

# Statutory Director of Social Care Services' Annual Report

2021/22 DRAFT

V2

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## Dates of Officer and Political meetings

<b>DMT</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
<b>CMT</b>	04 <sup>th</sup> August 2022
<b>Pre-Cabinet</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> September 2022
<b>Scrutiny</b>	SC&H 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2022
<b>Cabinet</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> October 2022
<b>County Council</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2022

# Introduction



This is my ninth annual report as Statutory Director of Social Services. Although Social Services is only a part of my corporate role there is a statutory requirement on me to report annually on the council's social services functions.

2021/22 really was another year with challenges like no other. Social services along with all other Council directorates were required to adapt to both the direct and indirect challenges from the pandemic. Our ability to respond quickly and flexibly whilst continuing to provide essential services is testament to the commitment and dedication of the whole workforce, and I cannot thank them enough for the commitment they have shown given the national challenges facing the sector. We have performed exceptionally well across most areas of Children and Adult Services However, we now face immediate and ongoing challenges to maintain this high performance.

The response of the staff across all our social services functions have been exceptional. However, many staff are showing signs of fatigue challenged in their personal lives by cost-of-living pressures and in their professional lives by managing outbreaks and the knock-on effect of vacancies on their workloads.

The external forces of reduced migration, wage inflation in other sectors, increased early retirements and staff leaving a challenging sector have all been felt in Carmarthenshire. This has left the sector needing to recruit an additional 200 Home Carers, over 100 Residential Carers and at least 30 Social Workers. This when coupled with rising post Covid demand across Children and Adult Services has resulted in waiting lists for homecare and residential care being at the highest levels for many years.

The last 6 months have seen a wide range of initiatives to assist recruitment that have included regrading of posts, record inflationary increases to care providers, the development of a Care Academi, record numbers of people supported onto the social work degree, the temporary introduction of market supplements and significant activity to promote and brand us as an employer and to promote care as a career. In our in-house service there have been significant improvements in the recruitment and retention of staff in residential care although gains have been more modest in filling social work posts and homecare.

Whilst risk is managed carefully and any waiting lists are monitored closely for risk, I have to report that choice of care is, at times affected and a significant minority of people are provided with alternatives to their assessed needs where the primary provision is not available. Homecare is the most stretched although the numbers waiting for care in hospital have reduced close to pre pandemic levels. I am pleased to say all providers of homecare now pay well above the Real Living Wage.

Children's services have seen a small but significant growth in the number on the Child Protection Register and those children looked after. It is crucial we meet this

need in a timely way with preventative services stretched and are likely to require increased investment moving forward if we are to avoid continued growth and cost in the number of looked after children.

Despite this challenging environment we continue to perform as well as could be expected. In our assurance check early this year, CIW reviewed how the local authority social services continue to help and support adults and children with a focus on safety and well-being findings:

Overall we found the local authority ensures people's voices are heard, their choices respected and people routinely achieved self-identified outcomes. Leaders have a line of sight on front line practice with clear plans that have led to creative practice.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance Check 2021:  
Carmarthenshire County Council

***Jake Morgan, Statutory Director of Social Services***

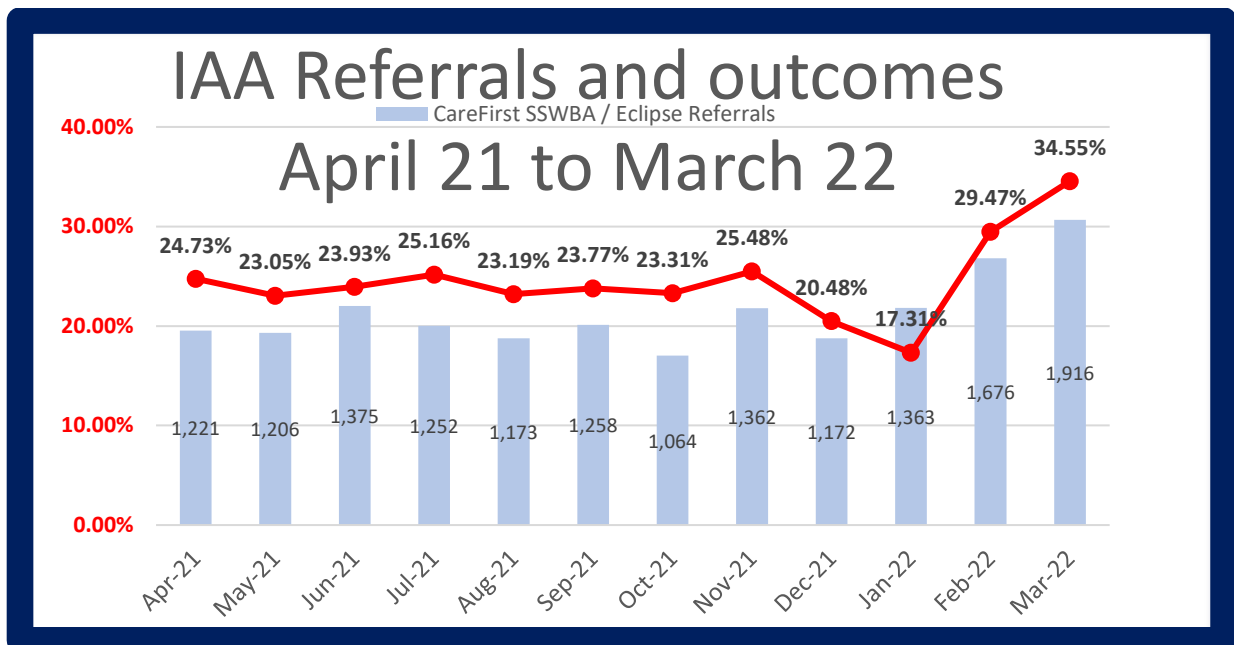
# Overview

## Adult Services

Managing the challenges that the pandemic created has been integrated into the everyday work of the service. The success of the vaccination programme and the associated very high level of take up by vulnerable adults and social care staff has meant that the impact of community transmission on care settings has been minimised with the impact on vulnerable adults relatively low even when they are infected. Thus with the exception of one isolated incident in the summer, care home outbreaks have not led to significant illness or death of our care home population although Covid has contributed to increased levels of staff absence. By the end of this reporting year (April 2022) Covid had become something for us to manage on a proactive basis, rather than constantly responding to emergencies on a reactive basis.

As a consequence of the above, we have had the opportunity to focus more on our core business and look at how we develop and shape our services so that they are fit for the future.

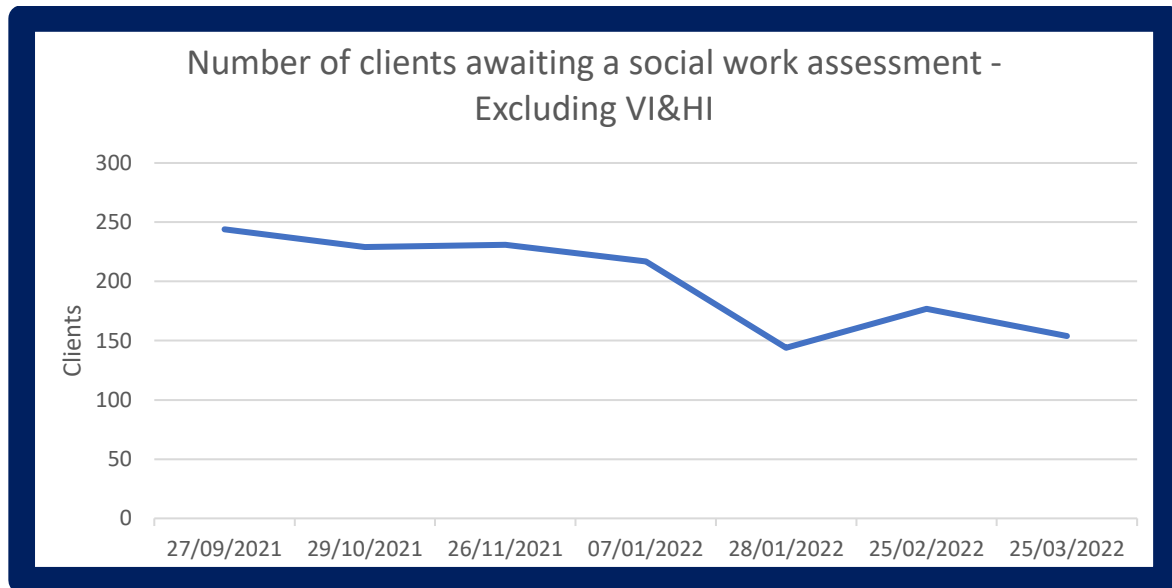
In partnership with Llesiant Delta Wellbeing (our arms length telecare company), we have continued to offer a strong Information, Advice and Assistance service (IAA) and are still seeing positive results with a significant number of enquiries not requiring ongoing assistance/assessment. As in all areas recruitment to our IAA service is a challenge and can, at times, impact on outcomes.



