

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 19 September 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Healthy Living and Social Care
Report Title:	Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2023-2024 – Final Version
Purpose of Report:	To ensure that Cabinet agree the future priorities for the Directorate of Social Services
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health
Responsible Officer:	Director of Social Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Social Services Management Team Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Challenge Version of the Director’s report was considered by Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee in July. Committee Members provided positive feedback. • A finalised version following feedback from partners is presented to Cabinet for approval. • The report contains several priorities which the Director of Social Services and Social Services senior management team has determined. These have been set in the context of significant increases in demand. Cabinet is asked to agree these improvement priorities. 	

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet considers the content of this report.
2. That Cabinet approves the Director's Annual Report for 2023/24 (attached at Appendix 1).
3. That Cabinet agrees the improvement priorities for Social Services as set out in the Director's Annual Report for 2023/24.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure that the Director's Annual Report is considered by elected Members.
2. To ensure that the Director's Annual Report for 2023/24 has the approval and agreement of Cabinet.
3. To ensure that the priorities as set out by the Director of Social Services are approved by Cabinet.

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the statutory duties, the Director of Social Services is required by the Welsh Government to produce an annual report on the effectiveness of social care services in the Vale of Glamorgan and on our plans for improvement. This gives the Director an opportunity to provide people in the Vale with a rounded picture of social services based on evidence drawn from a wide range of sources such as what users and carers say, key performance indicators, and measurements of progress against the overall goals of the Council.
- 1.2 The report is written for a wide range of people, including service users and carers but also Elected Members, the Council's own staff, and the range of partners and providers who help us deliver our services. It is used by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as evidence and to guide their inspection programme in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.3 The report reflects on progress over the last financial year.
- 1.4 The Corporate Plan sets the vision by identifying priorities that are aligned to well-being outcomes and objectives. In planning how we will deliver services over the coming years, our annual Services Plan outlines our service specific contributions to their priorities. The corporate Service Planning process has been used to set out our improvement agenda and to inform the development of the priorities in 2023/24 in the Director's Annual Report.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 This is an important report for the people of the Vale of Glamorgan, Members of the Council and our partners, both statutory and in other sectors. It outlines the current context within which social services are operating and priorities for improvement.

- 2.2 The final report has been prepared following the circulation of a challenge version. This has allowed key stakeholders opportunities to comment and make observations before the report is finalised, ensuring that it accurately reflects the position of social services.
- 2.3 As part of the challenge process, the challenge version of the report was presented to Scrutiny Committee to provide Elected Members with an opportunity to contribute their views. This is regarded as a key milestone in finalising the report because of the crucial role which the Committee has in providing consistent oversight and monitoring of social services.
- 2.4 Scrutiny Committee provided helpful comments regarding the challenge version which resulted in some amendments. These included reference to further planned work with regard to avoiding complaints regarding communication in Children's Services. Committee also requested more comparative information however this has been difficult to provide due to the unavailability of comparative data. The all-Wales data that is currently available appears inconsistent due to varied collection methods. The committee also endorsed the report and expressed gratitude for the work of the PPE team during the pandemic.
- 2.5 Further responses were received from the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and the 50+ Forum. The feedback from the RPB firmly endorsed the report and resulted in some changes being made to the Partnership Working section which now includes reference to our commitments to the regional planning arrangements. The Council's Strategic Leadership Team also reviewed the report and noted it covered broad areas and was comprehensive.
- 2.6 The final report will be made available via the Council's website.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 The challenge version of the report was a consultation document and was sent for consideration to a wide range of partners. A feedback proforma was provided which was returned via email. The comments received were evaluated and, where appropriate, changes to the report were made. There are no matters in the report which relate to an individual ward.
- 3.2 The need to ensure that services are sustainable in the longer term is a key element in the priority outcomes set out in the annual report. Delivering sustainable social services will require greater emphasis on prevention and people accepting more responsibility for tackling factors which can increase demand for social care and health services.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct climate change and nature implications as a result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The report is set out within the context of:
- increasing demand for help and support;
 - managing the impact of finite budgets;
 - efforts to focus more of our work on supporting people to remain as independent as possible.
- 5.2** The priority objectives contained in the reports will be delivered within the financial constraints set by the Social Services Budget Programme, which is approved by Cabinet and reported regularly.

Employment

- 5.3** There are no employment issues as a result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.4** The former reporting requirements for Directors of Social Services in Part 6 of the “Statutory Guidance on the Role and Accountabilities of the Director of Social Services” (Welsh Government June 2009) have been replaced as a consequence of both the Social Services and Well-Being Act 2014, and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.
- 5.5** The requirements for the social services report are contained in a number of pieces of legislation and codes. In purely headline terms the requirements are that every Local Authority must produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions and the report must include:
- An evaluation of the performance in delivering social services functions for the past year including lessons learned (Part 8 Code on the role of the Director).
 - How the Local Authority has achieved the six quality standards for well-being outcomes (set out in the code on measuring performance).
 - Qualitative and quantitative data relating to the achievement of well-being outcomes (also set out in the code on measuring performance).
 - The extent to which the Local Authority has met requirements under Parts 3 and 4 of the SSWB Act as set out in separate codes covering assessing needs and meeting needs.
 - Objectives for promoting the well-being of people needing care and support and carers needing support for the following year including those identified by population needs assessments under section 14 of the SSWB Act.
 - Assurances concerning: structural arrangements enabling good governance and strong accountability, effective partnership working via Partnership Boards and safeguarding arrangements.

- The Local Authority's performance in handling and investigating complaints responses to any inspections of its social services functions.
- 5.6** An update on Welsh language provision on how the Local Authority has engaged people (including children) in the production of the report.

6. Background Papers

[Report to Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 9th July 2024.](#)

The Local Authority Annual Social Services Reports Guidance:

[https://socialcare.wales/cms_assets/hub-downloads/The Local Authority Annual Social Services Reports Guidance.pdf](https://socialcare.wales/cms_assets/hub-downloads/The_Local_Authority_Annual_Social_Services_Reports_Guidance.pdf)

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Social Services: Director's Annual Report 2023-2024

Foreword

As the Director of Social Services for the Vale of Glamorgan Council, I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2023-24.

The report is framed around the six well-being standards, as defined by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The report details the progress made against each of the priorities we said we would focus on over the past 12 months. The progress and developments outlined within this report are closely aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-25 and associated Annual Delivery Plan for 2023-24 and beyond.

Under each well-being standard the report identifies the key priorities for the forthcoming year. The identification of priorities for next year was not done in isolation but was part of a far more holistic and integrated process that is closely aligned to our public consultation on the Annual Delivery Plan. The priorities/actions set out in the Annual Delivery Plan have been shaped by the voice of our citizens and remains the key planning document we have used this year to support the identification of priorities for Social Services in the forthcoming year.

Yet again this past year has been incredibly challenging for Social Services. The legacy of lock downs, the cost-of-living crisis, and changing demographics have resulted in ever increasing demand. This is in a context of limited finances and sustained staffing challenges.

Although we anticipate that the challenges will remain with us for potentially years to come, we are evolving and adapting our response to the rapidly changing and uncertain landscape. None of this could have been achieved without the dedication and resilience of our staff. By working with our partners, communities, and citizens we have been able to maximise our efforts and help those most in need. We owe it to all of those that need and use our services to make them responsive and available to them in a timely way although in the current context in some areas this is increasingly challenging.

There are several achievements over the last year that we are proud to celebrate (as outlined in this report). In particular I am extremely proud of the work of our PPE team which has now drawn to a close. I have no doubt that their incredible efforts and flexibility in supporting our staff and residents through the pandemic had a direct impact on reducing loss of life and harm. The closure of this team marks a pivotal moment as we move beyond the pandemic and their outstanding contribution is noteworthy. Additionally, we have also supported the independent sector to increase the capacity and availability of domiciliary care. In recent years this had become a significant problem resulting in delays in arranging this care for our residents and I am pleased we are now in the position where this is no longer the case. We continue to monitor this closely as we know the care system has limited resilience.

Throughout this challenging year we have continued to stick to our strategic aims, and it is nice to see we are still managing to increase the control our service users have over their care and support, and progress towards more strengths-based models.

I want to thank all those members of staff and our partners for the vital role they play in delivering high quality care and support to the citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan.



1 – PPE Team.

Director's Summary of Performance

Summary of Performance



We have continued to collect a range of performance measures from across the three divisions (Children and Young People Services, Adult Services, and Resource Management and Safeguarding) that make up the Directorate. This collection and reporting of performance information alongside other management information is undertaken through the Welsh Community Care and Information System (WCCIS). Collecting a suite of performance measures provides us with a snapshot of our performance over the past year.

Following a positive Performance Evaluation Inspection by CIW in January 2023 we have continued to work on the suggested areas for improvement and I am pleased to see good progress in delivering those changes albeit in the context of challenges across Wales.

During 2022-23, we identified four areas for improvement:

Increase the total number of adult protection enquiries completed within 7 working days
Improve the recording of the protected characteristics of adults, children, and young people
Increase the number of people supported by Reablement Services
Continue to improve the timeliness of assessments and the review of care and support plans

Improvement has been seen in all areas, except for timeliness of assessments in children and young people services. Improvement still needs to be made in recording processes in this area to enable us to demonstrate progress made. A snapshot of other improvements made can be seen in the table below.

During 2023-24 some of our key performance achievements have included increasing the timeliness of reviews. Timeliness of reviews for individuals receiving care and support are crucial as they ensure that their evolving needs are promptly assessed and addressed. By improving the review timelines, we can provide more responsive and tailored services, adapting to changes in circumstances and preferences. This proactive approach enhances the overall quality of care and support, promoting individual well-being, independence, and dignity. It also strengthens communication and collaboration between people who use our services their families and care providers, fostering trusting relationships and a person-centred approach to care and support delivery.

