

# Statutory Director of Social Services Annual Report

## Final 2022/23



sirgar.llyw.cymru  
carmarthenshire.gov.wales

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Overview .....	4
Adult Services.....	4
Children & Family Services .....	12
Direct Care Provision/Commissioned Care .....	22
Complaints and Compliments .....	26
Workforce.....	28
Welsh Language .....	33
Next Steps.....	34
Department's Management Structure.....	36

## Dates of Officers and Political meetings

05/09/2023	DMT
07/09/2023	CMT
04/10/2023	Scrutiny
16/10/2023	Pre Cabinet
30/10/2023	Cabinet
06/12/2023	Council

# Introduction



This is my **tenth** annual report as Statutory Director of Social Services. Social Services is only a part of my corporate role. There is a statutory requirement for me to report on the performance annually to demonstrate the improvements and the significant challenges we faced during 2022/23. I also set our priorities for the current year 2023/24.

I am grateful for the council's support and commitment to Social Services as we face unprecedented workforce and demand pressures.

The inability to recruit sufficient Homecare, Residential Care and Social Work Staff reached a critical point in late 2022. In common with almost all authorities this led to long waiting lists for assessment and care. Since then, workforce initiatives including a care Academi, increased degree sponsorship and improving some terms and conditions have improved and stabilised the position in all areas. However, at the time of writing, we still face significant gaps in Homecare and Social Work.

The council faced significant financial pressures in 2022/23, we needed to deliver against a robust efficiency programme in Adult Services. Children & Family Services were well protected corporately albeit increased demand and costs create a significant challenge for the council this year as the number of looked after children continue to rise. Our prevention and demand management work along with many other initiatives in supporting us to work as efficiently as possible whilst we continue to strive to improve service user outcomes. The position for 2024/25 looks more challenging and key decisions may need to be made by the council to meet need in different ways.

Despite this, performance remains good in most areas despite unprecedented levels of demand. In particular: We still have the lowest number of looked after children for our population in Wales; Our development of Supportive Living resources for adults with Mental Health and a learning disability is really transforming lives as this programme gathers pace; our Home-first service is reducing those needing long term care at pace and our development of in house resources to rebalance the market is on the cusp of delivering a range of new and innovative resources.

I would like to say a huge thank you to all Council staff who have worked incredibly hard throughout the year to deliver the services highlighted in this report. I have been so impressed by their dedication, patience and professionalism in the way they have risen to the huge challenges. I also want to express our sincere thanks to all our statutory partners, third sector and volunteers who have contributed so much to ensuring better outcomes for those who need our help most.

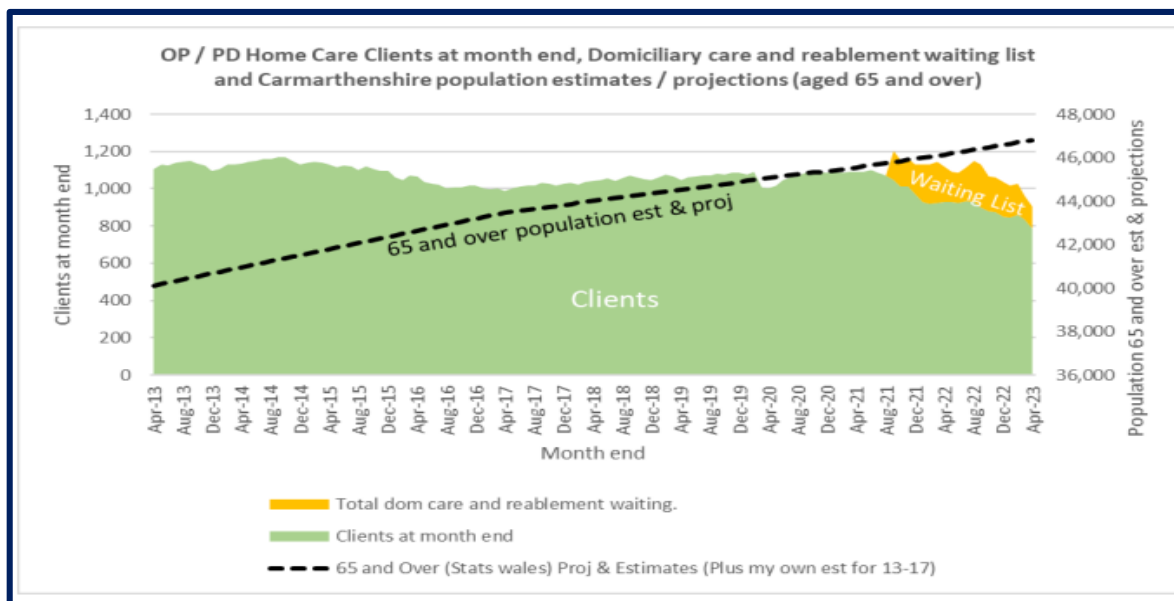
***Jake Morgan, Statutory Director of Social Services***