Whilst the use of virtual means of communication is helping us to be more flexible with the use of our time, we have returned to offering face to face assessments whenever we can to ensure that our practitioners are able to carry out a holistic

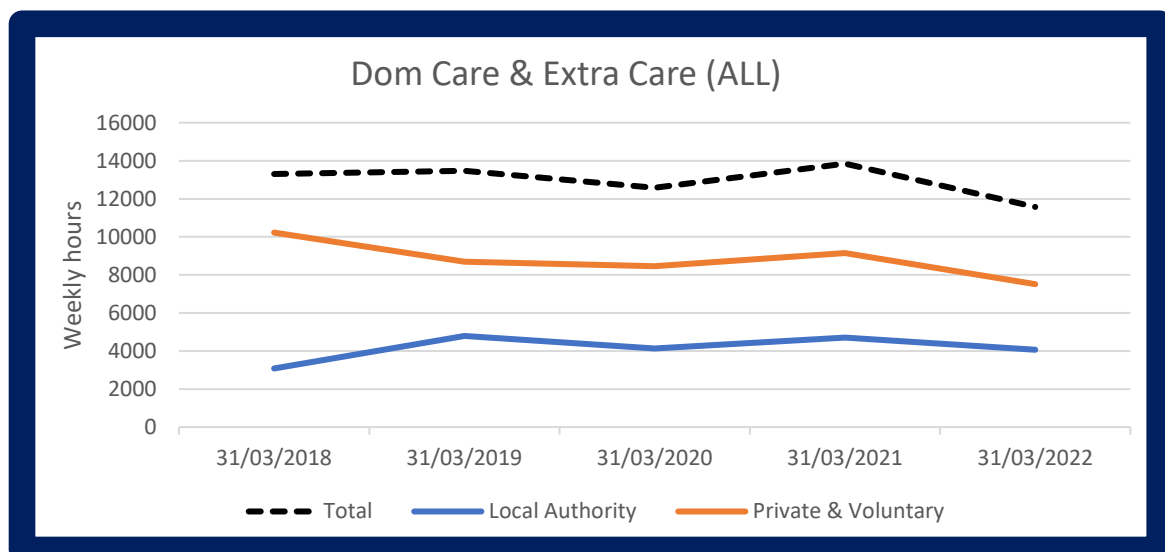
assessment of the individual and ensure that we can best support them and meet their outcomes.

Our biggest challenge has come from the significant recruitment and retention issues we are experiencing both in terms of a qualified social work and non-qualified social care workforce. As a consequence from an older adults/physical disability perspective, we have had insufficient social workers available to assess all those who need assessments as quickly as we might like. This means that since October 2021 we have started to have significant waiting lists for assessments and carefully prioritise those in most urgent need. Despite this waiting lists have steadily fallen.



This is a common picture across Wales and reflects the shortfall in numbers of social workers and the increase in demand. Some headway has been made in reducing the number since the autumn and as we appoint more social work staff we would anticipate the numbers waiting falling further.

Whilst we have a number of residential care beds still available to us, the availability of commissioned homecare care hours has decreased significantly since summer



2021. Our in-house service has remained broadly steady with improved recruitment and retention levels.

This reduced capacity has led to a rise in those waiting for care towards the end of last year. Whilst it has stabilised since then, progress to reduce the numbers waiting has been slow. Improvements in reablement performance have improved the picture since March and numbers waiting between March and May 2022 have reduced by nearly 25% with 150 clients waiting for care still to be formally allocated.

We have therefore had to prioritise those with the greatest need waiting for care. In doing this we work closely with individuals and families to consider other options such as a temporary step-down residential beds or remunerating families to provide support on an interim basis through our Wellbeing Support Grant until we can secure the care. In addition, we have offered temporary emergency support through Delta Wellbeing's CONNECT service to avoid hospital or care home admissions. We have always been a relatively high provider of statutory care services and this pressure has undoubtedly forced us to innovate better and reduce any unnecessary provision. However, we cannot provide the service we want until the whole sector has recruited sufficient staff.

Due to the significant challenges we have been facing along with staffing pressures, I established a Social Care Gold Command which I have chaired with representation across each division, and HR, Finance and Communications to ensure that we could effectively manage the risks and provide the corporate reassurance needed. This Gold Command has now been stood down on the basis that all controls are in place, but our focus is now on how we recruit and retain a sustainable workforce (see Workforce section).

The crisis that we have been faced with has also encouraged us to innovate and think creatively about how to best support the most vulnerable people in our population. New services have been created to support vulnerable users that meet demand in different ways.

One such example is the development of the Intermediate Care Multi-Disciplinary Team which initially focussed on supporting hospital patients to return home within 72 hours of their admission. The team is a collaboration between Health and Social Care and comprises the crisis response arm of the Health Board's Acute Response Team as well as GPs, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, Delta Wellbeing Community Wellbeing Officers (CWO's) and the Council's Reablement Service. Its success has been recognised both by achieving a Silver Award in the recent IESE Awards as well as the Health Board's Team of the Month. The team is soon to be expanded to focus also on hospital admissions avoidance as well as supporting crisis in the community. It will work alongside our front door to health and social care to provide the short-term support that people need to keep them safe and independent at home whilst an assessment is undertaken to determine long-term needs.

Alongside the Intermediate Care Multi-Disciplinary Team has been the development of Ty Pili-Pala a 14 bedded step down unit which forms part of the Council's Llys Y Bryn Residential Home. Again, the Council is working in partnership with the Health Board to allow for therapy-led reablement with a view to supporting people to be able to return home and live independently.

At the start of the pandemic in line with government advice and the high vulnerability of our client groups to Covid, we immediately had to close most of our **Day Services** and suspend most planned respite in care homes.

For older people we have tried to look at more innovative ways of how we can continue to support them to meet their preferred outcomes and provide some degree of respite for individuals and families. On a pilot basis we have offered those that previously attended our day services 1 to 1 support at home as well as an offer of a virtual day service by providing participants with a bespoke electronic tablet so that they can engage in virtual group activities such as bingo, coffee chats and exercise classes. At the time of writing the report, we are in the process of reopening two of our face-to-face day services on a phased basis. It is envisaged that these services will be part of our day opportunities offer alongside 1 to 1 support at home and an online telecare offer developed through Llesiant Delta Wellbeing. Planned residential respite has also started to become more of a viable option as users get more confident to access services

Ensuring that the people we work with are able to have a voice, choice and control is equally important and in this context we have continued to contribute to the regional commissioning agenda including the review of advocacy services and the commissioning of Independent Professional Advocacy. We also successfully brought our Direct Payments Service back in-house in April 2021 from our previous commissioned provider. This has presented an opportunity for us to better support the development of Direct Payments in lieu of direct services to those that need it.

**Learning Disability Day Opportunities** are critical to support adults in the community. As a result, we have continued to increase the number of people we are able to support as we gradually reopened our buildings. We have also offered support at home and a range of online virtual activities which remain popular with those who use our services and their carers. Activities provided include, exercise, quizzes, and cookery sessions, woodwork and craft activity packs have also been delivered to individual homes to enable them to join in with the virtual demonstrations.

The Learning disability Services has adapted and developed new initiatives in response to increasing demands. We have established new opportunities in the Llandovery area to support people to access community activities and build relationships closer to home. A new walking group specifically for Carers has been established through the exercise buddies project which is proving to be popular and have just taken delivery of their own branded T shirts etc and all the centres have seen a significant increase in their attendance numbers.

We were proud to celebrate the achievements of one of our Community Connectors, Fran Horton who in February was awarded Gower College Swansea's Community



Development Apprentice of the Year after completing her QCF Level 3 in Community Development. Fran's role is to promote inclusion and engagement by encouraging individuals to develop new networks within their local community so that they can utilise their own assets and those of their community to achieve the outcomes that are important to them.

Shared Lives is a service we run on behalf of the region to provide supportive homes for adults with a range of needs. After a review, the service has been restructured and this is now bedding in. Our new online recruitment portal for Shared lives Carers went live in February. This provides a more user friendly and efficient platform from which to become a Shared Lives Carer. The service is focussed on increasing both the number and range of carers available across the region. There are champion groups now running across the county to raise awareness and provide support and the team are developing locality referral meetings for any teams wishing to refer into the service.

The first phase of the new model for disability was also established during 2020 commencing with the 0 to 25 years old service where our Children with Disabilities Team and adult services provide seamless transitions for users of Children's Services to Adults. Initial feedback from those who use services, their carers and professionals is very positive. Moving forward this should enable better preparation for children with a disability on their transition to adult services and avoid the sense of a cliff edge of care that families have reported in the past.

We recognise that the pandemic has been a hugely challenging time for carers who have been managing with reduced support and respite. Through the Regional Partnership Board arrangements, we have continued to adapt our offer to carers to ensure that they can continue to feel supported. I am delighted that we have been able to publish the Regional Carers Strategy and we have been able to support the ongoing implementation of the local and regional action plan.