We have also been able to reduce the length of time an adult has to wait for a social care need assessment and the time they have to wait for a domiciliary care package to be put in place. This ensures that adults in need receive timely support promoting their overall well-being and quality of life. By minimising delays, we can address urgent or escalating care needs more promptly, preventing potential crises and hospital admissions. Additionally shorter waiting times for adults enhances satisfaction and engagement, demonstrating our commitment to meeting their needs efficiently. The increased availability of care has also had a positive impact on our reablement services who have been able to provide less “bridging” or “interim” care, and have been able to focus on rehabilitation, and supporting timely discharges from hospital. The team have provided less hours of service but have not developed a waiting list. There are a number of vacancies in the service which has restricted the ability to expand their remit therefore they continued to operate a targeted rehabilitation focused model.

We have reduced the time it takes to make decisions on contacts made to Children and Young People Services. This ensures swift intervention in cases where children may be at risk, enabling timely assessment and support to safeguard their well-being. By minimising delays in decision making, we can prioritise the safety and welfare of vulnerable children, potentially averting harm or further escalation of concerns. Additionally quicker response times enhance collaboration with families and professionals, facilitating early engagement and support planning. This proactive approach prevents family instability, reduces trauma for children and caregivers and strengthens relationships with partner agencies and community resources. Moreover, expediting decision making enhances organisational efficiency and compliance with statutory requirements, ultimately improving outcomes for children and families involved with Children and Young People Services.

We have recently implemented a Performance Management Framework in Social Services to enhance accountability, transparency, and overall effectiveness. By establishing clear performance indicators and tracking mechanisms we aim to streamline our business processes, identify areas for improvement and ultimately enhance the quality of service provided to our community. This framework allows us to set measurable goals, monitor progress and making firm decisions to better meet the needs of those we serve.

Outlined below are some highlights that provide a snapshot of our performance over the last year. In addition, comparative annual statistics for local authorities from the Welsh Government's [Stats Wales](#) website. However, please note these data sets available from Stats Wales are not reflective of this year's data and so comparison is limited. In considering our highlights we have

reviewed this information, our progress since last year in determining our performance highlights and areas for improvement.

Social Services Performance Snapshot HIGHLIGHTS
8% increase in the total number of adults with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31 March 2024.
51% increase in the number of care and support plans for adults that were reviewed within statutory timescales and a 75% increase in the number of care and support plans for adults supported by direct payments that were reviewed within statutory timescales, during the year.
77% decrease in the number of adults waiting for domiciliary care.
53% decrease in the number of adults waiting for a social care needs assessment.
43% increase in safeguarding enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse.
74% increase of young carers (or professionals on their behalf) contacting the service during the year.
53% increase in the number of contacts received by statutory children's social services during the year where a decision was made by the end of the next working day.
19% increase in the number of child protection reviews and a 13% increase in the number of children looked after reviews that were completed within statutory timescales.
20% increase in the total number of children with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31 March 2024
51% increase in the number of initial child protection conferences held during the collection year that were held within statutory timescales.

Vale Family Information Service achieves the Families First Quality Award

The Vale Family Information Service has achieved the Families First Quality Award. The third FIS in Wales to achieve this. The national Award recognises Family Information Services (FIS) that demonstrate excellence in providing information, advice, and assistance to local families.

The Award demonstrates that they exceed the requirements set out in the legislation and statutory guidance and provide information and assistance of the highest quality. This includes the Welsh Government's requirements of the Information and Advice Quality Framework (IAQF).

FIS provide information to families, professionals, and childcare providers, to make informed choices about childcare, help with childcare costs, activities and services for children, young people and families in the Vale.

The Assessment required the FIS team to evidence 16 standards including how their service supported families of children with disabilities. The Assessor also interviewed partners, managers and parents who have used the service.

Some particular strengths identified in the assessment included:

Leadership, which encourages and models a culture of partnership working and continuous improvement, and communication is effective.

A strengths-based, holistic, non-judgemental and inclusive approaches are applied in the way that staff engage with service users.

Parents and carers interviewed with complex needs, including those who have children with additional needs and disabilities, also spoke highly of the team's willingness to research provision and sources of funding where necessary.

Working with partners to deliver an 'outreach' service to parents in the community was highlighted as a strength. The FIS Christmas Family Party, which attracted over 700 people, was identified as an excellent opportunity for parents to speak to partners about the support available.

Feedback and comments from parents

A number of parents interviewed reported that the support of the FIS was empowering and had changed their lives. For example, reducing their anxiety, enhancing their own and their children's wellbeing, and enabling them to work.

"I found out about the Family Information Service via a friend's Facebook page. I contacted them, as I wanted a nursery using the medium of Welsh for my son. They got back to me really quickly. They also told me about the Childcare Offer. The team is so helpful, I just phoned them. I have used their information on Summer Activities as well."

"The SNAP Cymru helpline told me about the Family Information Service. I looked at The Index and I also read about them on social media. I have two children with disabilities. I can access the FIS using different media, which is good for me, as I have autism and disabilities as well. The FIS first helped me with information about how to get reasonable adjustments in school for my children. They also found Summer Activities for us. I have been able to access grants via The Index. The Index Newsletter is really helpful. They always follow-up after my calls to check if I still need help, which is great when you are neurodiverse. They advocate on my behalf as well. I feel listened to and empowered. The help they have given to me means that I am now back at work, and my mental health has improved, which has also had a positive impact on my children."

"The help I have had from the FIS has been life-changing. My child's school emailed me with contact details for the FIS. I followed them on Facebook, and I rang the FIS to ask about after school childcare, holiday childcare and funding, and also how to apply for this. The team has an exceptional amount of knowledge, and they helped me straightaway. They are very respectful, they listen, and they are approachable. They want to help. I have recommended them to my friends."

You can listen to some members of the FIS Team talking about the award and their service here: [Family Information Service Award Video](#) and find out more about them and what they do by visiting our website [Family Information Service \(FIS\) \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) or watching this video: [FIS Who are we and what do we do? Video](#)



Social Services Performance Snapshot

IMPROVEMENT AREAS

Increase the recording of assessments of unpaid adult, parent and young carers.

Increase the number of new assessments completed for children and young people during the year that are completed within statutory timescales.

Improve the recording of statutory visits to children and young people

Challenges

Summarised below is a snapshot of some of the key challenges Social Services has tackled over the last year and challenges that we are likely to continue to face going forward. Many of these challenges aren't new and in some cases are becoming increasingly difficult to resolve.

Children and Young People Services: Overview of service challenges

- The service has continued to experience significant increases in demand for care and support across all areas of key activity, reflected both in numbers and complexity.
- Linked to increasing levels of demand, the number of children looked after has increased. This places increased pressure on our existing resources and in a placement context, the service has become further reliant on externally purchased care, particularly independent fostering agency placements and residential care where availability has also visibly decreased.
- Recruitment and retention of Social Workers in the context of increased demand.

Adult Services: Overview of service challenges

- We continue to note the trend, where people entering statutory services are presenting with more complex needs, we continue to explore opportunities to interact at the earliest stage we can and signpost to preventative services, however the complexity and volume of demand continues to increase.
- The fragility of the Approved Mental Health Service Professionals continues to be of concern. Although we have made good progress, with more sustainable plans, there is still fragility.
- Challenges associated with ensuring that the citizens we work with are supported to access services in different ways and have the broadest choice of service models, in a person centred and cost-effective way.

Increasing costs of care provision within a societal context of austerity provides a significant challenge in terms of managing the adult social care budget.

Resource Management and Safeguarding Services: Overview of service challenges

- Recruitment and retention in care roles to our care homes has been challenging.
- Recruiting to the new structure within RMS and transitioning to the new working arrangements.
- Monitoring the quality assurance of our externally commissioned service providers is increasingly challenging due to the capacity and resources required to undertake this work.

- Increasing volume and complexity of Section 5 (allegations about practitioners and those in positions of trust) referrals.
- The work required in respect of the transition to the replacement for WCCIS.

How We Shape Our Services



Engaging with our citizens is vital to ensuring we understand the service user experience and can use this insight to enhance the quality of our service delivery. Engagement is essential to developing a more citizen-centred approach for how we provide care and support. Developing accessible and meaningful opportunities for consultation and engagement not only values the views of citizens and their experiences but it is also a key driver for improvement. Enhancing mechanisms through which individuals can have their 'voices' heard not only empowers our citizens to achieve their own wellbeing outcomes, but it is pivotal to the transformation of our services.

Outlined below is a summary of the key findings arising from this work.

We aimed to provide a variety of methods to enable citizens and their families to participate, using surveys (electronic and paper), semi structured interviews, telephone calls and focus groups.

Adult Services

During 2023-24, consultations were conducted in relation to the Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS), Day Services / Day Opportunities.

Outlined below is a summary of the key findings and identified areas of improvement arising from this work.

Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS)

This service provides reablement and support to enable adults to regain independence. We explored citizens' experiences of the VCRS, support from care staff, communication, and involvement in service planning.

Two separate consultations were undertaken. The first with Citizens, and the second with practitioners.

VCRS Citizens' Consultation

- Questionnaires were sent to 337 citizens between April 2022 and March 2023.
- Overall, 130 people responded (39%).
- 5 interviews were conducted.
- 25 phone calls were made.

VCRS Consultation Findings:

- Almost all (96%), felt the support helped them to complete the tasks important to them.
- Nearly all who responded were actively involved in decisions surrounding their care and support.
- 93% felt they were listened to throughout their involvement.
- 86% felt they were enabled to make changes to the service if necessary.
- Almost all felt the service was reliable.
- A large proportion of respondents felt they had more control over their daily life after receiving support (88%).
- Citizens felt that useful information and advice was available at the start of the service and as and when it was required.
- Respondents felt that care workers and the service were reliable and were very respectful to them.
- The service and support it provided resulted in an improvement to citizens' wellbeing.
- Citizens felt safer both physically and emotionally, because of the service.
- Many felt involved in the planning of the service and, also felt they could make changes if needed.

Areas For Action

- The findings indicated that expectations around timekeeping could be improved, a revised service user guide and statement of purpose outline the short-term nature of the rehabilitation service and dynamic rota arrangements, so our citizens are able to have clearer expectations.
- One citizen felt that greater consistency of staff would have assisted.

VCRS Practitioner Consultation

The Team is based within Barry Hospital and consist of various social care and health professionals.

The aim of the survey was to enhance commitment to providing quality services and identify areas for improvement.

