving to reduce child poverty, providing services that encourage and build resilience of children and their families. Improving services for children and young people and ensuring their needs are considered in everything the Council does.
 - Supporting the voluntary, community and faith sectors to help build active communities, creating the capacity for meeting the needs of residents within those communities.

Community Resilience Hubs (RPB feasibility study underway)

- 4.10 Cabinet approved the development of up to 10 Community Resilience Hubs in 2019. A feasibility study is currently underway which is seeking to identify potential neighbourhood assets (buildings) that have the potential to be developed into General Community Wellbeing Hubs or could be utilised to build from new Integrated Health and Social Care Hubs.
- 4.11 The Right Help, Right Time, and Right Place strategy identifies the need for Children's Services to bring together partners and communities in one ambition to better coordinate and integrate responses to early help needs.

RCT Locality Planning Group

- 4.12 This is an All-Wales Accelerated Cluster Development programme linked to a Healthier Wales ([A healthier Wales: long term plan for health and social care | GOV.WALES](#))

CTM offer, a CEO LA and UHB led proposal (Lessons from the Wigan Deal | The King's Fund (kingsfund.org.uk))

- 4.13 As leaders of public services, we are looking for a different and better way of doing things and are inviting a new conversation and partnership with communities that requires transformational change with a view to engaged and empowered communities and sustainable future provision.



We are committed to acting as one team, across Health, Social Care and our communities, pursuing the common goal, united in our purpose and in how we achieve this. In doing so we are seeking to achieve the following impact.

- Choice about how to get help when its needed
- Control about how that help is accessed
- Locally attuned responses for local people
- Reduced escalation of need and risk to statutory services
- Community led peer support
- More resilient communities
- Better conversations between services and people that result in improved understanding of need and solutions
- Improved health, well-being and life-expectancy
- Greater job satisfaction, wellbeing and recruitment amongst staff

5. IAA REVIEW

5.1 The purpose of the review was to make recommendations on the optimum operating model that will deliver a good quality sustainable IAA in the context of significant public finances pressures and is aligned with compatible with other digital and place-based transformations that will be taking place over the next few years. The review highlighted what was working well, challenges, and opportunities. It concluded by highlighting areas for development and change as follows, the detail of which will be further developed in the implementation plan. Paragraphs 5.2 to 5.13 set out a summary of the work ahead.

What is working well

5.2 Partners felt that the service was effectively led and managed, and that staff had the right training and expertise and were doing a good job in a challenging environment of rising demand.

5.3 The team were felt to be approachable and willing to discuss concerns and review decisions if needed. Stability of staffing, and the team had a good track record of retention which helped with establishing good relationships with partner agency staff.

5.4 There was an effective pathway to early help. About a third of 'What Matters' conversations resulted in a referral to the Resilient Families Service (RFS) in 2022/23.

5.5 There was an effective & efficient response to safeguarding issues - these were quickly identified and channelled to MASH. Strategy meetings were held very quickly, and the majority were well attended, with well-informed discussions.



- 5.6 Partnership working focused on safeguarding at strategic level was felt to be good. The Regional Safeguarding Board was highly thought of and described by one interviewee as a “Healthy and mature partnership” (Police representative). The IAA manager was said to make a positive contribution to safeguarding subgroups and school cluster meetings.

Managing demand

- 5.7 There is a need to develop new ways of working which will help with responding to the high volume of referrals coming into the IAA Service, and which will include exploring co-location with relevant partners.

The IAA workforce

- 5.8 Managers are working closely on implementation of the Children’s Services Workforce Strategy. Additionally, managers will explore how capacity can be increased through reviewing how key functions within the team are currently delivered.

Enhancing the Offer

- 5.9 This involves improving the digital offer of information and advice to families, children, and professionals by bringing together multiple sources of information held by the Council as well as by partners, and community organisations, so that families can self-help through being able to access trusted information and advice.

Improving partnership working

- 5.10 Providing more opportunities for all agencies to come together and discuss the fine balance between an agency’s own responsibility to manage safeguarding concerns and risks and when it is appropriate to share these with the IAA, is just one way in which this area for development will be addressed.

Better use of IT

- 5.11 Recognising the constraints of many different IT systems, work is already underway to improve connectivity between the MASH and other agencies including IAA.

Improve data collection and analysis

- 5.12 There is a need to ensure that staff in the IAA team are more aware of the team’s performance metrics and links to wider children’s service performance data/management.



Development of a regional approach

- 5.13 In response to the difficulties that partner agencies including Health and the Police experience in working across 3 different local authority IAAs, it would be helpful to explore whether there could be some common agreement about definitions of the IAA function and shared terminology. There are already some useful regional projects underway, for example work on initial decision making.

6. OUR STRATEGY

- 6.1 Our ambition is to transform service delivery, and align it with the place-based transformation of service delivery that is being planned for RCT. This will involve developing strong service delivery in communities, developed with people and their communities that is focused on prevention, self-help, and early intervention, which can lead to more intensive support when needed. A key element of the strategy will be to develop the skills within community-based services to identify early on when people need to have a broader conversation about what matters most to them, and to facilitate access to the right support, in the right place, at the right time. Implementation of this strategy will require significant collaboration with other Council departments who are similarly engaged in supporting people to connect to help in their communities, and timescales will be contingent on the pace of change that can be achieved in this collaboration. The implementation plan overseen by the steering group will develop the timeline for that.

