

**Report of the Director of Community Services
Health and Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

17th April 2023

**Subject:
Loneliness in Carmarthenshire Task and Finish Review Update Report**

Purpose:

To update the Committee on progress with the recommendations emerging from the Task and Finish Review on Loneliness in Carmarthenshire during the 2018/19 municipal year.

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1. Introduction:

In the 2018/19 municipal year, the Committee undertook a review into Loneliness in Carmarthenshire. The final report and recommendations were considered at the Committee's meeting of 3rd July 2019. The Review put forward 4 recommendations as follows.

Recommendation One:

Take a strategic approach to loneliness. Identify a senior officer at a Head of Service level, within the Authority to lead and drive an integrated approach to prevention where community connection and addressing loneliness is a priority. This role would work across all disability and age groups and be integrated in the communities' directorate and will also work closely with children and education.

Recommendation Two:

Address loneliness as an important shared priority. When the leadership is in place to drive this agenda, an integrated work stream should be developed to implement a practical and joined up plan to improve community connection, thereby delivering the directive from Welsh government.

Recommendation Three:

Focus on building and supporting community assets. Work with all stakeholders including PSBs to ensure that we maximise all resources. This will include further attention to the community asset transfer approach with the aim of encouraging community activity.

Recommendation Four:

Directly address barriers to connection. A co-designed action plan should be developed to address barriers to connection.

The purpose of the report is to brief the Committee on progress made on the 4 recommendations emerging from the Review.

2. Progress to date:

The review itself was concluded in July 2019. At the time that the review was concluded, it was anticipated that progress would be made through the creation of a dedicated lead for Prevention as part of the Integrated Services restructure. Plans were afoot to progress with this when the pandemic hit in March 2020, and the pandemic unfortunately hindered progress as the priority was inevitably to maintain operational service delivery to ensure that social care needs were met as well as protect the population from harm from Covid. There has now been some positive steps forward to tackle loneliness as demonstrated in the table below and the new Integrated Services Structure itself is now being implemented. As part of this restructure, a new post has been created who will take a lead in further implementing the recommendations emerging from the review. This post will be out to advert shortly.

Progress to date against the recommendations is demonstrated in the table below. Progress against all recommendations are now RAG rated green as they have all been delivered.

| | Recommendation | Progress |
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| 1 | <u><i>Recommendation one:</i></u> Take a strategic approach to loneliness. Identify a senior officer at a Head of Service level, within the Authority to lead and drive an integrated approach to prevention where community connection and addressing loneliness is a priority. This role would work across all disability and age groups and be integrated in the communities' | Rhian Matthews was appointed to the role of County Integrated Systems Director in January 2020. This is an integrated role between Carmarthenshire County Council and Hywel Dda University Health Board and takes a whole population approach to prevention and early intervention. Rhian Matthews therefore provides the strategic lead for prevention at Chief Officer level. Rhian has recently been appointed to another role in the Health Board, and her post is currently out to advert on an interim basis. Her successor will take on the strategic lead for prevention as it relates to community health and social care going forward. Following the Integrated Services restructure, a Senior Delivery Manager for Prevention post has been created and will shortly be out to advert. This |

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| | <p>directorates and will also work closely with children and education.</p> | <p>Senior Delivery Manager will be the strategic operational lead for prevention and developing an overall Prevention Strategy for Carmarthenshire will be a key priority. A Carmarthenshire Prevention Board is now in place which has started to make the links across all services in terms of prevention. This Board comprises senior officers from the Local Authority, Health Board and Public Health. The Board feeds into an established Regional Board also. Tackling loneliness and isolation will form a critical part of the Prevention Strategy as it develops.</p> |
| 2 | <p><u>Recommendation two:</u> Address loneliness as an important shared priority. When the leadership is in place to drive this agenda, an integrated work stream should be developed to implement a practical and joined up plan to improve community connection, thereby delivering the directive from Welsh government.</p> | <p>This will be a key area that will emerge out of the action plan linked to the overall Prevention Strategy for Carmarthenshire. The first stage of the development of the strategy is to complete a mapping exercise which maps all preventative services in Carmarthenshire, and starts to identify some of the gaps. This will inform what areas need to be prioritised going forward, including those activities to address loneliness and isolation.</p> |
| 3 | <p><u>Recommendation Three:</u> Focus on building and supporting community assets. Work with all stakeholders including PSBs to ensure that we maximise all resources. This will include further attention to the community asset</p> | <p>A number of areas have moved forward in relation to this recommendation as follows:</p> <p><i>Community Asset Transfer:</i> The Council welcomes expressions of interest in relation to Community Asset Transfer and will continue to support appropriate future community asset transfer requests. Revised Community Asset Transfer procedures</p> |

transfer approach with the aim of encouraging community activity.

were approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 27th March 2023 [Summary.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Carmarthen Town Task group:

A specific task group was established in Carmarthen Town to look at the issue of loneliness. The group was established in September 2021 and includes representatives from the 3rd sector. The group looked at the effect of COVID and its impact on loneliness, and was led by the Town Council. The work of this group has led to a Community Connection event organised by the Town Council in October last year, and a group that meets weekly in the park to connect people who are on their own.