Findings:

- Staff felt the team is very 'welcoming' to new staff.
- Staff felt they share a wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise.
- Staff feel the teams are citizen-centred and able to provide person-centred therapy.

Areas For Action:

- A more robust induction process is needed.
- There is a need for more team-building activities to break-down barriers between health staff and social care staff.

Day Opportunities

This service provides opportunities for people to engage in a variety of supported activities including leisure and volunteering in the community. For 2023-24 a Staff Survey was completed as below.

- Feedback was received from 8 Responders and the Survey was titled, 'Day Service Staff Survey 23-24'. The purpose of this consultation was to obtain feedback from staff who work within the service with a view to shaping service provision moving forward. This was carried out across our four settings, i.e. Rondel House; New Horizons; Woodlands and Trys o'r Le.

Day Opportunities Consultation findings:

- Individual Staff Members – 4 staff responders, reported they always felt valued by other staff and managers.
- 6 staff responders believed they were able to spend as much time with citizens as they felt needed during the day.

- 4 staff believed they had enough support to carry out their role.
- 4 staff believed they had someone within the workplace to speak to if there was a concern they needed to share.
- 2 responses welcomed staff consultation and would like to see more staff engagement in future and 1 of those stated this would be helpful without managers present.
- 1 response said there is regular supervision, so they feel supported.

Areas For Action:

- Staff felt that there was a need for ongoing consultation with staff moving forward.
- Supervision needs to continue.
- Transport services needs to be improved for citizens.
- Client activities need to be more tailored to individual's interests.

Children and Young People Services

During 2023-24 we explored the views and experiences of children, young people, parents, and carers in relation to our Placements Team, Flying Start Adoption Collaborative and 14 Plus Team.

Outlined below is a summary of the key findings, outcomes and identified areas of improvement arising from this work.

Placements Team – Assesses, approves, and supports foster carers for Vale of Glamorgan children in conjunction with our Fostering Panel.

- There were three Responses out of six approved Foster Carers from the VOG Foster Carers' Recruitment Survey 2023-24.
- The aim of the Recruitment Survey was to explore Foster Carers' views on the Recruitment Process and their experience following approval of the Local Authority Foster Carer.
- We explored the views of three newly recruited Foster Carers to establish their satisfaction with the information, support and training provided during the Recruitment Process.

Foster Care Recruitment Outcomes:

- All enquiries made regards Fostering within the Vale of Glamorgan were responded to in a prompt and efficient manner.
- Information provided allowed all Expressions of Interest to progress to an Assessment.

- One out of the three respondents stated from first appointment with Assessor to Panel Hearing took 4-6 months. One other stated this took 6-8 months, and the third respondent said it took 8+ months.
- All felt the Assessment Process helped them to become a Foster Carer.
- They were not prepared or expecting to have to answer so many questions at Panel, based on speaking to other Foster Carers.

Areas For Action:

- It was generally felt Assessors contacted Foster Carers to advise if appointments needed to be rescheduled, but there is some room for improvement.
- It may be necessary to ensure Foster Carers are made aware of the need to answer a high number of questions within Panel Hearing.

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC)

VVC brings together the adoption services of the Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr Tydfil, Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils.

- The service supports individuals through the adoption process and provision of support post adoption.
- The aim of this engagement is to understand experiences of the adoption process and the support they receive both pre and post adoption.

4 citizens engagement activity was conducted, as below.

VVC Post Placement – 2023-24, with 14 Respondents.

VVC Post Placement Outcomes:

- 13 people were satisfied with the content of their Adoption Support Plan.
- 7 Adopters had their Support Plan reviewed since placement.
- All Adopters received a completed Life Story book.
- All Adopters, except one received a completed Later Life Letter.

Areas for Action:

- Adopters recognised the value in engaging with consistent staff / Social Worker throughout the process.
- Some Adopters felt unequipped to deal with certain situations and would have liked to have received further feedback.
- One Adopter raised that once the adoption was granted, they felt that support ceased.

VVC Post Therapeutic, Education and Support Services in Adoption (TESSA) – 2023-24.

This is a Programme which aims to provide early access to specific support for adoptive parents as required.

There were 2 Respondents, both of which were from the Cardiff area.

VVC Post TESSA Outcomes:

- Both Respondents said they were interested in receiving further support.
- The wait for support is too long and does not address the need of the child which resulted in the parents left in crisis.

Areas for Action:

- As Respondents stated they were interested in further support this needs to be reviewed.
- As the wait for support is too long and does not address the need of the child and, as parents felt they were left in crisis, but not deemed urgent, this needs to be considered moving forward.

VVC Parent Evaluation Post CYPC – 2023-24.

- The aim of the survey was to receive views of the provision of family support or direct contact for adoptive families and family support groups.
- There were six Respondents. Two Respondents were from the VoG and four were from Cardiff.

VVC Parents Evaluation Post CYPC Outcomes:

- All Respondents positively rated the support they had received from the VVC Worker.
- As a result of the support received from VVC Staff, Respondents felt more confident understanding the reasons for their child's behaviour, enhancing behaviour management.
- All Respondents felt more confident in talking about adoption with their child.
- Four Respondents said the support and intervention received met their desired outcomes. One said desired outcomes were not met.
- On a score range of 0-10, with 0 being the lowest, parents gave an average score of 6.8, saying their family felt supported by the help provided.
- When asked if there were any areas for improvement, there was no general theme within responses. However, individual comments included concerns around waiting times, as it was felt support was not provided until crisis point. Accessible communication was also noted, along with education for schools to improve their understanding of childhood trauma, as well as concerns around support once adoptive children turn 18.

Areas For Action:

- Waiting times to receive support, rather than waiting for crisis point support.
- Accessible communication.
- Education in schools and impact of trauma on a child.
- Avoid parent feeling isolated and unsupported after the child reaches age 18+.

Flying Start

Aims to support children and their families to have a better start in life.

Parents accessing Flying Start services were asked about their satisfaction with all aspects of the service and the support they received.

2 citizen engagement pieces of work were conducted as below.

Little Bugs 2023-24, with 43 Respondents.

Satisfaction Survey 2023-24, with 18 Respondents.

Flying Start Service Outcomes:

Little Bugs – The aim of the Survey was to establish Parents' / Carers' views on the changes made to the sessions. These changes took the form of only holding 1 'Settling In' Session for children/parent/carers rather than 2 sessions that had been offered previously.

There were 43 Responses from this survey.

- Out of 43 Respondents, 42 felt the sessions were valuable.
- 36 Respondents said the sessions met their expectations.
- 38 Respondents did not feel anything extra needed to be added to what was already included.
- 40 Respondents believed the whole process helped their child settle in.

Areas For Action:

- To follow-up on feedback where Respondents did not feel expectations were met.

Satisfaction Survey – The aim of the Survey was to identify areas for improvement and obtain the views of those Parents' / Carers' accessing the service.

There were 18 Responses from this survey.

Flying Start Satisfaction Survey Outcomes:

- Out of 18 Respondents, 15 were satisfied with the communication, 3 said partly satisfied.
- 17 Respondents said they were able to contact a staff member when they needed to.

- 14 respondents felt the Staff always spent enough time with them.
- 15 respondents felt their concerns were always listened to.
- 12 Respondents said they always had the support they needed, 6 Respondents said, 'sometimes' and there were no Respondents saying rarely or never.
- On a scale of 1-5 an average rating of 4.44 was achieved in relation to expectations being met.

Areas For Action:

- To follow-up on feedback where Respondents did not feel expectations were met.

14 Plus Team

- The purpose of this engagement exercise was to engage young people who are involved with our 14 Plus team to identify areas for improvement and gain their views about the service.
- There was 1 piece of engagement work carried out, with 4 Respondents.

14 Plus Team Outcomes:

- All respondents knew who to contact about care and support and felt they could speak to their worker if they needed to.
- The preferred methods of communication included phone, text or messaging service, as well as video call.
- 3 felt they are always treated with respect by those they had worked with, with the other 1 answering 'Mostly'.
- 3 reported that they were always involved in decisions about their care and support, and had always been able to access support when they needed to.
- All respondents felt that support they had received improved their overall Mental/Physical Health and Wellbeing.

Areas for action:

- Continue to focus on exploring opportunities for wider engagement via social media/messaging services.
- Continue to involve young people in engagement and consultation opportunities to ensure they have a strong voice in service development.
- Most care leavers felt involved with their future care planning and all felt they had been listened to.
- The service aims to continue to focus on consistency and quality of contacts made by Social Workers and Young Person Advisors (for those over 18).

Resource Management and Safeguarding

- During 2023-24, an engagement exercise was undertaken across our residential care settings.
- Outlined below is a summary of the key findings and outcomes and identified areas of improvement arising from this work.

Residential Care – Residential and Respite Services

- Residents, relatives, and staff were asked their views and opinions regarding the quality of care and support provided by our residential care homes that included –
 - Cartref Porthceri, Southway, Ty Dyfan and Ty Dewi Sant.
- Focus groups with residents and their relatives were arranged so that relatives could come into the home and participate with the residents.

Residential Care Outcomes:

Residents – There was 1 piece of engagement work 2023-24, with 14 Responses.

Residential Care (Residents) Outcomes:

- Out of 14 respondents, 7 rated their initial visit as excellent, 3 – good, 1 – poor, and 3 gave no response at all.
- 9 residents rated their initial welcome, as well as their ongoing support from staff as excellent. One commented further ‘This is my home’.
- All respondents knew who to speak to if they had a concern about anything and were aware of how to lodge a compliment or complaint.
- All respondents felt safe and that their needs were catered for.
- 11 residents reported excellent opportunities to spend time with others, and felt they had choice about what activities they did, and when they did them.
- All respondents felt staff treated them with courtesy and respect, with one commenting – ‘They are angels on legs’.
- 8 residents reported that they were involved in their care planning.
- Out of 14 respondents, 9 felt they were always invited to give their views on what matters to them, with 5 other respondents selecting ‘sometimes’.
- All but 1 respondent felt their overall wellbeing had improved by moving to Residential care.
- Food and entertainment were the main themes highlighted when asked for suggestions for improvement.