# Overview

## Adult Services

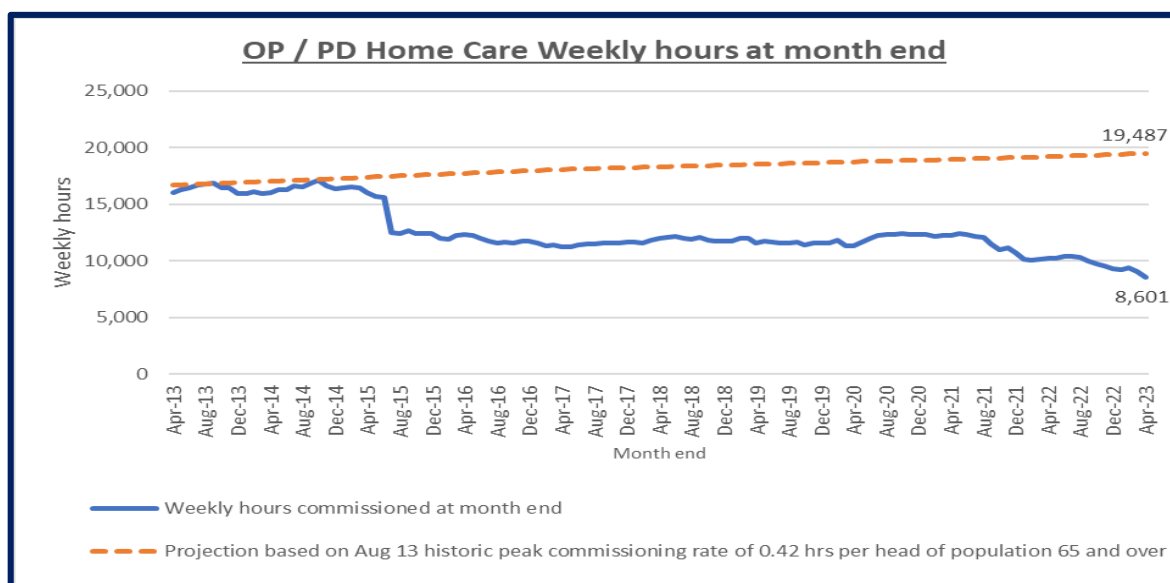
The last year has continued to present ongoing challenges for Adult Services. Similarly, to all Councils across the UK we have been grappling with the dual challenge of increased demand and complexity of those people who need our support as well as decreasing capacity to support them linked to the ongoing social care workforce crisis. In simple terms, we do not have enough social workers or Homecare staff to firstly assess all of those that require assessment and secondly support them once they have been assessed.

Homecare delivery has reduced to just over 9,000 hours a week due to the ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of care workers across sectors. This has inevitably led to minimum waits for care with the risk managed through careful triage and monitoring of people's needs. Greater emphasis on reablement, therapy led step down provision and supporting people in different ways such as Direct payments has led to a significant reduction in demand when considered against the growth in the number of older people in the county. The graph below illustrates the likely demand for homecare if we had continued with the same model of care:



Innovation had made a difference in particular our efforts at smarter commissioning and contracting, a greater emphasis on early intervention, utilising technology, and workforce better, more effective reablement and the introduction of direct payments has led to a striking long-term trend of halving the number of hours of homecare. This has enabled us to manage provision whilst maintaining a stable number of residential placements and delivering a sustainable budget. From being amongst the highest providers in Wales for Homecare we are now average when considered against our population.

The graph below illustrates the 10-year trend of provision.