Third Sector Support:

There are a number of third sector initiatives in place which support those lonely and isolated in the community including the CAVS Befriending Services and support service facilitated via Age Cymru. The Council was awarded a grant by Welsh Government in the 2021/22 financial year in relation to Loneliness and Isolation and worked with CAVS so that this could be accessed by groups in communities to support initiatives at a very local level.

Preventative Services Framework:

The Council recently went out to tender for its Preventative Services Framework. The county has been subdivided into 5 geographical areas which mirror the 5 geographical areas that relate to our domiciliary care services. The lead partner for each area has now been appointed and will work with their local communities to design and develop the preventative

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| | | <p>services in their area. This will include activities that help address loneliness and isolation and build strong communities.</p> |
| 4 | <p><u><i>Recommendation Four:</i></u> Directly address barriers to connection. A co-designed action plan should be developed to address barriers to connection.</p> | <p>There has been significant progress against this recommendation as indicated against the key workstreams below:</p> <p><i>Delta Connect:</i> Delta Wellbeing has made excellent progress in rolling out Delta Connect to those isolated and vulnerable in Carmarthenshire, as well as across the region. At the end of February 2023, there were 1,974 active clients in Carmarthenshire and the project overall had supported over 5,700 people across the West Wales region. Delta Connect provides customers with regular proactive checking in calls, as well as a rapid response service to support people in crisis at home rather than needing to for example dial 999 unnecessarily. Over the lifetime of the project, 76,737 proactive calls had been carried out and 11,391 call outs undertaken by the Community Welfare Response team. Customer feedback indicates that the social connection that the service provides through the regular proactive calls is a lifeline for many, particularly in these difficult times where people are sometimes still fearful to interact socially in their communities in the usual way. Delta Connect also played a key role early on in the pandemic in reaching out to all those individuals that were shielding in the County as well as providing those that needed them with food parcels.</p> <p><i>Day Services:</i> Day services for all client groups are now back up and running across the county. They were temporarily closed during the pandemic, but are now working to capacity.</p> |

Social Prescribers:

In conjunction with our primary care colleagues, we have appointed a number of Social Prescribers who are embedded in GP practices and work with vulnerable people to identify activities and support to help their overall wellbeing. This is a key way that we can work proactively with vulnerable people before they access statutory support and help tackle issues such as social isolation. There is now full coverage across the County with a social prescriber attached to every GP practice.

Dewis:

Carmarthenshire continues to use Dewis as the sole vehicle to provide information on the range of services available in Carmarthenshire. There are still areas to develop within it, but we are continuing to promote its development.

Connect to Kindness:

Connect to Kindness is a regional campaign which aims to create more understanding about the benefit and impact of kindness to ourselves and others in our community. As part of the campaign, regional partners are developing stronger community networks to create an environment where acts of kindness can flourish and happen more easily. To learn more about the Connect to Kindness Campaign in West Wales and the impact that kindness can have on ourselves and our communities, follow the link [Connect Carmarthenshire - Connect Carmarthenshire](#) . This online platform connects individual and communities and was launched early in

2020 as a result of the need to move services to a digital platform during the initial Covid 19 lockdown.

Cost of Living Advice and Support:

The Council is working with a range of partners to provide advice and support to its residents in relation to the cost of living crisis. This has been a significant piece of work to ensure that people know how to access the help that they need. Carmarthenshire County Council has also now set up the roles of Hwb Advisers within the 3 main towns. Our helpful advisers are on hand to provide a tailored package of support to suit everyone's circumstances. The Hwb role is soon to be extended to the rural communities of Carmarthenshire. More information will soon be available. The Council work with a range of partners to ensure all residents are supported and advised accurately. A leaflet providing a range of information on sources of advice and support has recently been sent to every household with the Council Tax demand notice and there is an advice page on the Council's website [Cost of Living Advice \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/cost-of-living-advice) .

Age Friendly Communities:

Carmarthenshire is working towards the World Health Organisation's accreditation to be recognised as an Age Friendly county. This will ensure that the county adheres to a set of minimum standards to make Carmarthenshire a place where people of all ages can connect. The first phase of this has been a piece of work supported by Practice Solutions to assess how Age Friendly we already are and highlight the gaps that need to be addressed. Via funding support from the Welsh Government, a dedicated Officer is in the process of being recruited to help take this

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| | | <p>forward. On 2nd March 2023, for the first time since before the pandemic, Carmarthenshire held an in person Ageing Well Event in the Botanic Gardens. This well attended event showcased all of the fantastic work that is being undertaken to support older people in our communities as well as hosted a number of interactive workshops offering practical advice and support. The event was attended by the Deputy Minister and the Older Person's Commissioner for Wales who were hugely positive about the work that is underway in the county.</p> |
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3. Conclusion

This concludes this piece of work as all recommendations and associated actions have been delivered. A review of the recommendations will be fed into the business planning process moving forward.