Areas For Action:

- To continue to engage with residents and find creative ways to obtain high quality feedback.
- To follow-up on feedback where Respondents did not feel expectations were met.

Relatives – There was 1 piece of engagement work 2023-24, with 10 Responses.

Residential Care (Relatives) Outcomes:

- Out of 10 respondents, 8 rated their initial visit as excellent, and 3 – good.
- 6 residents rated their initial welcome, as well as their ongoing support from staff as excellent.
- All respondents were aware of how to make a complaint or provide a compliment, and 4 responded 'yes' to having already made a compliment/complaint.
- 9 agreed that their relative felt safe and that their needs were catered for.
- 7 reported excellent opportunities for their relative to spend time with others, with 6 agreeing their relative had choice about what activities they did, and when they did them.
- 9 of respondents felt staff treated their relative with courtesy and respect, with one commenting – 'They go over and above'.
- 6 reported that they, and their relative were involved in their care planning.
- Out of 10 respondents, 8 felt they were always invited to give their views on what matters to them, with 1 selecting 'sometimes', and 1 gave no answer.
- All respondents felt their relative's overall wellbeing had improved by moving to Residential care.
- Food and entertainment, as well as improved communication and the retention of staff were the main themes highlighted when asked for suggestions for improvement.

Areas For Action

- To continue to engage with relatives and find creative ways to obtain high quality feedback.
- To follow-up on feedback where Respondents did not feel expectations were met.

Golau Caredig

There was 1 piece of engagement work 2023-24, with 20 Responses.

Residential Outcomes:

- 13 residents state that they received enough information regarding Golau Caredig.
- 16 residents felt that they knew who to contact should they wish to raise a concern.
- 10 residents stated that they were involved in the review of their care and support plan.
- 15 residents felt encouraged and supported to remain as independent as they could.

Areas For Action:

One resident would like to see activities on the weekends included.

One resident would like to see an improvement with the food.

Compliments and Complaints

Compliments

Compliments play a vital part in understanding what we are doing well and enable us to share this experience across the breadth of our services. It also provides a means through which we can celebrate and praise the efforts and dedication of our staff.

During 2023-24 Social Services received a total of 163 compliments. The compliments related to a range of services and support citizens received. The compliments often named specific staff where they felt the individual had gone over and above what was expected of them.

Better understanding the service user experience in relation to what they value and what matters most to them, will not only enable us to build a better picture of how our services are performing, but will help to reinforce a sense pride in our work.

Outlined below is a breakdown of all compliments by Division.

Service area	Number of compliments
Children and Young People Services	75
Adult Services	69
Resource Management & Safeguarding	18
Social Services (all areas)	1
Total number of compliments	163

Outlined below is a snapshot of some of the compliments we have received over this past year.

- **VCRS-** *“We wish to thank all the carers who have taken very good care of me. They have given exceptional care and made such a difference to my recovery not only my personal care but all the laughter and joy that have brought to our home.”*
- **Occupational Therapy Team-** *“Thanks for all your help. You and your team really are a lifeline, and we very much appreciate everything you do for us. It’s been a pleasure as always.”*
- **RMS-** *“Dad is settling in nicely and the carers from Caremark have all been amazing. Can we the family say thank you for all your help in being able to get this set up for dad.”*
- **CYPS-** *“I think you need to recognise how instrumental you’ve been in getting her to this point. Without your absolute commitment to her, your advocacy, understanding and the protection you’ve put around her she may not have been able to be where she is.”*

Complaints

Through our complaints handling process we have continued to focus on maintaining a person-centred approach to how we deal with complaints. By taking this approach it enables us to fully understand the issues from the citizen's perspective and puts us in a stronger position to be able to find an agreeable resolution, learn lessons and consider areas for improvements.

The Complaints Officer takes a proactive approach to preventing and mediating issues before they have the potential to escalate into a complaint. Sometimes, citizens may contact Social Services unsure whether their concern equates to a formal complaint. Where this is the case, these are defined as enquiries, which consequently do not always progress on to becoming a complaint.

As of the 31st of March 2024, a total of 113 enquiries were received across all three divisions of Social Services. This data shows, that speaking with an individual who has raised a concern is an effective and invaluable way of reaching an early resolution and preventing concerns escalating into complaints.

As of the 31st of March 2024, a total of 56 complaints was received, 24 of which were discontinued during the year (either through no further contact or the complaint was considered not able to be considered within the complaints process).

Of these 32 remaining complaints, 12 (38%) of complaints were resolved within the designated timescales, 17 (53%) were resolved outside of timescales and 3 (9 %) of complaints remained open at end of year, so continued forward into 2024-25.

The complaints and compliments team are required to work within statutory timescales for acknowledging and responding to complaints. Designated timescales are as below:

- Responding to Stage 1 complaints 10 working days and a further 5 working days to confirm the outcome of the discussion.

- Stage 2 complaints, 25 working days.

The Complaints Team hold weekly meetings with Operational Manager and Team Managers to support timely and effective oversight and response to complaints.

The table below provides a full breakdown of all enquiries and complaints received during 2023-24.

**** The ombudsman figures relate to enquiries from the Ombudsman's office. There were no Ombudsman investigations initiated during 2023-24 ****

Service division	Enquiries	Complaints Stage 1	Complaints Stage 2	Ombudsman **	Responded to in timescales	Complaints discontinued	Total complaints and enquires received
Adult Services	31	16	2	4	32	13	49
Children and Young People Service	76	36	4	13	68	28	116
Resource Management & Safeguarding	6	4	0	0	4	4	10
Total	113	56	6	17	99	35	192

2 1 - Please note that the Ombudsman's complaints are recorded separately to the rest of the complaints data.

The table below provides a breakdown of the nature of stage 1 complaints and enquiries by division.

Type of Complaint	Adult Services	Children and Young People Services	Resource Management and Safeguarding	Total complaints by nature of complaint
Poor quality of service	26	64	4	94
Quality of Communication	10	61	3	74
Rude Discourteous staff	4	8	0	12
Unhappy with Timescales	2	5	2	9
Incorrect Information given	2	5	1	8
Unhappy with Costs /Financial Support	3	2	0	5
Data protection failures	1	2	0	3

Please note there may be more than one reason why a complaint is received. For example, one complaint was related to a lack of response, the quality of services provided and also charges for service.

Lessons Learnt

The Vale of Glamorgan Social Services recognises the importance of learning lessons from our complaints from citizens and ensuring this is fed into service development and improving practice. We continue to ensure we communicate and support service, practice, and policy development where we identify improvements are needed.

During 2023-2024, a summary of key lessons learnt have been captured below:

Enquires

Quality of communication

- Enquires were often in relation to citizens being unable to contact the right person at the right time, and delays in assessments or request with no clear communication provided.

Lessons learnt from Enquiries

- Timescales for communication with all citizens is to be strengthened via a commitment from all staff. Review of policy surrounding communication and engagement to be undertaken and disseminated across the Directorate.

Stage 1 Complaints

Quality of service

- As outlined above this is an area which receives the highest levels of complaints. Citizen's report not receiving the necessary documentation, being misinformed and meetings not taking place in a timely manner.

Quality of communication

- Alongside poor quality of service, Quality of communication also receives a significantly high number of enquires and complaints. Citizens report not being able to contact the right person as the right time, not knowing who to contact due to a change in professional or staff sickness.

Lessons learnt from Stage 1 Complaints

- A whole directorate approach to be developed surrounding practice standards. Practice standards will set out the statutory standards required to fulfil our work within Social Services.
- Timescales for communication with all citizens is to be strengthened via a commitment from all staff. Review of policy surrounding communication and engagement to be undertaken and disseminated across the Directorate.
- Review of training opportunities for staff, particularly relating to challenging conversations to ensure that communication remains strength based, positive and inclusive wherever possible.

Stage 2 Complaints

An ongoing and significant challenge for the service is the availability of Independent Investigation Officers (IIO). This is reflected nationally and presents significant challenge in appointing IIO's when stage 2 investigations are required. This in turn can cause further frustrations for our citizens making complaints. We try to ensure that we maintain regular communication with individuals in these situations to support effective and transparent communication.

Lessons learnt from stage 2 process & individual reports

The length of time surrounding Stage 2 complaints has continued to exceed timescales.

- It is acknowledged that changes in staff and other key stakeholders can impact on the timely completion of the Stage 2 investigations. We are supporting processes to ensure that timely information gathering, and interviews can take place.
- Introduction of mid-point monitoring of Stage 2 complaint timescales, with updates and communication with relevant Heads of Service. This will identify any anticipated delay with meeting completion timescales and support appropriate oversight of the process and any barriers to completion.
- Independent Investigating Officer to notify the Complaints Officer where there are delays in completing stage 2 investigations and anticipated timescales may be exceeded.
- Learning, outcomes, and recommendations from stage 2 reports to be captured and communicated on a regular basis.
- Quality Assurance Team to support regular communication of lessons learnt from complaints across the Directorate.

Future Developments

It is evident that we need to consider how we respond to complaints further. Growing demand means that we aren't always able to keep up with the expectations of those we serve and their representatives. A focussed piece of work will need to be undertaken in 24/25 to review our complaint handling and how we can take the lessons learned in to everyday practice to avoid future issues being raised.

Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help



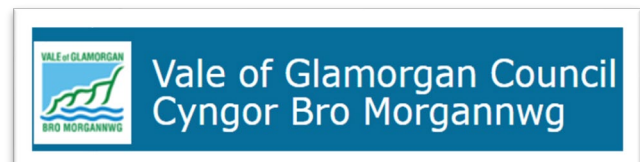
This section of the report sets out our performance in promoting and improving the key aspects of well-being of people in the Vale of Glamorgan who need care and support and carers who need support in relation to the six well-being standards.

Well-being Standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.

Wellbeing Standard 1: Performance Snapshot

72% of assessments for children completed within timescales.
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Priority 1: Review and enhance current information on Staffnet, DEWIS and public facing website.