The social work teams and day services staff have kept in contact with carers and provided support when necessary. Many of our staff have either achieved or are undertaking the Investors in Carers Award which is an acknowledgement of the support provided to carers. All social work teams in Adult Social Care have also clearly identified Carers Champions.

The pandemic is challenging for everyone, but the impact on the mental health and wellbeing of many people in Wales and Carmarthenshire is significant. In planning for this, the council has invested significant growth resource to address this which we used to recruit more social work and social care staff to focus on two specific areas: early intervention and prevention and a more robust and timelier crisis response. During the last year, we have been collaborating with the Health Board and the third sector to develop initiatives in this regard developing a Single Point of Access and a 24/7 crisis response service. The Twilight Sanctuary Crisis Response in Llanelli, which was council led, goes from strength to strength and the model is now being rolled out across the region. For the Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP) service, it has been business as usual, and they have had continued to undertake their statutory duties throughout the pandemic.

Within mental health and learning disability services, we are embarking on an ambitious programme of change in relation to accommodation. Our vision is to further reduce the reliance on residential care and develop more community options accommodation, which promote choice and independence. In 2021, we commissioned the Housing Learning Improvement Network (LIN) to undertake an accommodation needs mapping exercise for mental health. We have used this data to establish a four-year accommodation plan and to collaborate with colleagues in Housing, Commissioning and with Hywel Dda University Health Board, to develop a range of community accommodation projects from independent tenancies to shared settings.

Learning Disability and Mental Health is now a priority in the council's housing strategy. We have been able to access the council's housing stock and new builds for those who are able to live independently. Our housing department have purchased properties and made the necessary adaptations to accommodate those with complex needs.

I am pleased to report that despite the challenges of the pandemic, this work has remained a key objective for the division. We have developed several accommodation projects in partnership with our colleagues in housing and enabled twenty adults to step down to more independent living from residential care.

The prevention of suicide and self-harm is also a priority for the region, this work is led by the Head of Adult Social Care. A current priority for the region and Carmarthenshire, is to establish a multi-agency rapid response to suicide. This model is being developed under the umbrella of the Regional Safeguarding Board. The rapid response model is a meeting where, in the event of a suicide, organisations and relevant others will come together swiftly to look at who is impacted, who needs to be supported and what needs to be done to prevent further incidences. It will then be extended to include incidences where suicide is not completed. This model has already been adopted in other parts of Wales and is seen as good practice in the prevention of suicide and self-harm.

In relation to the Substance Misuse Team, we have seen increased demand and complexities related to the pandemic. We have been collaborating with partners to develop innovative pathways for comorbidities such as mental health and substance misuse and alcohol related brain damage.

## **Adult Safeguarding**

In relation to adult safeguarding, the Regional Safeguarding Board and associated subgroups have continued to meet virtually. We were part of a Regional Multi Agency Covid Response Group which met weekly to have assurance regarding safeguarding responses during the pandemic. MAPPA, MARAC and VAWDASV arrangements have also continued. We have continued to work within the new All Wales Adult Protection Procedures and Carmarthenshire has led on several developments including a regional policy on self-neglect.

Carmarthenshire Adult Safeguarding Team is held in high regard across the region and received positive feedback from the CIW Assurance visit in 2021. We have seen an increase in safeguarding activity and an increase in the complexity of referrals with up to 25 referrals a week. Our risk management was highlighted as effective by the CIW:

Co-produced solutions were evident and there were positive outcomes for people subject to safeguarded interventions. Safeguarding enquiries and investigations conducted in line with statutory requirements, good analysis of risk, protection plans in place and action taken when necessary. Providers and partners said they were supported by the adult safeguarding team; their willingness to offer advice, guidance and assist with training of social care workers was acknowledged.

**“Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 2021”**

A robust regional approach to managing new and existing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard authorisations was agreed during the pandemic. This approach ensures the principles of the Mental Capacity Act are upheld and is consistent with the guidance received from Welsh Government. As a result, we are well prepared for the implementation of the new Liberty Protection Safeguards in April 2023.

The number of DOLS applications has been consistent during the past 12 months. Due to the visiting restrictions in place for care homes, the assessments have been undertaken remotely in line with national guidance and good practice. Assessments are prioritised in terms of urgency and a robust audit process is in place for ensuring the principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) are followed.

## **Technology Enabled Care**

Llesiant Delta Wellbeing is wholly owned by the Council and was created to enable us to innovate and deliver care. The service has been invaluable in enabling us to respond to the needs of vulnerable people during the pandemic. Employing close to 150 people and providing services both regionally and nationally the service is one of the UK leaders in delivering innovative Technology Enabled Care (TEC)

Carmarthenshire took the best of integrated health and social care practice in Spain and developed the TEC CONNECT project. This innovative service provides 24 hour proactive integrated tele-monitoring and wellbeing calls, wellbeing plans and community-based support pathways with a rapid response team when vulnerable users are in crisis. The rapid response element of the service is now registered with CIW and has had a recent inspection which was hugely positive.

“People and their relatives speak positively about the time-limited care and support they receive through Llesiant Delta Wellbeing and the ongoing support and reassurance provided through CONNECT, the non-regulated part of the service. Care staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the needs of the people they support and an enthusiasm for working for Llesiant Delta Wellbeing.”

**“Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 2022”**

The total number of individuals who have been supported via CONNECT in Carmarthenshire is 3089 with Carmarthenshire having the most people in Wales supported by telecare.

The service has been acknowledged as best practice in the UK exemplifying the work that is being achieved across sectoral boundaries and is delivering an innovative, person-centred approach to wellbeing, care and support. CONNECT has helped transform the way we deliver care, by implementing this new model of self-help and pro-active care, utilising TEC, which is at the heart of the project, to improve wellbeing, helping people to stay independent for longer and reducing demand on long-term or acute care. CONNECT provides a wrap-around service which allows people to remain confident and safe at home and in the community.

The Community Rapid Response Service has attended over 5800 calls to clients' homes since April 2020 ensuring that they are receiving the right help at the right time. With only 7% of those calls needing to be escalated to the emergency services a high proportion of CONNECT clients who have suffered a non-injurious fall, have avoided a long-lie and ultimately a lengthy conveyance to hospital due to unprecedented waits for ambulances and have been lifted off the floor and supported by the team.

We have recently embedded our service in both acute hospital sites with Delta Wellbeing Officers who are able to offer information and advice on site and triage new referrals to determine whether patients need further assessment. They are a critical link between the hospital ward and social care to make sure that we make the discharge process as streamlined as possible.

We have worked hard to develop the expertise of our front-line Response and TEC Officers over the last year, specifically developing skills that allow them to identify issues of concern. Their “eyes on” within the property is invaluable to identify any concerns for an individual's wellbeing and ensure the appropriate escalation or response.

The Community Response Team has been expanded to assist patients to return home safely, ensuring the right support is available to prevent re-admission. As well as emergency bridging packages of care where there is a start date for someone leaving hospital. This service has enabled clients to return home from hospital sooner and freed up hospital bed spaces during what continues to be a challenging time for our local hospitals and domiciliary care services.

**Carmarthenshire's Delta CONNECT offers "a lifeline" to Edward during pandemic lockdown**

When 82-year-old widower Edward returned to his Llanedweryn home from a long spell in hospital at the end of 2020, his son, daughter in law and daughter would visit several times a day to help support him in his everyday life and keep an eye on him.

However, everything changed when the lockdown started. Edward began shielding and frequent visits were no longer an easy.

Edward began using the Delta CONNECT service in March 2020 and it has meant the world to him. His mood was extremely low after his lengthy stay in hospital and he had lost a lot of weight, which left him feeling frail and vulnerable.

As part of the CONNECT service, his assigned Community Wellbeing Officer (CWO) Louise called him weekly to check how he was and whether he needed any help. He also had a lifeline home unit with pendant to call for help in an emergency.

"I'd been in hospital for four months and was really down in the dumps," Edward said, "It really helped when I spoke to Louise, she brought me back from the depths of despair."

For many clients, the service includes food or medical supplies, but Edward was lucky enough to have his family living locally to help with this.

"I'm so lucky to have a fantastic family nearby and they really look after me, but sometimes it's easier to talk to someone outside of your family because you don't want them to worry any more that they already are."

"I can't speak highly enough of CONNECT. Knowing that there was someone at the end of the phone for my son a lifeline and so reassuring for my family as well."

The CWOs are trained to identify clients who may need additional support, even when the client hasn't recognized that need themselves - this has helped Edward's family know that he is safe and supported at home even when they can't be there.

Edward's son Jonathan said: "The Delta service means a lot to my dad and he feels genuinely privileged to be able to access it. The lifeline system is invaluable for him and although we're close by, it's reassuring for the family to know that help is on hand should he need it."

"The wellbeing calls have been fantastic - he enjoys having someone different to talk to and really looks forward to the calls every week. In a few years I'll probably be signing myself up."