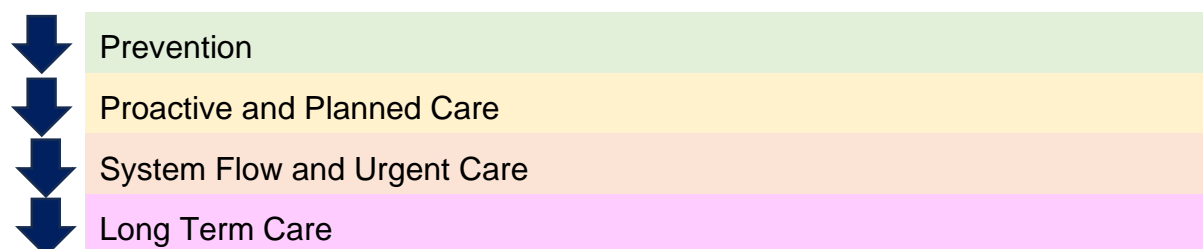


Note -The drop in 2015 reflected a more effective new contracting model and a drop in the number of paid for hours not a drop in the number of care hours delivered to service users.

A range of activities have had an impact in managing demand and demographic growth despite these efforts there is still a considerable waiting list of more than 100 people. However, had we not made these radical reforms over the last 10 years then we would have a waiting list of 500 people and spend of an additional £20,000,000 annually. This clearly illustrates how managing demand in this area is central to the overall financial health of the authority.

In **Older People and Physical Disability services** it has been demonstrated that working in partnership within our integrated management structure between Carmarthenshire County Council and the Local Health Board has been key. This partnership extends to Delta Wellbeing and our third sector partners who are critical to developing and delivering community preventative services as well as long-term care services.

Our strategic plan to manage demand is aligned to the development of pathways as follows:



Our priority has been to redesign these pathways of care to allow us to ensure our services are aligned to best support the population of Carmarthenshire as the population changes and the needs grow by at least 3% a year.

Our key priority has been on keeping safe those waiting for care. This has been a strength of the service over the last year. We have maintained our robust approach to triaging all referrals for social work assessments and prioritising those in greatest need. We continue to review those waiting for care, to ensure that needs have not changed and people remain safe through regular keeping in touch calls by dedicated Care and Support Coordinators in the teams. We also work with families to consider all options and are creative around how to meet support needs at home through a combination of informal and formal support.

We continue to make best use of the care capacity we have by using the releasing time to care methodology to actively reduce care packages where appropriate and release hours to support others. The support of our Occupational Therapists is critical in using their expert knowledge to reduce the number of carers needed from 2 to 1. As part of the annual budget efficiencies, it was agreed that we would look to increase the capacity within the review team on an invest to save basis. This is allowing us to increase the pace at which we can do reviews, and consequently release more care hours to support others.

A dedicated meeting now takes place fortnightly to review all long hospital waits. This allows us to challenge and review and ensure that all options have been considered. This has had a considerable impact on reducing those with a long wait in hospital. In addition, there are twice weekly hospital escalation panels where all difficult cases are escalated and discussed. Waits for care in hospital remain in line with the long-term average with less than 10% of hospital capacity used for people waiting for care despite well over 70% of the capacity of hospitals used for frail and elderly people.

Preventing admissions and reducing the length of stay will be key if we are to create more bed capacity for planned hospital care. With record deficits in Health Board budgets across Wales there is a very real risk that this could destabilise the implementation of initiatives that deliver medium- and long-term benefits in favour of short-term cost cutting.

To improve flow and reduce demand we have also recently changed our approach to how we deal with referrals when they come through Delta Wellbeing, our single point of access to community health and social care. All referrals are now being centrally triaged by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, rather than being triaged in the 3 separate localities by individual professional teams. Whilst it is early days, this approach is starting to reduce the number of those waiting for social work assessment both by ensuring that referrals are directed to the correct place first and through identification of preventative/early intervention services which allow us to close down the referral at information and advice. At the time of writing the report the overall number of people waiting for assessment had reduced from a post pandemic peak of 450 to 200 and we were cautiously optimistic that this change in approach would effectively help us to manage demand. The numbers of people waiting for domiciliary care had also significantly decreased from just over 250 at its peak to just over 100, most of who are in the community.

Despite the challenges, there are a number of key achievements. The Integrated Services Restructure is now complete, all Senior Managers are in post with only the

Senior Delivery Manager for Prevention in the process of being recruited. This restructure, the first for 9 years provides the platform to deal with the continued challenges. This prevention post will support the Carmarthenshire Prevention Board in clarifying its strategic intent in relation to prevention and help us to develop an action plan to address key gaps and ensure we retain a focus on long term goals as we navigate budget pressures in Health and the County Council.