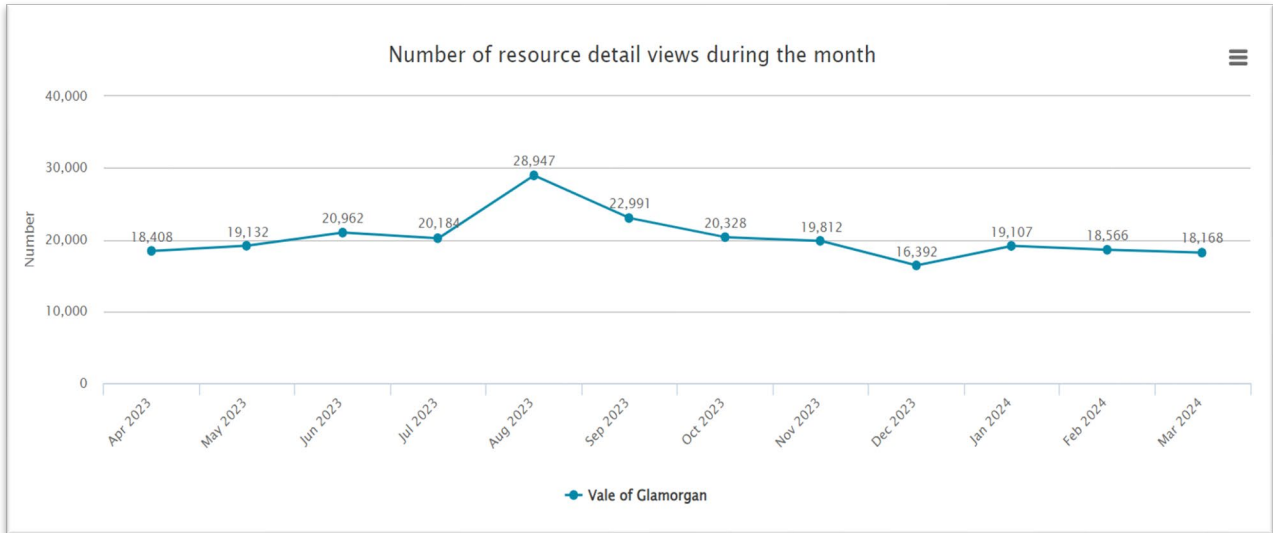


During 2023-24 we have:

- Continued to add new resources to Dewis Cymru dewis.wales. Resources include services that help people with their well-being, so that the people who want to help and support can find them more easily.
- Encouraged people to use Dewis Cymru to find out about resources that are available to them in their local area through our outreach work.
- Worked closely with key teams in Adult Services to discuss how Dewis Cymru can work for them and to help support the residents they work with.
- Established a Staffnet working group to update team pages. Adult Services pages and most of RMS have been updated, and meetings held with key staff in Children & Young People Services.
- Updated the Family Information Service web pages, including the Childcare Offer for Wales and Flying Start web pages. Created a work programme to review the Adult Services and Children & Young People Services web pages.

Key Successes:

- There are currently 1109 resources on Dewis Cymru that are available to people in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- On average there were 20,250 detailed views of resources available in the Vale of Glamorgan every month.
- All adult care homes registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) are now listed on Dewis with vacancies now also broken down by bed type.



Challenges:

- Data Cymru is changing software to analyse Dewis usage. This has made it difficult to gain accurate data on number of people using Dewis and searches made. New software will be in place in May 2024.
- Reviewing information on both Staffnet and website needs managers to review their content, which takes time. We have presented to Adult Services SMT and agreed a work programme and timescales. We will do the same with C&YPS and RMS.

Priority 2: Continue to focus on the development of WCCIS in relation to ensuring timely and proportionate recording to inform and improve service delivery.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Successfully established four working groups with social work practitioners and performance management staff, focusing on recording, and reporting processes for Adults, Children and Young People, Safeguarding and Carers.
- Advanced our social care system by conducting comprehensive reviews of forms and processes aimed at informing and enhancing service delivery and making best use of the digital functionality of our case record system WCCIS (Wales Community Care Information System).
- Through our evaluations identified inefficiencies, streamlined workflows, and implemented best practises to better meet the needs of those we serve.
- Through the collaborative efforts of the working groups, we have successfully made tangible improvements in case recording forms and processes within the social care system.

- Released a bi-monthly WCCIS e-bulletin to communicate important WCCIS related news, training, guidance to support our data integrity programme, and development information.

Key Successes:

- Developed / redesigned 61 forms on WCCIS and reviewed the associated business processes to ensure they are more closely aligned, and improvements have been made to support data integrity by linking form questions to underlying system data.
- Improved efficiency by showcasing a reduction in time spent on administrative tasks related to case recording.
- Enhanced accuracy by highlighting increased accuracy and completeness of case records, leading to better informed decision making.
- Demonstrated high levels of participation and engagement from both social work practitioners and performance management staff in the review process, indicating a collaborative and inclusive approach to improvement efforts.
- Sharing feedback from practitioners indicating satisfaction with the revised forms and process.
- Presented data on key performance indicators such as reduced errors increased compliance with regulatory standards.
- Delivered bespoke training to new users and training support to existing users. We have delivered 171 training sessions to 203 people. We have also introduced targeted training (floor walking) to offer one-on-one support to several teams.
- Developed resources to support practitioners understanding of the recording and business processes. This includes over 30 new training videos for practitioners, and business process maps for all key areas of case management.
- Made good progress with the development and release of Performance dashboards using WCCIS data and SQL reporting. 70% of the data sets are being refreshed daily and automated. New performance monitoring data dashboards are now in place for all service areas.

Challenges:

- Balancing the demands of day-to-day responsibilities with participation in the working groups has sometimes been challenging for both practitioners and performance management staff impacting the availability and timeliness of our ability to make changes.
- Case recording forms and process within our social care systems can be complex and multifaceted requiring thorough understanding and careful consideration to ensure that proposed changes are effective and feasible.

- There are functionality limitations to how much we can change on the current case management system.
- Existing case record information may sometimes suffer from inconsistencies and missing information which can compromise the integrity and reliability of the data being recorded.
- Social work practitioners may require additional training and support to effectively utilise new functionalities introduced to case recording forms including guidance on data entry, quality assurance and troubleshooting common issues.

Priority 3: Improve awareness of the Carers Gateway and our response for unpaid carers.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Supported awareness raising campaigns.
- Strengthen monitoring arrangements of the service.
- Reviewed information and advice arrangements for Unpaid Carers.
- Reviewed our unpaid carers statutory needs assessment pathway.
- Developed our performance and data requirements.

Key Successes:

- Continued increase in identification of unpaid carers.
- Strengthened operational arrangements between the Local Authority and the Carers Gateway.
- Supported gateway in delivery of Time for Me initiative.

Challenges:

- The third sector organisation responsible for the delivery of the Carers Gateway ceased at end of March 2024. However, throughout quarter 4 of 2024 we have worked to ensure that a 3rd sector service is in place to continue to deliver the Unpaid Carers Information, Advice and Support service by April 2024.

Well-being Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Wellbeing Standard 2: Performance Snapshot
12% of adults that completed a period of reablement and had a reduced package of care and support after 6 months.
84% of adults who completed a period of reablement did not need a package of care after 6 months.
The average age of adults entering residential care homes was 81.

Priority 4: Develop and implement proposals for our new operating model that includes the rationalisation of our physical office use.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Worked with corporate colleagues to establish the Social Services elements of the Council's Your Space programme.
- Consulted with team managers regarding future requirements.
- Analysed current office space usage.

Key Successes:

- Established guidance requiring in person team meetings and supervision sessions.
- Developed proposals for the use of new space and completed site visits to test practicality.

Challenges:

- Uncertainty about the future use and availability of some buildings has impacted on progress.
- Management capacity to implement changes in the context of service delivery challenges.
- Storage considerations.
- Evolving model of in person activity.

Priority 5: Work in collaboration with our Third Sector partners to maximise and further develop the use of children's residential provision across the Vale to ensure sufficiency of placements and achieve financial savings.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Opened the first residential home, a 4 bedded provision in the Vale of Glamorgan.

- Completed renovations to the second home, a 2 bedded provision in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Key Successes:

- Three children offered a home locally, two returning to the Vale of Glamorgan from placements out of area.
- Partners working effectively together as a team around the child.

Challenges:

- The demand for residential care exceeding local availability, both in terms of numbers and complexity of need
- Lead in times, often long and time consuming, impacting the speed with which provision is available.
- Achieving the right balance when considering moving children from existing settled placements out of area.

Well-being Standard 3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm.

Wellbeing Standard 3: Performance Snapshot		
5% were re-registrations of children on the local authority Child Protection Register during the year.		
The average number of days spent on Child Protection Register during the year was 151.		
99% of adult protection enquiries completed within statutory timescales.		
Wellbeing Matters Activity 2023-24	Total number of calls received to Wellbeing Matters service (VoG Adult Social Services)	55848
	Total number of calls into Wellbeing Matters (Health)	49012
	Number of individuals receiving IAA (universal)	14886
	Number of calls to Wellbeing Matters (Adult Social Services) whose needs were met through information only	2254
	Number of calls to Wellbeing Matters (Adult Social Services) which generated a referral ie active signposting	3022

Priority 6: Continue to maintain oversight of our referrals at the front door to ensure we respond effectively to manage demand.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Responded to considerable challenges in both demand, recruitment and retention.

Key Successes:

- Maintained a clear focus on decision making at the front door, achieving an improving performance at year end.
- Invested in additional manager and practitioner posts and increased stability in the team.

Challenges:

- Increasing numbers of referrals and complexity of need.
- Recruitment and retention into this part of the Service.

Priority 7: Implement a sustainable and integrated model for single point of access to Well-being Matters services (via the Contact Centre).

During 2023-24 we have:

Continued to provide an integrated health and social care single point of contact.

Key Successes:

- Integrated information assistance and advice across health and social care.
- 75% of all calls were able to be resolved via information assistance and advice.
- 95% of all urgent health referrals were resolved within 48hrs (referral to contact).
- Further developed our telecare offer, moved from analogue to digital system.
- Developed a falls response service linked to the telecare service.

Challenges:

- Capacity to explore preventative services.
- Capacity to explore a range of technologies that could help support citizen choice.
- Recruitment to the integrated manager post has been difficult.