*\*Names have been anonymised*

As we continued to raise the profile of the CONNECT service and the essential support it has provided to date, Delta have been recognised in a number of high-profile awards across various categories from innovation, digital impact, partnership working, care and health integration and transformation. In 2021 Delta received a Silver Award in the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards for 'Innovation' and were also a winner at the Swansea Bay Business Awards 2021 for 'Customer Service'. Finally in 2022 Delta Connect won in the prestigious UK wide Management Journal Awards for the best example of care and Health Integration.

The future potential for telecare and telehealth is significant and detailed work is underway to integrate the service with assistive living in Pentre Awel, Llanelli and wider monitoring and intervention of chronic conditions.

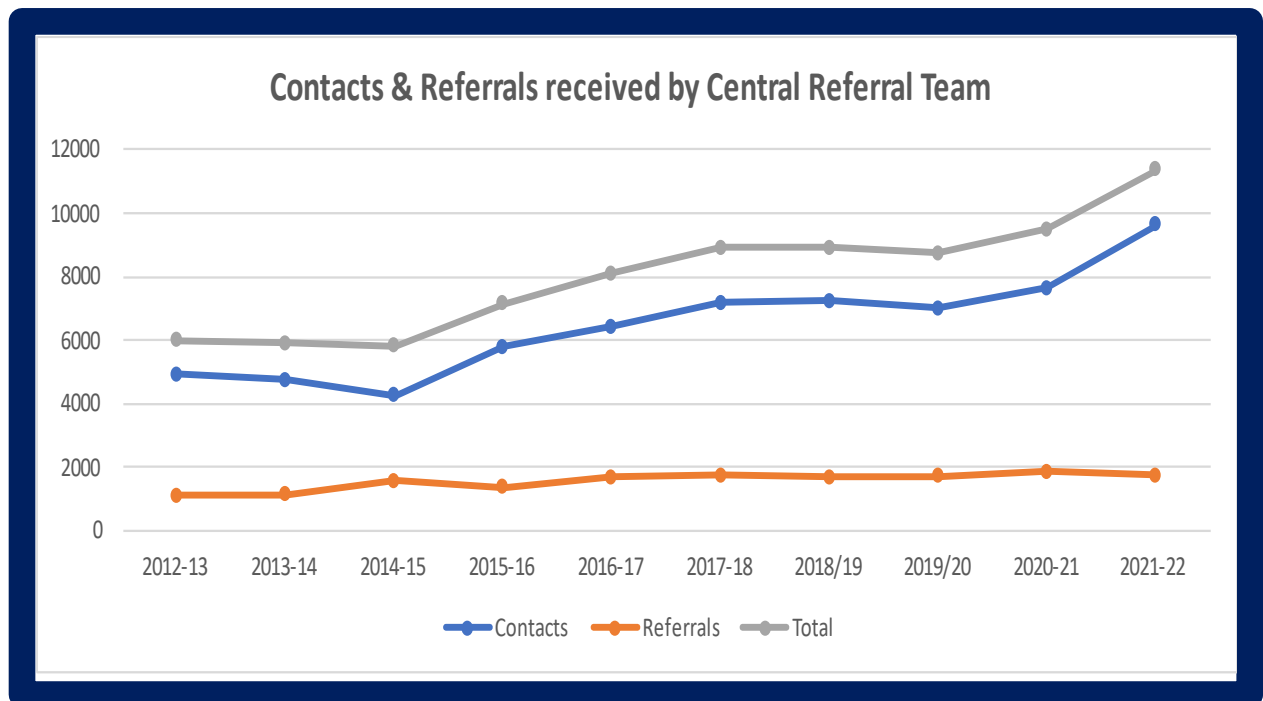
## Children Services

Children's services have continued to function effectively throughout the pandemic and lockdowns and work has had to continually evolve and adapt to ensure our staff, and the children and families we visit stay safe whilst following Welsh Government guidelines in respect of Covid restrictions. The pandemic has also continued to demonstrate the benefits and opportunities of digital working which has often increased engagement, especially with those who may not have otherwise been in regular contact, thus providing better insight and opportunities and helping improve outcomes. Whilst Covid has dominated the last two years it is also important to reflect on the challenging work and innovative ways our workers have adopted throughout the pandemic in continuing to support children and families.

### Progress during the year:

The impact of the Covid pandemic has placed significant pressures on families and brought about unprecedented challenges to ensure children and young people in Carmarthenshire are safeguarded. Children's services have seen significant

increase in demand for services and support with the **number of contacts** to the department continuing to rise.



However, we continue to perform well despite these added pressures. 90.2% of new assessments were completed within statutory timescales. The increase in contacts coupled with staff absence/sickness, Covid restrictions and recruitment difficulties have all been additional challenges resulting in some caseloads higher than normal. Also, within preventative services the increase in demand and effects of Covid and restrictions there has been less availability thus placing more pressure on statutory services.

There continues to be good evidence in the sample of **assessments that are audited monthly** of the views of children and what life is like for them, and practitioners are using a wider range of tools to enable this. There is evidence of collaborative work with children, parents, and extended family and increasingly assessments refer to the contribution that a Family Network Meeting has made to the assessment in terms of identifying sources of support and family/friends who have helped devise a safety plan that ensure a child's needs are met appropriately.

The **relationship based approach to delivering social work services** to children and families, incorporating systemic thinking and the principles of Signs of Safety is embedded in all childcare teams including the 0-25 disability service. Contributions from adult services in pods are also increasing such as substance misuse and learning disability to incorporate different perspectives about a family into pod discussions and consequent actions and plans.

Pod discussions are taking place face to face again instead of remotely wherever possible. It is seen as more effective sharing thoughts and knowledge about cases and staff value this peer support as it helps reduce feelings of isolation.

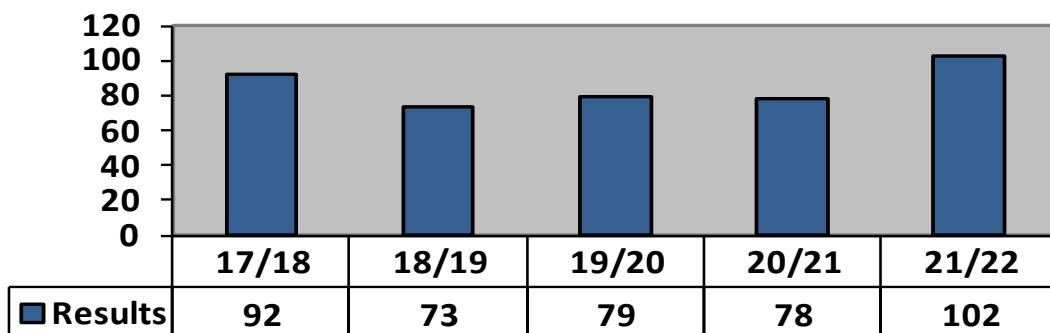
Mandatory sessions for social workers in their first year of practice will include input on systemic practice enabling social workers from both children’s and adult services to have opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. Over 20 managers and senior social workers have completed foundation level training this year which has extended their knowledge and confidence in using systemic thinking and ensuring a consistent approach.

The focus remains on Family Network Meetings which is an essential tool in both assessment and childcare teams. In collaboration with ‘Collective Space’ practitioners have developed a training package which will be delivered on a regular basis in future, in addition to more specialist risk assessment training.

We have continued to follow regional threshold and **multi-agency child protection arrangements** ensuring early intervention and utilisation of preventative services to reduce the need for statutory involvement wherever possible. A regional development day was held in May 2021 facilitated by Gladys White OBE which was an opportunity for staff to consider legislation, guidance, and child protection practice across the region and to ensure risks are understood and consistently applied. The session was well received, and feedback highlighted the benefit of workers having time to reflect and work alongside colleagues from different agencies, and across other LA’s in the region, and provided assurance that arrangements are working effectively across the region.

The number of children on the **child protection** register has increased this year – 102 (as at 31/3/22) compared to 78 the previous year. Recent times have proved very challenging to families due to the pandemic. Families have faced difficulties in relation to safeguarding issues when under Covid restrictions which has meant some children’s names having to be placed onto the child protection register to ensure their safety under demanding circumstances.

**CH/026 - The total number of children on the Child Protection Register as at 31st March**

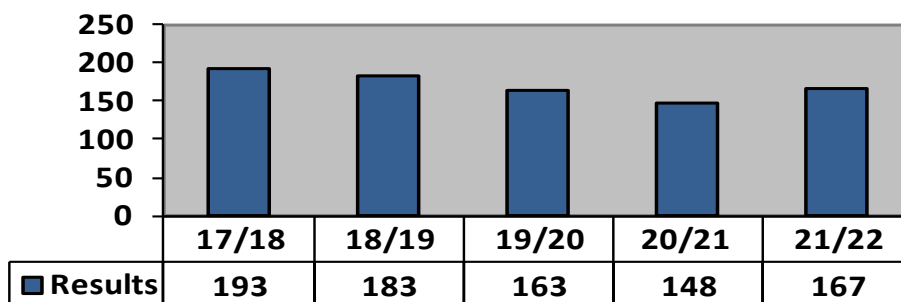


We continue to develop our preventative work to reduce the number of children being subject to child protection plans. Prevention is the key to practice to ensure children are able to remain at home with friends or family when it is safe to do so. The impact of the pandemic was felt acutely in this part of the service. The withdrawal of face-to-face preventative services meant that families became more isolated and as a result we have seen more children entering the statutory service, some as child protection cases. It is crucial that services now operate fully on a face to face basis.