- 6.2 The overall objectives are that:

- Families and professionals can access information and advice how and when they want, which includes a trusted, and high-quality digital offer, which helps parents help themselves.
- Our information and advice offer is active, and supports families to access relevant help. We want to make the very first contact the most important one, so that families feel listened to and have a clear response which could include referral to 'universal services' or help from other service providers.
- Our partners are present, and we work with and alongside each other to support families to prevent escalation of need, by ensuring they get help from the right person at the right time.
- Our work is relationship based - we carry out high quality 'what matters most' conversations (what this looks like will be shaped by our model of practice) – families and professionals can speak, consult, work out next steps together.



- Referrals reduce because people get the right help, in the right place, at the right time.

Situations that require more structured care and support intervention from children's services, or child protection, etc. are quickly identified and channelled for assessment and inter-agency intervention, as necessary.

6.3 We will evaluate success using the following measures:

- Feedback from public and professionals who have accessed our digital information and advice concludes that they are able to access relevant resources that they feel are reliable and trustworthy.
- Feedback from families who have received a direct service from a co-located and co-delivering team concludes that they can access the right support, in the right place, at the right time.
- Referrals for information and advice into the service decrease by 10%.
- Increased capacity within the service reduces reliance on agency staff by 10%.

6.4 A multi-agency IAA Review Steering Group has been established that will oversee the development and delivery of the strategy and implementation plan. The Steering Group representatives are coming together in a workshop facilitated by IPC using a "theory of change" methodology to explore opportunities to develop key areas contained within the strategy.

6.5 A detailed implementation plan, impact assessment and project risk management plan has been developed, and the Steering Group will oversee implementation and adjustment of that plan and the interface of this work with the other co-occurring transformation work mentioned in section 4 above.

6.6 Additionally, there is an internal Council working group that is collaborating to ensure that there is joined up thinking and activity on the development of community based delivery of services.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

7.1 There are no immediate Equality and Diversity/Social-Economic Duty implications relating to the recommendations within this report.

- 7.2 An EQIA pre-screening exercise has been completed and no negative impacts identified at this stage and the indication is that the impact of the new strategy will be positive. Processes are in place to monitor the impact of the Strategy for any unintended negative consequences.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no immediate Welsh Language implications relating to the recommendations within this report. Implementation of proposed Strategy will comply with Welsh Government's "More Than Just Words" Strategic Framework in Health and Social Care.

9. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 9.1 Consultation with stakeholders, including children and young, has taken place throughout the review. We will continue to involve children and young people and stakeholders from statutory partners, and the voluntary sector, in the development and implementation of the strategy.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 10.1 Thus far staff have met the increasing demand within existing resources that are presently strained with examples of additional hours being worked. Staff supported by managers are carrying out process reviews aimed at reducing activity to only what is necessary to run a safe service and looking for new ways of doing things.
- 10.2 If this work cannot deliver its intended goal, the service may need to make the case to increase the staffing base of the team in order to meet unavoidable need.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (SSWA) (Wales) 2014¹, requires all Welsh local authorities to provide an IAA Service. A key objective for the service is that it promotes early intervention and prevention so that people of all ages can be better supported to achieve their personal outcomes and explore options for meeting their care and support needs. The legislation says that IAA should be seen as a preventive service in its own right.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents>



12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

12.1 This provision aligns strongly with the ambitions of **Working With Our Communities**. It also supports the Council to contribute to all of the seven well-being goals:-

- **A prosperous Wales:** children and families who can access high quality information, advice, and assistance are better supported for prosperous lives.
- **A resilient Wales:** children and families who are enabled to help themselves to overcome adversity, and access support when necessary, are better able to work through challenges towards success.
- **A healthier Wales:** high quality provision of information, advice, and assistance, will support children and families to connect to, and take advantage of, local opportunities and services to help them improve their lifestyle.
- **A more equal Wales:** children and families will be supported to achieve their fulfil potential, no matter what their background or circumstances, through the delivery of information, advice, and assistance in the localities in which they live.
- **A Wales of cohesive Communities:** access to services that are not restricted to particular communities promotes equality and harmony across communities and the means to share community resources in order to be responsive to need and build resilience.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** children who are given the potential to thrive learn to be tolerant and accepting, preparing them for a multi-racial, globalised adult world.
- **A globally responsible Wales:** children who have access to high quality information, advice, and assistance are afforded experiences that prepare them to be globally responsible.

13. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

13.1 The document is strategic and is applicable to all electoral wards and residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (SSWA) (Wales) 2014², requires all Welsh local authorities to provide an IAA Service.
- 14.2 The Review of the IAA has highlighted areas for development, which are encapsulated in the new Strategy and implementation plan for approval in Section 2 above.
- 14.3 The Strategy to transform the delivery of IAA has been prepared with a view to providing a service that helps prevent problems getting worse by allowing people to make informed decisions, take independent measures to support their wellbeing, and where necessary receive support and interventions that ensure children and young people are protected from harm and abuse. By working closely with our partners, and communities, we seek to ensure that children and families can access trusted and high-quality information, advice, and assistance as close to their initial point of contact as possible.

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents>



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW OF THE INFORMATION, ADVICE, AND
ASSISTANCE SERVICE**

29th APRIL 2024

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH
COUNCILLOR GARETH CAPLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND
SOCIAL CARE**

Background papers

None

Officer to contact

Annabel Lloyd, Director of Children's Services