Our award-winning Home First pilot whereby we triage all new referrals is helping to inform Phase 2 of the restructure. As a result, we are re-aligning our teams under the Senior Manager posts. We anticipate that Phase 2 will be complete by mid-Autumn. The Intermediate Care element of the Home First team is now fully embedded and is supporting people to leave hospital more quickly and starting to support people in crisis in the community to help keep them at home rather than admitted to hospital. This element of our changes is receiving national recognition.

Aligned to this service is Ty Pili Pala, our 14 bedded reablement unit within Llys Y Bryn Care Home which is providing excellent outcomes with 70% of those that use the service returning home with no formal ongoing care. We have also launched our integrated reablement service in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board. Whilst recruitment has been a challenge, 90% of those supported are now leaving the service with no long-term care arrangements needed. This is an outstanding example of a service improvement that improves outcomes and reduces costs that could not be delivered without such a strong integrated approach across health and social care.

Our day services for older people are now back up and running, following the enforced closure during the pandemic, and we are slowly growing the service to ensure that we can keep pace with demand. As people chose different models of care and support, we will reshape these services to reflect need.

This model of continuous improvement leaves me cautiously optimistic that the latest set of data continues to demonstrate that our innovative approaches are having the impact that we need to ensure that residents in Carmarthenshire who need it are supported at home in as timely a way as possible within a budget that is manageable in the short term. However, as the population grows it will be impossible to both continue to absorb inflation in the sector above 10% and the frail population growing annually by nearly 3% without substantial and sustained national investment in the care of older people.

**Mental Health and Learning Disability** services have continued their drive to develop a range of supported accommodation to reduce their reliance on residential care. This improves outcomes and enables choice for individuals and promote their independence as more vulnerable people are able to live in our communities. This programme of work also impacts positively on the budget, by reducing over provision and cost in some cases. This ambitious programme of change slowed during the pandemic but is now progressing at pace. Several housing schemes have been opened with more to follow this year and approximately 20 individuals have stepped down from residential care.

Whilst the last year has been challenging, it has also brought opportunities, such as in day opportunities where we have had to adapt and provide less building-based services and provide activities and support people in different ways, with resources reshaped and remodelled to deliver care in the communities that people live. This was always our intention. We have also been successful in increasing the use of technology to stay connected with people and this has proved very successful. We have developed several innovative projects to provide day opportunities for people with a Learning Disability including activities in collaboration with leisure. Moving forward we are also establishing a skills hub in Crosshands which will offer skill development and accredited training.

Last year the Council provided a significant additional investment in Mental Health Services, to enable us to develop and deliver improved services. Unfortunately, despite the investment, we have been unable to recruit all the social worker posts, as a result we are embarking on an ambitious programme to “grow our own”, linked with development pathways for social care staff. More information is provided in the Workforce section of this report. We have however established a wellbeing pathway in the mental health teams with a dedicated resource focussing on early intervention and prevention. Whilst this is in its infancy it is already producing positive outcomes for individuals.

Demand for substance misuse services has increased since the pandemic. We have seen an increase in those presenting with Alcohol Related Brain Damage, so we are collaborating with colleagues in the Health Board and third sector to develop support pathways for individuals with this profile. This is also the case for individuals who have mental health and substance misuse issues.

Over the last year, similarly to older adults and physical disabilities, increased demand and complexity has been a consistent feature in all the Social Work teams. This includes our Learning Disability Teams who are responding to the impact of the pandemic on individuals and their families and our Substance Misuse Team who have seen increased complexities related to increased substance misuse.