The statutory childcare teams are supported by IFST, Edge of Care and Family Intervention Team with intensive packages of support implemented in a variety of ways to keep children safe. The effectiveness of systemic approaches and signs of safety working practices, including effective communication, and working together with families contribute to good outcomes, despite the increasing complexity of cases. We continue to perform well in relation to the **timeliness of child protection conferences** with 98.6% held within statutory timescales during 2021/22.

Wales has amongst the highest numbers of children in public care in the Western world. Reducing this is a national priority. However, whilst we have seen the number of children looked after increase 167 (as at 31/3/22) from 148 at the same time last year, Carmarthenshire still remains proportionately the lowest LAC population in Wales. The rise is in part explained by several young children looked after who are being moved onto permanency at an early stage due to abuse and neglect with families suffering mental health and substance misuse. There has also been a cohort of teenagers who have presented significantly challenging and complex needs and have required more specialist services. The development of an inhouse specialist residential unit later this year on the Rhydygors site will take away complete reliance on an independent sector that is judged by national reports to have failed to meet need and used national demand to increase profits beyond what is reasonable. This will enable us to only work with external providers who offer quality care with reasonable levels of profit.

**CH/039 - The number of children looked after at 31st March**





We have continued to work hard across teams to maintain **placement stability** for looked after children and focus on the careful matching of placements. During 2021/22, 11 children (6.6%) of children experienced **3 or more placement moves**. These were due to children and young people who had experienced emotional and physical trauma, challenging behaviours, and complex needs. We continually perform well in maintaining children in the same school.

There are robust systems in place to prevent children from becoming looked after including Accommodation panel where requests for placements are reviewed, together with IFST and Edge of Care involvement, focusing on good quality family network meetings and regular Legal Gateway and Pre-proceeding meetings. Early intervention working in partnership with families through care and support plans is key to achieving this. As mentioned previously, the pandemic has had an impact in this area and this has been compounded by a significant social work vacancy factor that the local authority is working to address.

The LAC education team has continued to deliver weekly **trauma informed practice** and attachment training online and in schools in Carmarthenshire throughout 2021-22. Schools have provided very positive feedback as it has helped staff understand how trauma impacts on children and how schools can use strategies to help children who have experienced trauma in their lives to feel secure in school and subsequently enable them to achieve better outcomes. We have consistently performed well in respect of maintaining children in the same school wherever possible.

Choice of available **foster carers** is something we continue to make slow but steady progress on. We have recruited 12 new foster carers during 2021/22 which is an improvement as previously the pandemic had impacted on recruitment with low numbers of people interested in fostering. Nevertheless, placement availability has been limited by the increased numbers being received into care. The National Fostering Framework has been replaced under the new name of Foster Wales which was launched on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and is now the statutory responsibility of Adoption/Wales Management. We have continued to develop our digital marketing programme and use of our local website alongside the Regional Marketing Officer to promote foster care both locally and regionally as many more carers are needed to care for children especially those with challenging and complex needs.

Regional working together continues to drive through common aims and objectives such as developing the harmonisation of fees/allowances and support services to retain foster carers across the region and locally. Carmarthenshire foster carers receive 24 hour support along with training, mentoring, and support groups to meet their learning and development needs, as well as financial resources and support. The Marketing and Recruitment officer in the Mid and West Wales Adoption Service continues to link with the fostering service to share recruitment opportunities and resources.

Foster carers are a valuable commodity and it is likely that rates will have to be reviewed to reflect cost of living increases if we are to retain the ones we have. Demand for **Mid and West Adoption Services (MWAS)** has remained high. Although the number of children with a plan for adoption and the number adopted

fluctuates, the demand for adoption services has carried on rising. MWAS has been able to place sibling groups this year as well as older children and children with more complex needs. MWAS is implementing the Wales Good Practice Guides and a one-off meeting between birth parent and adopter is offered in nearly all instances. Adopters and birth parents are positive about the benefits of this meeting, despite its emotional nature.

To enable adopters to know more about the child's lived experience and what may affect them, MWAS holds 'Understanding the Child' days, and the psychologist assists staff to compile a Trauma Nurture Timeline for each child. This greatly helps the adopters explore the impact on the child of their early experiences and helps tailor the support package that is made available to the adoptive family. Demand for adoption support continues to be high.

Welsh Government funding for adoption support has increased the capacity of MWAS to support adoptive children and families. Whilst we are reaching more families and providing a range of interventions, demand continues to grow. As with other services Covid restrictions, staff absence/shortages and recruitment have been additional challenges for Adoption and Fostering services this year.

We have continued to develop our services for **disabled children aged 0-25** since implementing the new structure during 2020/21 bringing together our statutory and non-statutory teams for children and young people. These have been jointly delivered between children's services, adult social care, health, and education and employ a systemic approach to practice working with the whole family, focusing on their strengths and capabilities in order to meet their needs. We have seen an increased demand for support from families as an impact of the pandemic. We continue to meet with parents each month as part of our 'working together' group and with their input we designed and delivered a range of activities over the summer and winter. We have continued to develop the Early help service and the recently appointed manager will have an important role in managing demand into the service to ensure families get the right help at the right time. Work has been undertaken with partners to develop the web based local offer of support to ensure important information, advice and guidance is included plus sign-posting for specific services.

'**Autism** Skilled Training' for health and Social Care practitioners has continued during the year with over 90+ being trained to date. Our ASD Development Officer has been part of a working group alongside the National Autism Team (NAT) which has developed the framework. Short training and information sessions, and e-learning modules have also been held to help people recognise and respond to autism, in addition to on-going and specific training delivered to our partners and other agencies, and further e-learning being developed for 2022/23.

The Complex Needs panels for Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion have been brought together to create a regional panel with Hywel Dda University Health Board and the inaugural Regional Panel met in July 2021.

The implementation of a **Resource Allocation System** (RAS) has not yet been taken forward due to operational priorities. However, this remains an important piece

of work and progress to date will be taken to the Regional Children's Board to be developed as a regional project with support from the West Wales Care Partnership Team.

The programme of improvement across our **residential services** for children has continued. Care and support arrangements for disabled young people who are moving on from residential care/foster care has been developed. Utilisation of staff from the children's setting to transfer and aid the transitional period helps ease such a big move. The first transition has been completed and was successful for the individual involved.

The homes are recovering well from the difficulties posed during Covid restrictions. Staff are working more freely between homes, and this is becoming the ethos of the service enabling us to be responsive in directing support where needed. Young people themselves have been involved in the planning, design, and appointment of care staff. We have continued to play an active role in the regional partnership Board and lead on several workstreams to transform health and care services in the West Wales region.

The **Corporate Parenting Panel** resumed meeting virtually since November 2021 to monitor and scrutinise the care and support that the Local Authority provides to our Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Throughout the Covid pandemic all Looked after children and care leavers have continued to be supported via the childcare teams and corporate parenting service to ensure they are safeguarded and receiving good quality care which has enabled them to reach their potential. A number of Care Leavers are studying in colleges and Universities and others participating in training which is a great achievement for the young people. In addition, a number of Care Leavers are graduating from universities, and subsequently taking up professional positions in the community.

The Corporate Parenting Service is also regularly monitoring the outcomes of Looked After Children through the MALAC (Multi-Agency Care Management meetings) and CYSUR Audit and Evaluation Meetings that have continued to take place virtually through 2021-22 to ensure the council fulfils its corporate parenting role and progress is monitored as part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Whilst the pandemic created challenges for children's services throughout 2021-22 the outcomes being achieved for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Carmarthenshire has remained overwhelmingly positive.

Creating more **housing options** for vulnerable young people has faced a significant delay due to Covid. However, we are working closely with partner agencies to implement a 16-25 housing transformation plan which aims to decommission a number of current providers in the Tyisha area of Llanelli and replace with smaller accommodation with increased support for young people. The aim is to achieve this by September 2022. Following work between the Housing Department, Commissioning Services, Youth Support Service, and Children's Services, we anticipate new supported accommodation will be available by September 2022. Young people at risk of becoming homeless or those who are experiencing homelessness will now have the opportunity of being offered more supported accommodation in smaller housing projects within their communities as opposed to

larger supported accommodation which was mainly based in Llanelli. Increased support will also be available to ensure they are supported to achieve better outcomes.