Well-being Standard 4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society.

Wellbeing Standard 4: Performance Snapshot
69% of young people reported they had advice, help and support to prepare them for adulthood.
90% of people reported that they can do what matters to them.
93% of people reported that they feel satisfied with their social networks.
8% of Children Looked After during the year (to 31 st March) experienced one or more changes in school during periods of being looked after that were not due to transitional arrangements.

Priority 8: Develop a Day Opportunities Board to review and shape our future delivery model in partnership with our members.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Created a board of representatives at Hen Goleg, and established an open forum for considering future service models.
- Established a potential capital funding stream via the regional partnership board.
- Continued to see our learning disability / complex needs service maintain a community focus to their work and activities.

Key Successes:

- Good engagement from citizens and families attending the board.

Challenges:

- People enjoy the traditional service model at Hen Goleg and have some concerns about change. They are however fully engaged and actively working with officers to explore alternative models.
- Limited alternatives in terms of buildings to deliver a like for like or expanded service at another site.
- A need to consider day opportunities in its broadest context including considering supported employment opportunities.

Priority 9: Extend the roll out of domiciliary care in relation to Learning Disability and mental health in line with the 'Your Choice' programme

During 2023-24 we have:

- Transferred 13 citizens under the Mental Health Team and 21 from the Learning Disabilities Team to the Your Choice scheme.

Key Successes:

- Worked with citizens with mental health issues and learning disabilities to understand the advantages of outcome-based community care.

Challenges:

- Delays in undertaking reviews for transfers to be completed.

Priority 10: Expand the development of SMART houses and review the outcomes of them in terms of impact for citizens in supporting independent living and enhancing their wellbeing.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Completed a third SMART house in collaboration with First Choice Housing Association and Innovate Trust for three people with learning disabilities and secured funding for a fourth property.

Key Successes:

- Increased levels of independence and confidence in people undertaking all aspects of daily living.
- Digital inclusion for people with a learning disability.
- Good collaborative working across all partners.

Challenges:

- Having to adapt to moving timeframes without allowing this negatively impact people with a learning disability and their families.
- Securing funding.

Well-being Standard 5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.

Wellbeing Standard 5: Performance Snapshot
46% of children were supported to remain living with their family during the year.
40% of Children Looked After were returned home from care during the year.
11% of children looked after on 31 st March had experienced 3 or more placements during the year.

Priority 11: Further develop 'Grow our own' Social Work schemes and support recruitment, retention and succession planning for our harder to fill roles.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Maintained a commitment to 'growing our own' Social Workers, recognising the value of this invest to save initiative.

Key Successes:

- Supported 11 members of staff to commence year 1 of the Social Work course.
- Received 8 expressions of interest to commence year 2 of the Social Work course.
- Supported 5 members of staff to commence year 3 of the Social Work course, qualifying in October 2024.
- Continued to support external Social Work students to complete placements in the Vale of Glamorgan, increasing opportunities for them to seek employment in the Vale of Glamorgan once qualified.

Challenges:

- Supporting the release of individuals to complete placements away from their substantive teams given the demands in all parts of the Service.

Priority 12: Work with partners to implement the Youth Offending Service Post Inspection Action Plan to enhance young people's outcomes.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Renamed the Service, following participation and engagement with children, families, staff and Board members to the Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS).
- Focussed on further developing the reach of prevention and diversion support to promote children and young people's safe, happy, and healthy life chances. This has included preventative community outreach sessions with children at key times for example at Halloween, to engage children and reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Continued to embed the Trauma Informed approach into practice; allowing increased support for those experiencing trauma and who have Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) to lead safer, offence free and positive lives.
- Implemented the 'Turnaround' Project utilising funding by central government to increase the diversionary support for young people who come to the attention of the Police.

- Continued to work with victims of offences through the YJESS Victim officers in a strong victim led offer, including supporting participation in the restorative process.
- Continued the delivery of high-quality reparation work within the community for example in 'beach clean' reparation sessions and graffiti removal.

Key Successes:

- YJESS provided support to children and young people in the Vale of Glamorgan by undertaking 259 interventions.
- Further increasing the percentage of children and young people benefitting from preventive and diversionary work, including through the Turnaround Project. 88% of all support has been through preventative/diversion work. This helps to promote the best possible outcomes for children to lead happy, healthy, positive lives.
- Consistently maintaining the lowest First Time Entrance rates in Wales.
- Maintaining high quality reparation offer by the skilled and creative engagement of children. This has enabled YJESS to provide a positive opportunity for direct reparation for children committing offences and anti-social behaviour.
- Proactive focus on quality work offered to victims of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour has been recognised. We were asked to meet with HMIP Inspectors to provide feedback on the effective assessment of quality victim engagement, and to contribute towards best practice guidance, which has now been published by the Ministry of Justice as part of the Victim Code campaign.

Challenges:

- Significant challenges in management capacity over an extended period and within the Service in long term vacant posts.
- Increasing complexities in the cohort of children YJESS work with, who are impacted significantly by trauma and adverse experiences. This has manifested in relation to increasing safeguarding concerns and the risk management of serious youth violence in a contextual context.
- Reduction in funding presents a significant and ongoing threat to the effective delivery of services. For example, the ending of the 'Turnaround' funding in 2025.

Well-being 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.

Wellbeing Standard 6: Performance Snapshot
38 care leavers completed at least 3 consecutive months in education, employment, or training in the 13-24 months after leaving care.

Priority 13: Review our data sets to assess and improve how we are capturing data on our service users with protected characteristics.

During 2023-24 we have:

- Reviewed the way we record protected characteristics on our electronic case management system.
- Revised our assessment and care managements forms to include the recording of protected characteristics at both the point of assessment and review.
- Introduced weekly reports to monitor the recording and quality of equality data on our electronic case management system.
- Produced guidance for practitioners to remind them of the importance of collecting this data. We have explained how it helps us to understand and respond to the specific needs and circumstances of individuals and enables us to monitor the impact of services, identifying disparities and improving quality and equity.
- Added a category for protected characteristics on our complaints monitoring system.

Key Successes:

- 4% increase in recording the ethnicity of adults.
- 17% increase in recording the religion of adults.
- 16% increase in recording the nationality of adults.
- 15% increase in recording the first language of adults.
- 11% increase in recording the ethnicity of children and young people.
- 56% increase in recording the religion of children and young people.
- 9% increase in recording the nationality of children and young people.
- 14% increase in recording the first language of children and young people.

Challenges:

- The first time you record the details of a person on our social care record system is the only time you are automatically prompted to capture this information.
- Establishing trust and support is key to asking about sensitive information and this can be more challenging over the phone compared to face-to-face interactions.
- The first (and sometimes only) point of contact with a person, is often over the phone, which can be challenging. It can be difficult to gauge the persons readiness to discuss sensitive topics and they may feel less comfortable disclosing personal information over the phone due to concerns about privacy and confidentiality.

Priority 14: Review our staff Supervision arrangements and ensure that they are fully operational and of a consistent standard

During 2023-24 we have:

- Developed a new social services supervision policy in collaboration with teams across the directorate.
- Developed Quality Assurance activity to review the standard and consistency of supervision.

Key Successes:

- Collaborative approach to developing a new supervision policy.
- Utilising digital opportunities to record supervision discussion and decision on individual's records.

Challenges:

- Implementation across the directorate within agreed timeframe.
- Ensuring awareness, understanding and compliance with new policy.

Workforce Developments 2023/24

Children and Young People Services:

- We have continued to review capacity and demand across the Service and invested resources to add manager and practitioner capacity in our Intake and Family Support Teams where levels of demand have been high and to support sustainable structures.
- Continued to utilise traditional and innovative approaches to support recruitment into key roles. Maintained our commitment to 'grow our own' Social Workers by creating clear development pathways for those in unqualified roles. Maintained a commitment to well-being across all teams and the promotion of a positive culture, supporting retention of our staff.

Resource Management & Safeguarding:

- We have continued to enhance recruitment of care staff through the fast-track to care recruitment programme to encourage and train new starters, so that they become more ready quicker.
- We have put into place our Domiciliary Care action plan which has successfully supported recruitment into the sector. The action plan has been successful and will continue into next year.
- The Vale Council is a Home Office Approved Sponsor and the care homes have been able to recruit several foreign nationals into long standing vacancies, reducing the pressures on our workers and our reliance on expensive agency staff. We have continued to support workers to obtain visas in order to fill vacancies within our care homes.

Adult Services:

- Continued to utilise traditional and innovative approaches to support recruitment into key roles. Maintained our commitment to 'grow our own' Social Workers by creating clear development pathways for those in unqualified roles. Maintained a commitment to well-being across all teams and the promotion of a positive culture, supporting retention of our staff.
- To address the capacity challenges around Approved Mental Health Practitioners we have identified individuals who have been undertaking Approved Mental Health Professional training to support retention and succession planning. We have also utilised some agency support to ensure we are able to meet our statutory duties.
- We support overseas recruitment to our care workforce in Reablement.
- Implemented the Welsh Government "trusted assessor" strategy to streamline process and maximise the recognition of expertise of the social work role.

Workforce Priorities 2024/25

- We are offering many more staff the opportunity to undertake training to prepare them to become social workers and need to consider how we do this in a sustainable and manageable way.

Children and Young People Services:

- Maximising resources across all teams, supporting delivery against their dedicated remits.
- Achieving permanence across our teams, focusing equally on recruitment and retention.

Resource Management & Safeguarding:

- Strengthen the support that we have in place for workers who join our care homes workforce from overseas.
- Embed and review the effectiveness of the new structure within RMS now that posts have been successfully recruited to.

Adult Services:

- Continuing to develop our staff across the service, maximising development opportunities and career development to aid in recruitment and retention of staff.
- Continue to monitor workloads and capacity as demand for service continues to increase and maintain the health and wellbeing of our workforce.

Ensure that staff are aware of the limits of their roles and responsibilities as well as those of Adult social care, ensuring access to specialist services is available when needed for our citizens.

Financial resources

The Social Services budget is carefully monitored throughout the year. There is robust and effective monitoring of the budget via the Budget Programme Board that provides a high level of oversight of how we are managing our financial resources. Regular monitoring enables us to act where areas of concern emerge.