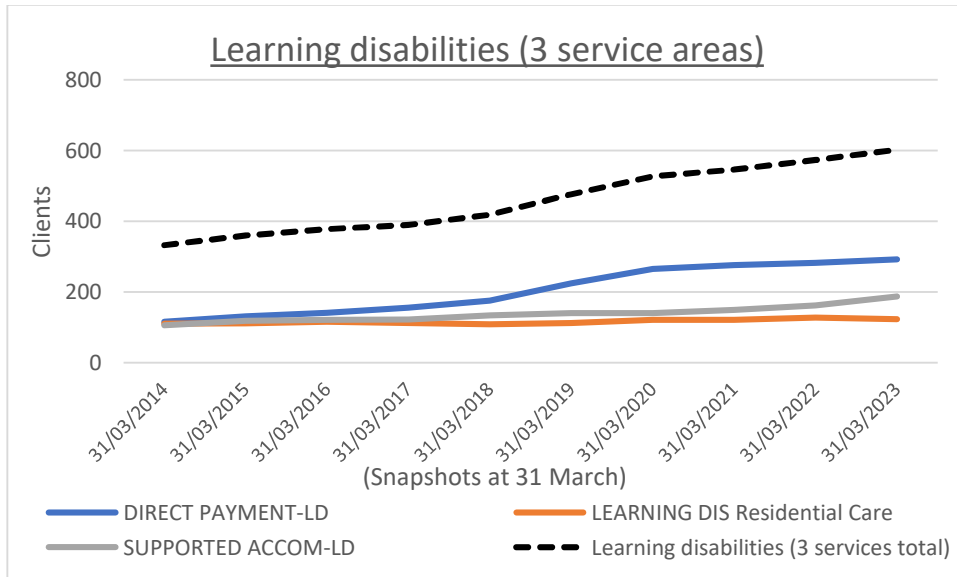
In order to manage demand going forward it will be essential to ensure that we have a robust prevention strategy to provide advice, information, assistance, early intervention and rapid response to those in crisis. This will allow us to, wherever possible, help people to maintain their independence for as long as possible, and prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and residential care. Person centred practice will be at the heart of everything we do, as well as supporting carers to continue in their caring role. We have carers champions in all teams within Adult Social Care, and all teams have either achieved or working towards their Investors in carers awards. This collaborative approach is key in delivering our service objectives. Getting this right must be the service’s key focus in 2023/24.

These services are facing increasing demand that can result in delays to providing the care people need when they need it. However, strong professional leadership in the service leaves me confident that the service is managing the risk and developing the pathways of care to keep people safe and future proofing our services in times of increasing demand. However, the pace of delivery will need to increase if we are to



keep pace with rising demand and deliver a net decrease in the number of people with mental health and learning disabilities in residential care.

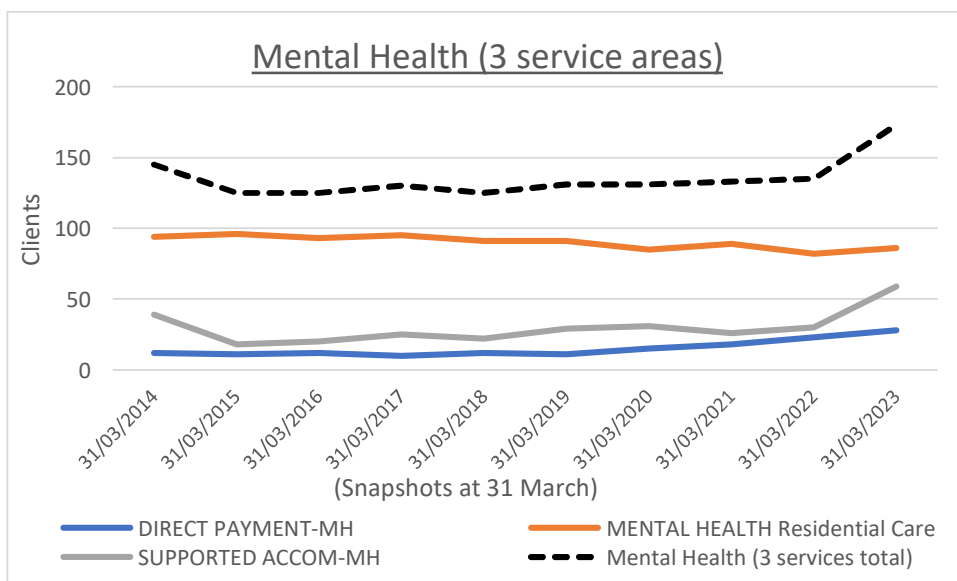
The graph below illustrates people with learning disabilities that receive a range of services since 2014.



The number of people receiving a service has doubled since 2014 with demand growing this has now demonstrated a steady growth in people receiving supported living and direct payments.

The challenge for the next few years is to build on the progress made in developing accommodation in the last few years, further reduce the number of people in residential care and support adults with disabilities in the community.

The below graph illustrates patterns and demand since 2014 for people with Mental Health



In the past few years, we have been successful in slowly reducing numbers of people in residential care. Since the pandemic the demand for mental health services has grown, and we have seen a growth in people requiring supported accommodation in the community. Extending the range of accommodation options as we have done in Learning Disability is a priority this year.

## **Safeguarding**

In relation to **Safeguarding of Adults**, we have seen an increase in safeguarding activity and an increase in the complexity of referrals, but performance is consistent, and we continue to deliver and continue to be held in high regard in relation to safeguarding and lead on many of the regional projects.