In addition, children's services successfully applied for funding from the Housing Support Grant to develop an in-house Supported Lodgings service to increase capacity for supported lodgings placements for vulnerable young people aged 16-25. It aims to provide 24 placements for our young people including those who experience more complex needs. Staff are currently being recruited to run the service and it is hoped it will start to provide placements to young people within the next few months.

There is a new structure in place for **Electively Home Educated children (EHE)**. The number of families electing to educate their children at home has increased since 2020 and is continuing to increase. There are currently 565 children known to be electively home educated (541 statutory school age and 24 pre-school age). The most common reason for opting to home educate has been due to the Covid pandemic. It's a policy area where repeated recommendations for a strengthening of national guidance have been rejected by Welsh Government despite the Children's Commissioner, ADSSC (Directors of Social services) ADEW (Directors of Education) and the national safeguarding board all recommending action by government, the position of the promised guidance remains delayed by years despite multiple drafts and consultation. This is an area identified as a risk by the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board.

The level of engagement with EHE families continues to increase with 90% of children having had a visit within the last 12 months. Welsh Government funding has enabled us to strengthen the team on a temporary basis, and grant funding has also contributed towards a number of schemes and initiatives for EHE families and feedback has been positive. One of our Home Education Advisors has recently received a gold KIT award from home education charity "Education Otherwise". This award recognises officers who have achieved high standards in their role, nominated by home educating families.

**Team Around the Family (TAF)** are continuing to re-shape their service to meet future need. The TAF-in-Schools team has been amalgamated with the TAF Central team as part of the reshaping TAF to be a more efficient, place based, and community focused organisation. TAF are continuing to develop links with the third sector, and work closely with schools, Safeguarding and Attendance and Early Help team as part of the behaviour support agenda. The team have operated at a much reduced capacity (less than 50%) to meet the needs of families primarily through digital means. The first peer parent support group is in the early stages of development going forward into 2022/23.

The **Family Information Service (FIS)** has kept families and professionals up to date by providing information and advice via a variety of methods. During 2021/22 there have been 1866 enquiries to the FIS website. FIS Social media channels are continuing to grow and are an excellent means of communication. As well as 37,363 website hits, engagement via Facebook reached 31,247 and Twitter 33.4K. The Child Development Fund provides additional support to children and families who are

in greatest need and disadvantage especially due to Covid to ensure needs are identified early before they escalate. During the year, 178 families benefitted from the CDF with 187 children being supported.

Promotion of the **Childcare Offer** has continued with vigorous and multi-media advertising. During 2021/22 the number of enquiries to the webpage was 463, with 12,168 hits to the webpage. On average 500-600 children accessed the childcare offer each month during 2021/22. The new national digital service is planned to be rolled-out nationally in January 2023. Carmarthenshire is participating in a small pilot working with Ceredigion commencing September 2022.

All **Families First** projects have been providing a broad range of support to families/young people in a variety of locations including schools, office/community basis and families' homes as well as continuing to provide support virtually. Projects continue to face challenges including Covid related staff sickness, families contracting Covid, working with limited group numbers and pre booked appointments are still required. As restrictions ease, projects are working with greater numbers of individuals and are reporting an increase in referrals. FF Projects have benefitted from additional short-term grants from WG which has helped meet demand for support and enabled support from other agencies:

During 2021-22:

**6792** individuals supported from the FF programme, of which **4876 (72%)** were new individuals.

**3569** families supported from the FF programme, of which **2683 (75%)** were new families (as a result of working with people on a one-to-one basis)

**591** single agency JAFFs were closed with a forward movement of **551 (93%)** on the distance travelled tool.

**16** cases were stepped up to Social Services, of which **1** of those cases were stepped up to Ceredigion and **86** cases were stepped down from Social Services to the FF programme.

In most cases support has been provided on a one-to-one basis due to Covid restrictions. As projects have increased their face-to-face support, there has been an increase in the number of families stepping down from Children's Services into preventative services which will now help alleviate some pressures in statutory services.

Collaborative work has continued within **Flying Start** (FS) providing a holistic approach to communicate and engage with families, sharing ideas and resources. The Flying Start App has been integral in engaging families, keeping them informed and providing vital information. We have used mobile data devices to help families unable to download the app. The FS team met with WG to evaluate the success of the App, especially during Covid, with an aim of it being rolled out to other LA's. Challenges have continued due to ongoing Covid restrictions and lack of access to suitable venues for face-to-face delivery. Staffing issues due to Covid and vacancies

have also made it difficult to run full services. Language and Play (LAP) services have worked closely with the advisory teacher and educational psychologist has enabled them to offer bespoke support to individual childcare settings to support children's developing communication skills.

## Direct Care Provision/Commissioned Care

### Care Homes

Care Homes have been amongst the hardest hit by Covid. Thankfully, the roll out of the vaccination programme and the high take up amongst residents and health and social care staff has meant that in the majority of cases residents and staff are no longer becoming seriously unwell with Covid. However, it is still something that we need to manage carefully and the Welsh Government and Public Health Guidance still means that we are seeing ongoing patterns of having to close care homes to new admissions for significant periods of time.

We are hopeful that as the evidence is now showing that the effect of the vaccination programme has significantly lowered the risk to care home residents that we will start to see the guidance change and move away from the need to isolate new residents on admission and close care homes to new admissions when there are a number of cases. Clearly, each instance of Covid cases needs to be managed on a risk assessed basis, but we are hopeful that greater discretion will be given to Responsible Individuals to take risk-based decisions on how to operate their homes.

In the last year, 61 care homes (across older people, learning disability and mental health) have been under exclusion (incident status), with several homes being under exclusion on numerous occasions. However, in the last year we have seen only one home where Covid infection has led to significant levels of serious illness and death of residents.

Most of the care and support in Carmarthenshire is delivered by the independent commissioned sector. The Commissioning Team in Carmarthenshire has continued to play a significant part in supporting these services during the pandemic. The range of support has included:

- Coordination of the numerous communications and guidance.
- Coordination and supply of PPE.
- Proactive communications with providers.
- Support for risk assessments surrounding admissions/returns from hospital.
- Initiating provider performance arrangements to address any Covid or other concerns in relation to service provision.
- Support with testing and infection control.
- Financial support.
- Coordination of support and liaison with care homes experiencing outbreaks.

Visiting care homes by families and friends has continued to be a challenge, but all care homes now have good systems in place to ensure that residents are able to have visitors and maintain family contact to support their wellbeing.

The sector continues to experience challenges with filling vacant beds and at the time of writing the report we had 12% of beds vacant in Carmarthenshire. A recent regional market stability report has been developed and is helping us to better understand the risks associated with the market and to consider what capacity we need going forward and how we work with providers to reshape their provision to better meet the needs of the population. Capacity and the ability to take placements is impacted by the difficulty the whole sector has in recruitment, albeit recruitment levels have improved significantly in the last few weeks within our in-house residential care settings.

The Population Needs Assessment has also been recently updated, which clearly articulates the demographic pressures linked to an increase in the population of over 85-year-olds and higher instances of dementia. The 'sufficiency' assessment of the Population Needs Assessment combined with the Market Stability Assessment of regulated services will provide a strong foundation for strategic planning for the next five years.

It is fair to say however that the impact of Covid has led to individuals and families making quite different decisions about their long-term care. People are choosing to remain at home much longer than they might have prior to the pandemic because of the much-publicised impact that Covid has had on care homes. The number of commissioned placements has decreased considerably as per the graph below. This is in part due to increased reluctance of people making this choice post covid, partly availability of beds and an increased reliance on community packages to meet need.



There has been unprecedented financial support to the care sector with vacancies paid through much of the pandemic even when costs reduced as numbers fell. The decrease in commissioned care home beds is now likely to be having a financial impact on care homes although there is no evidence at this stage that their viability is in question. Many need to evolve their business model to take a greater proportion of the elderly mentally ill (EMI) and ensure their staffing terms and conditions match the market rate.

Managing the mental and physical impact on staff in care settings continues to be one of the greatest challenges, which is compounded by the ongoing recruitment and retention issues linked to the workforce. We continue to provide support to external homes where we can and ensure that we are supporting the wellbeing of our own staff. We recognise that staff are tired after such a difficult two years, and we are doing everything we can to support them.

We have provided a substantial percentage uplift to residential home fees between 10.55% and 11.78% to enable them to pay staff at the real living wage and meet other inflationary pressures.

## **Domiciliary Care**

We have articulated clearly what the challenges have meant in terms of the difficult decisions we are making surrounding people's care, and at the time of writing the report we were still seeing a declining trend in commissioned care hours, although it has started to plateau elsewhere. The decline is largely because of systemic workforce shortages across the county.