However, this year has seen unprecedented pressures on top of a challenging allocation. Additionally, costs have risen across the board. As a result, the services has overspent significantly across all areas. This is the first time the service has overspent in my 7 years as Director. The Vale is not unique in this regard with authorities across the UK highlighting significant in year pressures in Social Services. This is the most worrying financial period I have encountered in my working life.

Detailed commitment reports are reported to the Budget Programme Board, which project forward for a whole year. We have good oversight from this reporting where any changes/developments are considered every month. Commitment monitoring includes analysis

of trends to identify where demand services is changing and in terms of changes in usage of different types of social care.

Commitment monitoring also informs costs pressures, which are kept under ongoing review. The work of the Budget Programme Board also receives regular updates on progress being made against savings targets. Alongside this individual savings schemes and cost pressures are also considered by the Council's Cabinet at appropriate intervals throughout the year.

Budget planning is aligned to our Reshaping Programme (improvement programme) and our Service Plan actions are aligned to this Reshaping programme. These interfaces enable us to effectively knit together our commitments in terms of delivery of our key priorities and our budgetary spend.

Vale of Glamorgan Social Services have received less grant funding and less slippage from regional grants this year which has also impacted on our end of year position.

The position for the Council next financial year is extremely challenging and I am grateful that it has endeavoured to protect Social Services. Despite that protection the directorate has been required to find significant savings going forward in order to keep pace with increased demand and rising prices.

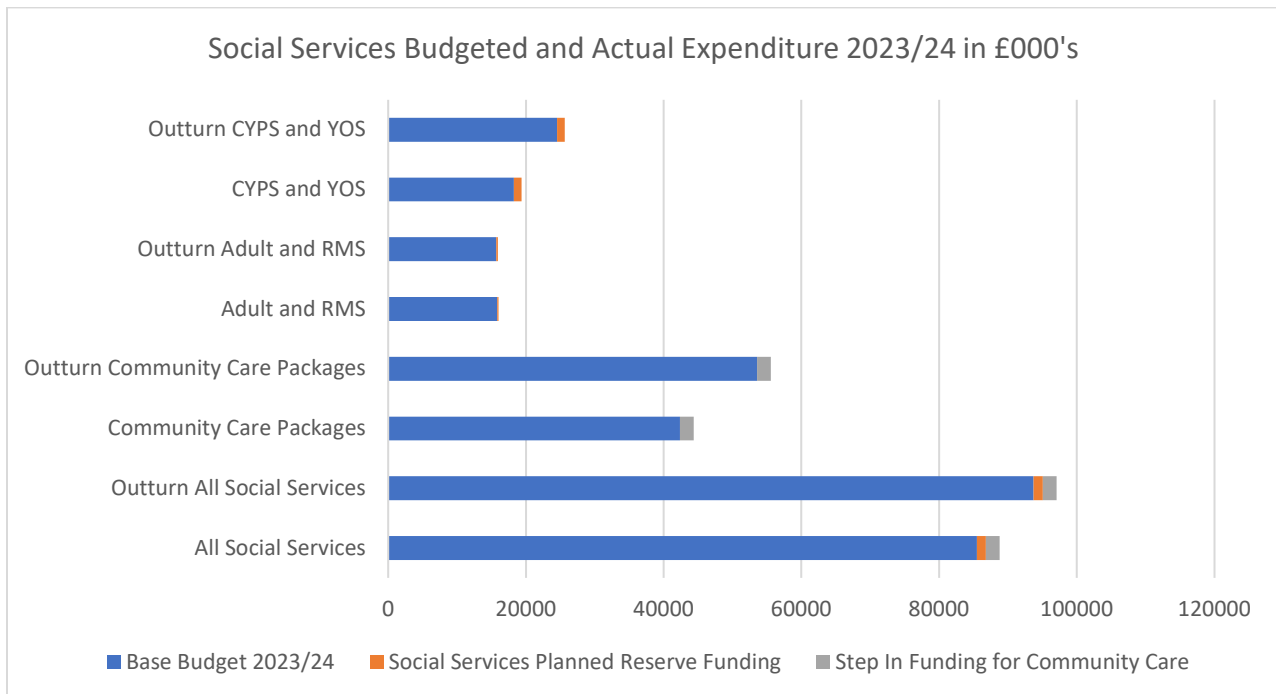
The charts and tables below illustrates how the budget and expenditure is deployed across the three divisions of Social Services.

Total Budgeted Expenditure 2023/24

Year End Social Services Budget 2023/24 £85,493,000, further funding through planned use of reserves totalled £3,323,000. Therefore, the total planned expenditure in 2023/24 was £88,816,000

Actual Outturn Expenditure for 2023/24 was £97,067,000.

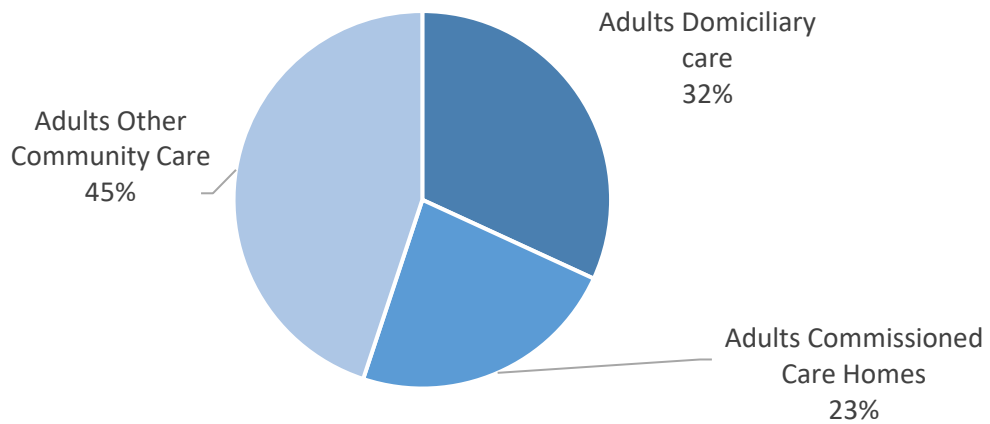
These figures are presented net of grant income in 2023/24 which was approximately £8.7m.



Total Community Care Packages Expenditure in 2023/24 £55,547,927

Community Care Packages	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £
Adults Domiciliary care	16,011,459	17,697,574
Adults Commissioned Care Homes	10,737,630	12,895,281
Adults Other Community Care	23,344,498	24,955,072
Total	50,093,587	55,547,927

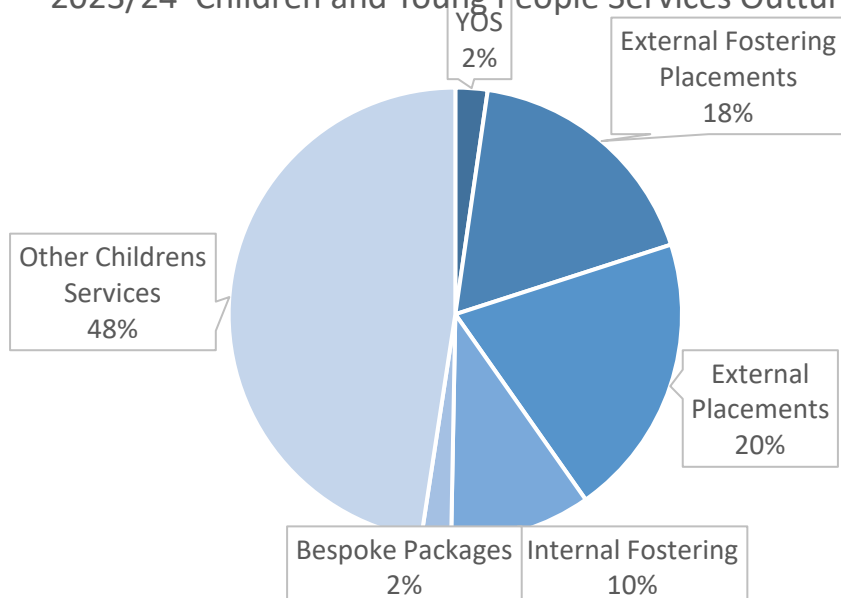
2023/24 Community Care Packages Outturn



Total Children and Young People Services Expenditure in 2023/24 £25,621,708

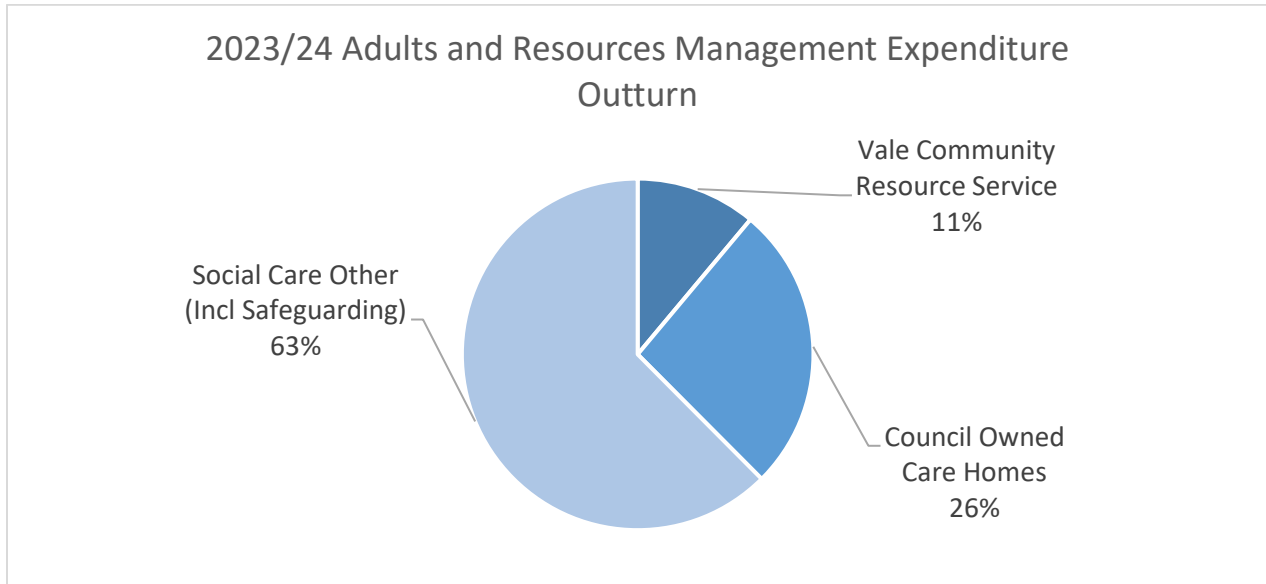
Children and Young People (incl YOS)	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £
YOS	716,000	587,150
External Fostering Placements	3,912,812	4,545,157
External Placements	3,228,278	5,179,380
Internal Fostering	2,410,520	2,575,024
Bespoke Packages	0	543,189
Other Childrens Services	9,100,806	12,191,808
Total	19,368,416	25,621,708

2023/24 Children and Young People Services Outturn



Total Adults and Resource Management Expenditure in 2023/24 £15,911,273

	2023/24 Budget	2023/24 Outturn
Adults and Resource Management	£	£
Vale Community Resource Service	2,030,756	1,764,587
Council Owned Care Homes	3,650,300	4,208,007
Social Care Other (Incl Safeguarding)	10,351,003	9,938,679
Total	16,032,059	15,911,273



Our Partnership Working, Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability.