Despite the challenges, we are among the most forward thinking of authorities and are determined to address this national issue- there are some green shoots on the horizon. Late last year, we went out to tender for our new Domiciliary Care Framework and have been successful in appointing providers to all "lots" under the Framework. We officially launched the Framework in March 2022 and will be gradually moving to the new commissioning arrangements over the next few months. The new framework will allow us to meet some of the long-standing challenges such as equity of provision in some of the more rural areas of the county. It will also allow us to develop our Community Assessment Service with both our in-house and external provider, which will allow as many individuals as possible a period of assessment before long-term care decisions are made with a view to increasing independence and support people to remain safe and well at home for as long as possible. All commissioned hours should now be paid at the real living wage or above and receive a mileage rate that is comparable to the local authority (45p).

At the time of writing the report, we have just received the report concerning a CIW inspection of our in-house domiciliary care inspection. I am delighted to report that the feedback has been extremely positive. To receive this during a global pandemic and despite significant workforce challenges is quite remarkable.



The report is not yet published, however, the following is a summary of the feedback received:

“People and their relatives speak highly about the care and support they receive. Care records are person centred and reflect people’s individual needs. Care staff are well trained, have a good knowledge of the people they care for and are enthusiastic about working in the service. Dedicated and knowledgeable managers who are well supported by the Responsible Individual (RI) lead the service. The managers are accessible and well respected by all involved. The RI has good oversight of the service and there are robust systems in place to support this. The leadership team have good working relationships and a clear vision about the service.”

Measures to recruit and retain domiciliary care workers has become one of our core areas of work. We have developed a marketing campaign to try and attract people to want to come and work in the sector, we have provided financial incentives to encourage our own staff to work extra shifts and we have worked with the independent sector to try and improve rates of pay and consider recruitment and retention initiatives. As a result, the proportion of care delivered as a percentage of the total continues to grow and is now consistently at 38% of the market from a low of 22% 6 years ago. This is in line with the agreed strategy to rebalance care and ensure the care market in Carmarthenshire is balanced. It is intended a further review will be completed should we reach 50% of the market share. Reflecting the increasing complexity of the role, pay for our in-house teams is now up to £25,363 PA or just over £13 an hour. Despite this market leading rate recruitment remains extremely challenging.

I am particularly proud of this in-house workforce who have demonstrated remarkable resilience and commitment and continued to deliver care to our most vulnerable throughout this most difficult of times. Managing staff absence, whether that be linked to Covid, general sickness or vacancies has been extremely difficult and we have continued to rely on the goodwill and generosity of our staff to fill gaps when needed. Whilst our recruitment and retention work is currently only allowing us to increase numbers at a very slow rate, I hope in 2022/23 that we will once again be in a position to grow the workforce and get to a more sustainable position where we can better meet needs.

To contribute to this improvement, we hope to create a joint reablement service with the health-board giving comparable terms and conditions, joint recruitment and deployment. This will, if successful move away from the overall tension within the system where NHS Healthcare Assistants are paid substantially more than their local authority equivalents.

Regular compliance meetings with CIW for all registered services have taken place during 2021/22 and have been very positive. A key objective going forward is to grow

the in-house domiciliary service which will include supporting those with more complex needs.

## Complaints and Compliments

### Adults

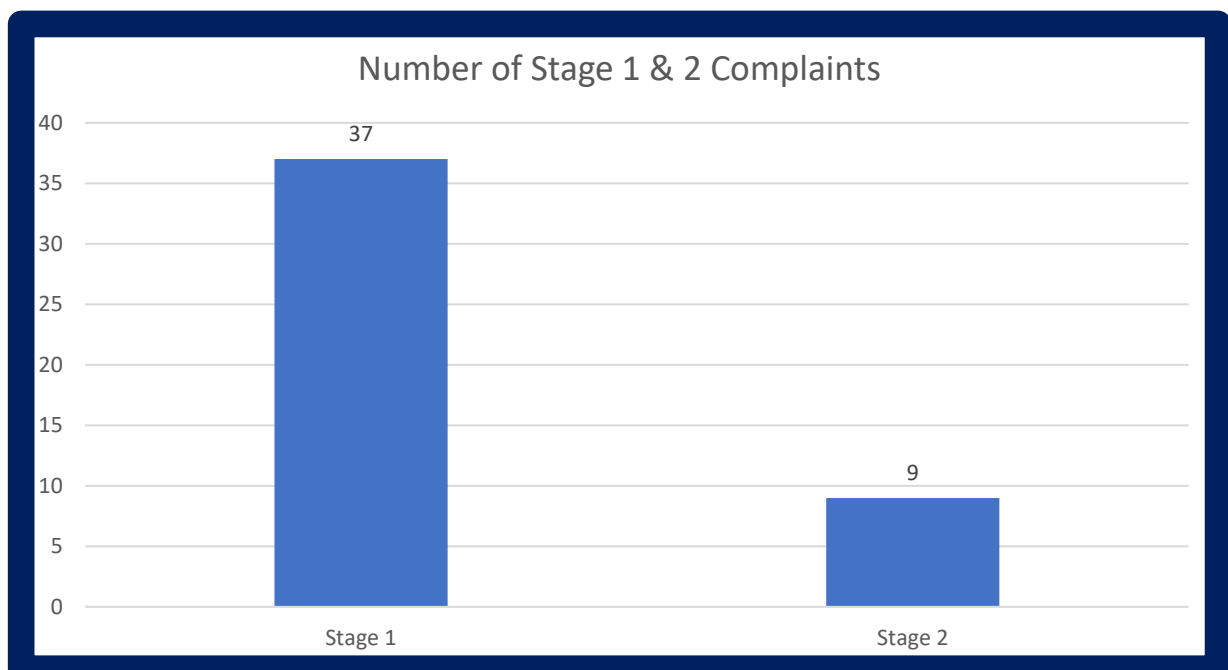
Adult Social Care complaints and compliments 2021/22. It provides a positive picture of the department's performance in the context of 4,190 individuals that received a social care service from Carmarthenshire County Council during this period. This means that only 1% of individuals formally complained about the service they received.

### Complaints

A total of 46 complaints were recorded at either Stage 1 or 2 in relation to Adult Social Care.

### Summary

- 37 of the Adult Social Care complaints were investigated at the local resolution Stage 1.
- 9 were recorded under the Formal Investigation of Stage 2
- A further 41 complaints were dealt with by the department and recorded either as Redirects, No Further Action, on hold pending safeguarding or other.



## Ombudsman Complaints

In total, eight complaints have been escalated to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales following completion of a Stage 2 investigation. Of the eight complaints, five were rejected and no further investigation took place. However, there are currently two complaints being investigated by the Ombudsman and the council had to issue compensation to one complainant that related to delays in the effective handling of a complaint relating to an external provider. Changes have been put in place to stop this happening again.

## Compliments

A total of 172 Adult Social Care compliments were received in during 2021/22.

“We are delighted & so thankful to XX & everyone who’s involved in guiding us through this transition for Mam. Everyone has made the experience so stress free especially at a time when it can be very emotional. Could I please thank each & everyone for all the help, support, patience & guidance. It has been so painless with all of your help.”

“Would like to send a huge thank you for your kindness as my mums social worker. From our first Teams meeting with you, my sister and mam, you acted in mams best interest and quite frankly saw what a character she was. As a family we could not have wished for better care and support from your care team. You came in on a days annual leave and certainly went above and beyond to help mam be comfortable in the last few weeks.  
Diolch yn fawr

“Llawer iawn o ddiolch I chi am bob Cymorth a chyngor a gawsom fel teulu ganddoch yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf. Mae’n dda gwybod fod rhywun fel chi ar gael I rol cefnogaeth eto os bydd angen. Cofion cynnes iawn.

## Children

In relation to Children services, there were sixteen (16) Stage 1 complaints received.

Twelve (12) of the Stage 1 complaints were not upheld.

There were four (4) Stage 2 complaints investigated by an Independent Investigating Officer (IIO)

Three (3) of the Stage 2 investigations were not upheld by outcome.

Of the 4 Stage 1 complaints upheld - these focused on;

How a foster carer communicated in a meeting about the parents (complainants) child. During a complex legal dispute over parental contact with their child how one parent (the complainant) alleged preferential treatment over such contact than the other.

The conduct of social workers carrying out a home visit for assessment/investigation purposes, not wearing face masks and not providing updates to the complainant on the assessment and investigations and that the complainant felt embarrassed by the visit due to lanyards being worn visible to neighbours impacting further on the complainant's mental health.

Concerns raised by complainants that during supervised contact they overheard contact staff at the venue discussing other cases which worried them in terms of whether their case would be discussed with others. It was established no names or identifying details were disclosed, but discussions did happen.

All the complainants received apologies and an explanation was given in respect to what had happened, including reassurance of compliance with the department's Covid policy/practice at that time, and relevant staff being reminded about confidentiality.

There was one (1) upheld independently investigated Statutory Stage 2 complaint. This related to an adult who was subject to social services involvement when a child in the early 1980's who believed should have been removed from an abusive home life (witnessing domestic violence).

The IIO concluded there were possible missed opportunities by professional involved at the time, and subsequently partially upheld the complaint and compensation was awarded.