Leadership and Governance

The Social Services Well-being Wales (Act) 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act changed the way we view, plan and deliver our services for our citizens. There is now a much greater focus on delivering a citizen-centred approach to working that enhances the well-being of our citizens.

Social Services is not just driven by the need to fulfil statutory functions as defined by legislation, but by the desire to explore opportunities to further streamline and integrate and our services so that we can continuously improve the quality of care and support we provide and ultimately the outcomes for our citizens.

The Corporate Plan 2020-25 is the Council's key policy document that set out our vision 'Working Together for a Brighter Future'. This plan outlines an ambitious plan of activity for the next 5 years that will enable us to deliver our four Wellbeing Objectives and contribute to the delivery of the seven national Well-being Goals (as outlined in the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA)). Aligned to the Corporate Plan is an Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) that is produced annually to reflect what specific actions the Council will progress during the year to deliver the commitments outlined in the Corporate Plan. This year the Annual Delivery Plan contains a wide range of priorities that service areas will all be working towards, some of which will reflect our pivot towards implementing a new operating model as part of our recovery from the pandemic. Annually, within Social Services, the Reshaping Service Board priorities are aligned to our ADP priorities to ensure that we contribute to the Corporate Plan commitments and delivery of the Annual Delivery Plan.

The main channel through which we do this is via our Service Plans and the Reshaping Services Board. Within Social Services there are three Service Plans that reflect the divisions of Adult Services, Children and Young People Services and Resource Management and Safeguarding. Producing annual Service Plans ensures that our priorities remain relevant to the Corporate Plan, are realistic within our budgetary means and enable us to comply with our legislative requirements and our statutory Social Services functions. We monitor delivery of our Service Plan activities on a quarterly basis through our Reshaping Board and via performance reports that are presented to our Senior Leadership Team, Scrutiny and Cabinet. This provides an opportunity to discuss resource and budget issues as well as flag any emerging performance issues and challenges that require consideration by Scrutiny and Cabinet.

Our work also takes place in a regional context with Cardiff and Cardiff and Vale UHB. This is overseen through by the Regional Partnership Board. We are committed to this work in delivering our part of the Joint Area Plan and Strategic Capital Plan. We continue to develop our joint working arrangements so that services feel as seamless as possible to services users.

What does our regulator say about us?

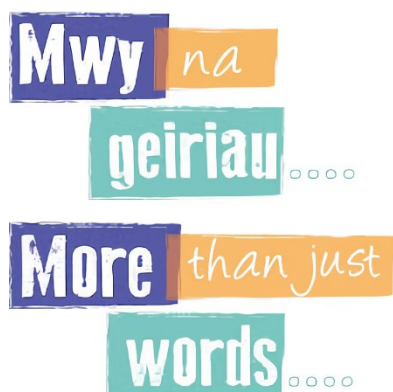
Each year the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) evaluates the Council's performance in conducting its statutory functions that is presented in the form of an annual performance review. During 2022-23, CIW completed a Performance Evaluation Inspection of Social Services.

This inspection reported positively on the work that the Directorate has completed to respond to the previous Assurance Checks and was complimentary of the efforts of our staff in supporting our residents.

In the last year we have also had inspections of our Community Resource Service, Ty Dyfan Care home, Southway Care home and Cartref Porthceri Care home. I am pleased to advise that all reports were very positive about the services our residents receive.

CIW continue to undertake regular performance and 'check in' meetings with the Director and Heads of Service.

Promoting Welsh Language and Access to Services



Mwy na geiriau ... More than just words was first published in 2012, with a new five-year plan for 2022-27. Its vision is for Cymraeg to belong and be embedded in health and social care services across Wales so that individuals receive care that meet their language needs, leading to better outcomes, without having to ask for it.

Here are some of the things we have been doing in 2023-24 to promote the Welsh Language and ensure that social care workers appreciate the active part they have to play in realising this vision

Welsh Language Service Update 2023-24

We have continued to offer and promote Welsh language courses and taster sessions to our social care staff and enable staff to attend courses within their working hours. These have proven to be popular from which they are opting to attend further Welsh language training:

Social Services staff attending Welsh language training:

Course	No of staff
Entry/Mynediad	4
Foundation/Sylfaen	5

Dysgu Cymraeg / Learn Welsh is a dedicated information page for staff aimed at Welsh learners and prospective learners.

Customers' language preference is captured at the first point of contact with services. Social Services provide an "Active Offer" which means providing a service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it. Out of 832 Social Services assessments completed during 2022-23, 619 service users and unpaid carers had evidence of the active offer being made. Of the 619 where the active offer was made, 0 were accepted.

We have a number of staff in social care who are fluent Welsh speakers, able to complete and write an assessment in Welsh:

Service Area	Number of fluent Welsh Speakers
Children and Young People Services	14
Adult Services	8
Resource Management and Safeguarding	6



We also have a number of staff in social care who whilst not fluent, are good Welsh speakers:

Service Area	Number of good Welsh Speakers
Children and Young People Services	6
Adult Services	8
Resource Management and Safeguarding	3

Our partnership working and collaboration

Through pursuing a progressive collaborative agenda with our health and social care partners we have been able to enhance how we integrate services. At a regional level, we remain committed to developing initiatives as part of the Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board (RPB). Through the RPB we have been able to maximise our use of funding to invest in the priorities identified in the RPB's Plan.

We remain committed to working collaboratively both at the local and regional level in order to improve the quality of care and support we provide to our citizens and to support us in delivering services more effectively.

Partnership working remains a central feature in addressing some of these challenges and will enable us to redefine services into the longer term with a preventative focus, where service design is focused on integration and service user involvement and delivered where possible through collaborative means.

The development of the Vale Alliance / PCPG is a good example of where we are embracing the evolving partnership requirements to help support our residents.

This year we have published a detailed local review of our commissioning requirements in line with the regional Market Stability Report.

We have engaged with partners and the third sector in relation to establishing a Vale of Glamorgan Section 16 forum. The first forum will meet in May 2024.

Looking forward



This year has been extremely challenging however we are still making some excellent progress in some critical areas and I am really pleased that the position with regard to domiciliary care has improved. This improvement has directly enhanced the speed which we are able to facilitate hospital discharges. However, the demands upon our children's services in particular are impacting on our ability to respond as we would want to and we will have to look at new ways of working to ensure that we are supporting more families to stay together wherever possible.

As always it is only through the dedication and resilience of our staff that we have managed to achieve our successes.

Drawing on the events from this past year and our insight for the way forward, we intend to progress the following priorities into 2024-25.



Our priorities 2024/25

Wellbeing standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce wellbeing outcomes that people wish to achieve.

1. Introduce a quality assurance framework to support service performance evaluation that drives effective, accountable, and evidence-based practice that informs service improvement.
2. Implement a Section 16 Forum to promote social enterprises, co-operatives user led services and other third sector organisations for the provision of support and preventative services in the Vale of Glamorgan.
3. Continue to co-produce new service models that offer the citizen voice and control and reduce dependency on statutory service provision.

Wellbeing standard 2: Working with people/partners to protect and promote physical, mental health and emotional wellbeing.

4. Collaborate on undertaking preparatory work for a replacement system for WCCIS.
5. Work with partners to promote community models of care, and to minimise any unnecessary time spent in hospital in line with the Welsh Government Frailty Standard.

Wellbeing standard 3: Safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm.

6. Continue to maintain oversight of our referrals at the front door to ensure we respond effectively to manage demand.

Wellbeing standard 4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

7. Implement new supervision policy and ensure consistent practice is in place across the service.
8. Explore how we can support communities to support each other by developing more connections.
9. Continue to roll out our dementia friendly communities programme.

Wellbeing standard 5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

10. Continue to focus on participation in the local authority reductions programme to manage demand for placements within Children and Young People Services.

Wellbeing standard 6: Working with people to achieve greater economic wellbeing, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation.

11. Work with colleagues and partners to identify capital improvement and development projects to respond to the requirements to grow services in line with market stability report.

Further Information and Key Documents

This report has provided an overview of how we have performed over the past year by outlining key successes and challenges we have faced whilst focusing on improving the well-being of those who need our help and support.

There is a significant amount of background information that sits behind this report and provides additional details of what we do and how we do it.

Further information is available via the following documents:

- [Vale of Glamorgan Council's Corporate Plan 2020-25](#)
- [Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25](#)
- [Service Plans 2024/25](#) for Children and Young People Services, Adult Services and Resource Management, Safeguarding and Performance.
- [Cardiff and Vale Integrated Health and Social Care Partnership](#)
- [Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board Well-being Assessment 2022](#)
- [Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Population Needs Assessment 2022](#)
- [VCRS inspection Report](#)
- [TyDyfan Inspection report](#)