## Compliments

**Compliment from High Court Judge & Guardian in respect of extremely complex case to childcare Social Workers. This kind of acknowledgment is rarely given when it should be but has been noticed on this case.**

Judge x expressed gratitude to the Social Work team, for its sensitive, flexible and common-sense approach to both the case and the family, and for the work and support which is being provided in the future. The LA was also complimented on the quality of both its social work and legal documentation. The Children's Guardian made particular note of the Department's work with this family in her Final Analysis, stating that she wished her thanks to the social work team to be put on formal record, in light of the fact that they had *"worked tirelessly to support the family at what has been a difficult time"*. Mother has also formally acknowledged her gratitude to the LA for its approach with her.

## **Legal Team. Children's Guardian, and Barrister feedback to childcare Social worker**

Excellent work it was a complex case and you managed this exceptionally well. The Guardian has fed back how impressed she was with your conduct of the case, your relationship with the three children as well as your final evidence, your detailed care plans and your oral evidence in court last week. The judge also referred to your comprehensive assessments of both parents in his judgment. You gave evidence clearly and understood what was best for the children... and gone above and beyond to provide the parent opportunities to engage.

It takes a very special person  
To do the job that you both do  
We don't know where we would be now  
Without the help from you

You stood by us as we struggled  
You were there through the good and bad  
I think I speak for all your clients  
You were the guardian angels when we were sad

You guided us through our bad days  
You taught us so much too  
If ever someone needs help like this  
I'll be putting them onto you

Sometimes you may feel unappreciated  
Some people may treat you bad  
But believe us when we tell you  
You are the best friends that we've had

Without you both I don't know what we'd have done  
Or where we would be now  
When we were down and in despair  
You showed us the Where, When, and Who

We'll never forget what you've both done for us  
And we will miss you in our own way  
We'll always remember everything you've done  
You're the reason we are who we are today

Thank you so much for all you've done for us  
Throughout all our troubles and strife  
It's guardian angels like you both  
That deserve the best in life

Never put yourself or what you do down  
We've gained two very special friends  
I hope all that happiness you deserve  
Will be there when this journey ends

Thank you both from the bottom of our hearts

***Poem written by a young person to her child care Social Workers to recognise the difference they have made to their life.***

## Performance Framework

With the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act, the Local Authority undertook a survey of people who use their Social Care Services via an annual questionnaire. The survey was conducted between March 2022 and May 2022 a response rate of **24%**.

The findings of the survey were positive and consistent with previous years.

- 90% of respondents felt that they live in a home that best supports their wellbeing.
- 57% answered 'Yes' they could do the things that were important to them.
- 55% felt that they were part of a community
- 88% were happy with the support they received from family, friends, and neighbours.
- 83% stated they felt safe from any kinds of abuse physical harm or from falling both inside and outside their home.
- 82% of respondents new who to contact about the care and support
- 75% of people stated they thought they had the right information or advice when needing it.
- 77% of respondents were involved in decisions.
- 91% were able to communicate in their preferred language

**Full report can be available from the Performance, Analysis & Systems Team**

## Workforce

Having the very best people working for the Authority means the very best social care can be provided for our people in the community. It is important that staff feel proud about the social care they provide and feel they are connected to the local communities and the teams they work within.

I cannot stress enough how much our staff have continued to step up to the challenge and go above and beyond what is expected of them. The pressures continue to be immense, and without their flexibility and resilience we would not have a service to deliver. I recognise that being a social care worker, social worker, occupational therapist or staff who support our back-office functions is at times an impossible task within the context of the challenges we now face. However, despite everything, they continue to display the highest levels of compassion and empathy to the people they work with and are doing everything possible to help them achieve the best possible outcomes.

However, the position across the country is stark with the office for National Statistics seeing pay in the public sector falling in real terms by 4.5% last year. This impacts on our ability to recruit and retain the staff we need and, with over 1.3 million vacancies across the UK it is likely that recruitment will remain a challenge for some time.

To tackle this challenge the work that we are doing on recruitment and retention will be critical to grow and develop our workforce giving them real reasons to stay and develop their careers. To this end, I chair a social care recruitment and retention

working group which has developed our overall plan and is ensuring that it is delivered. Initiatives developed include:

- Overseas recruitment as well as how we ensure that all our staff are able to access appropriate career paths to encourage them to stay with us.
- Comprehensive advertising strategy
- A significant expansion of traineeships and secondments
- The development and launch of a Care Academi to deliver a career pathway for care staff
- Systematic job role reviews to ensure our roles reflect the task needed

We work closely with the trade unions and we are currently considering what actions we can take to support Homecare staff with the massive impact of fuel rises.

We recognise that the last two years has had a huge emotional and psychological impact on many of our staff, and this should not be underestimated. As a department, we have encouraged staff to come forward as Wellbeing Champions and now have a Wellbeing Champions Group who meet regularly to work through some of the wellbeing challenges and put suggestions for areas of improvement through to our Departmental Management Team. We are also providing dedicated wellbeing support at team level where we are experiencing challenges.

We asked a question to all staff in the Department if they would “[Rate Your Division as an Employer](#)” to understand their experience working in the department and Division. The response was consistent with previous years as “Good”, despite the ongoing pressures.

Carmarthenshire County Council care workers have been recognised in the Queen’s New Year’s Honours list for their services to health and social care during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lisa Randell, a Support Worker and Lyndsay McNicholl, Care Home Manager at Llys Y Bryn Residential Home in Llanelli, were awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for their dedication and determinations shown throughout the crisis.



## Welsh Language

Within the Communities Department, we have ensured the active offer is a priority, and this was recognised in a recent CIW inspection of Domiciliary care. CIW noted that in line with Carmarthenshire's policy and direction, the service provides an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It anticipates, identifies, and meets the Welsh language and cultural needs of people who use, or may use the service.

“People receive care and support that meets their needs. Staff are knowledgeable, caring and take pride in the care and support they provide. Personal plans provide good information about the individual and daily records support these. The service provides an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. Many of the staff are Welsh speakers, which means people are able to communicate in Welsh or English as they choose.”

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

Whilst the Welsh Language Board has not met as frequently during the Pandemic, access to training has continued and a total 72 staff have completed their training. The sustainability of the Welsh language depends on providing enough educational, cultural and social opportunities to use the language daily and this is an essential part of our workforce strategy.

Within 2022 we have a workshop planned to refresh our Welsh Language strategy within the department. The promotion of the Welsh language and culture is a priority for the Communities department as it is at the heart of our communities in Carmarthenshire.

A revision of our strategy will provide the opportunity for us to build on the work that has already been done in Carmarthenshire, and create the conditions that will enable the Welsh Language to thrive, to ensure it can be seen and heard in our communities and amongst our workforce. The strategy will support and contribute to the Welsh's Government's vision to create a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

In our annual survey to people receiving care and support 91% were able to communicate in their preferred language.

“We found the Welsh language 'Active Offer' was being promoted with recognition of people's first language recorded and services being delivered in people's chosen language. Preferred language is recognised as a key factor in building effective relationships between people and practitioners. “

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance Check 2021:  
Carmarthenshire County Council



## Conclusion and Next Steps

### Children's Services

No	Action	By Who
1	We will continue to transform children's social work practice through a <b>Relationship based approach</b> that incorporates systemic thinking and the principles of Signs of Safety.	
2	We will continue effective <b>management oversight &amp; challenge</b> of Assessments & Care & Support plans to ensure they are outcome focused, evidencing the voice of the child, & reflect the underpinning principles of the Social Services & Well-being Act (SSWBA)	
3	We will review and monitor the implementation of the <b>Corporate Parenting Strategy</b> ensuring the council fulfils its Corporate Parenting role and that our looked after children and care leavers have the opportunity to reach their full potential	
4	We will continue to develop and deliver the <b>early intervention support</b> services (0-25) for disadvantaged children, young people, and families across the county in line with the Family Support Strategy, utilising opportunities for integrating services across the Children and Communities Grant and flexible funding opportunities with the Housing Support Grant.	
5	We will maintain the focus on increasing the range of placements to ensure <b>placement stability</b> and stability in education in respect of looked after children, including accommodation through the implementation of an in-house supported lodgings service. This will include the development of an in-house residential service.	

## Adult Social Care and Integrated Services

No	Action	By Who
1	Develop a 10 year strategy for Social Care incorporating Children and adult services	Director
2	Develop and implement a Digital Transformation Strategy for the department	GM
3	Develop and deliver a workforce Plan to recruit, retain and develop staff to ensure a sustainable workforce for the future	AB
4	Ensure we implement the new domiciliary framework which effectively addresses the lack of availability of domiciliary care to support vulnerable adults.	CH
5	Re-model and grow a quality, sustainable and efficient in-house domiciliary care service alongside an effective private and micro enterprise sector	AB
6	Develop and implement a Prevention Strategy for Carmarthenshire which will include continuing to work in partnership with Delta Wellbeing in support of our residents	AW

# Department's Management Structure