Carmarthenshire continues to lead regionally on strategic developments in relation to Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

Suicide and Self harm prevention is now a priority for the Safeguarding Board and Carmarthenshire Safeguarding Operational Group as we have seen incidents of suicide rise across the region. A regional group chaired by the Head of Adult Social Care continues to pilot an immediate multi agency response to suicide, this is being progressed on a local authority footprint to ensure we do all we can to respond to those in crisis.

I can confirm there is a robust process in place for responding to and managing professional concerns.

Corporate Safeguarding remains a priority. Corporate safeguarding are the areas outside of the core safeguarding work with vulnerable children and adults. In this area where work slowed during the pandemic, key work has been developed by human resources to improve recruitment arrangements ensuring full compliance with our policy. Schools have been a priority area with new guidance and direction issued by the Director for Education and Children.

A new policy will be launched in 2023 to ensure that corporate governance and reporting arrangements are strengthened.

Moving forward Corporate Safeguarding will be contained in a dedicated annual report published in parallel with this annual report. Improvement in reporting arrangements and making the political governance arrangements clear will be the key action in 2023/24.

## **Technology Enabled Care**

The County Council's award-winning arm's length company Llesiant Delta Wellbeing is central in our approach to maximise the benefits and respond to fast developing approaches in health and social care monitoring and technology.

Whilst the service delivers out of hours switchboard services for the council this is a tiny part of a service that has expanded from 45 members of staff to more than 170. Whilst it supplies a range of services to most counties in Wales its primary growth area in recent years has been to the people of Carmarthenshire and West Wales.

Delta provides our Information, Advice and Assistance service for adult social care providing a single point of contact for all enquiries. This year it is projected to handle more than 20,000 calls through qualified call handlers. Performance has improved at effective preventative advice with more than 40% of calls now diverted.

In addition, DELTA makes more than 40,000 proactive monitoring calls to isolated and vulnerable people across West Wales. This is an increase of more than 25% on last year as more vulnerable people are found to benefit from the CONNECT programme of support. The CONNECT programme is also able to offer a responder service preventing ambulance calls and unnecessary admissions to hospital. The service is expected to deliver 5000 emergency calls in the next year with less than 8% of calls needing emergency service intervention. This service has further supported hospital discharge pathways by offering a bridging and monitoring service for up to 7 days following discharge. Over the next year we anticipate more than 600 discharges will be supported in this way.

All these functions are underpinned by monitoring technology that is fitted in people's homes. Carmarthenshire has been recognised as a UK leader in delivering technology enabled proactive care. Whilst we already support the monitoring of a range of health needs in the community, I am of the view that this area will expand, and we are seeing growing interest and investment from the health sector. Through a partnership with the private sector, I believe Delta will be amongst the first in Wales to digitise the technology in people's homes and will be well placed to support the health sector in the application of artificial intelligence in the delivery of diagnostics and treatment.

## Case Study 1

### **Intermediate Care Multi-Disciplinary Team (Home First Team and Delta):**

Mrs N is a 99 year old lady who lives alone, she is very independent albeit a little shaky on her feet when mobilising, otherwise does very well at home. During the early hours of a Wednesday morning her bed sensor was activated after 30 minutes of absence. The Community Response team were alerted and dispatched within 7 minutes of the activation coming through. The Response team arrived at the property 15 minutes later to find Mrs N on the floor in her bedroom.

After completing the ISTUMBLE assessment and taking the clinical observations, Mrs N was lifted from the floor. Mrs N experienced a bump to her head, but she refused for an ambulance to be called. Responders ensured she had her lifeline to hand, should she need assistance or if anything was to change and assisted Mrs N back to bed. The following morning the GP was notified of the fall and a home visit was arranged. The GP visited Mrs N and suggested she goes into hospital for a CT Scan to check her head injury, so contacted the Welsh Ambulance Service to arrange an ambulance. This was then picked up by the Community Response Manager at Delta Wellbeing and the Paramedic via the ICMDT (Home first team) and transport was arranged with Delta Wellbeing to take Mrs N into A&E. When Mrs N was ready to go home, A&E Discharge Teams contacted Delta Wellbeing to collect Mrs N and take her home. Community Responders then settled Mrs N in, made her comfortable and ensured she had her lifeline to hand, should she need any assistance. Over the following 7 days, a welfare visit was arranged with Mrs N to ensure that she was coping well following her fall. Any concerns are then reported to the 'Home First' team for further triaging.

# Children & Family Services

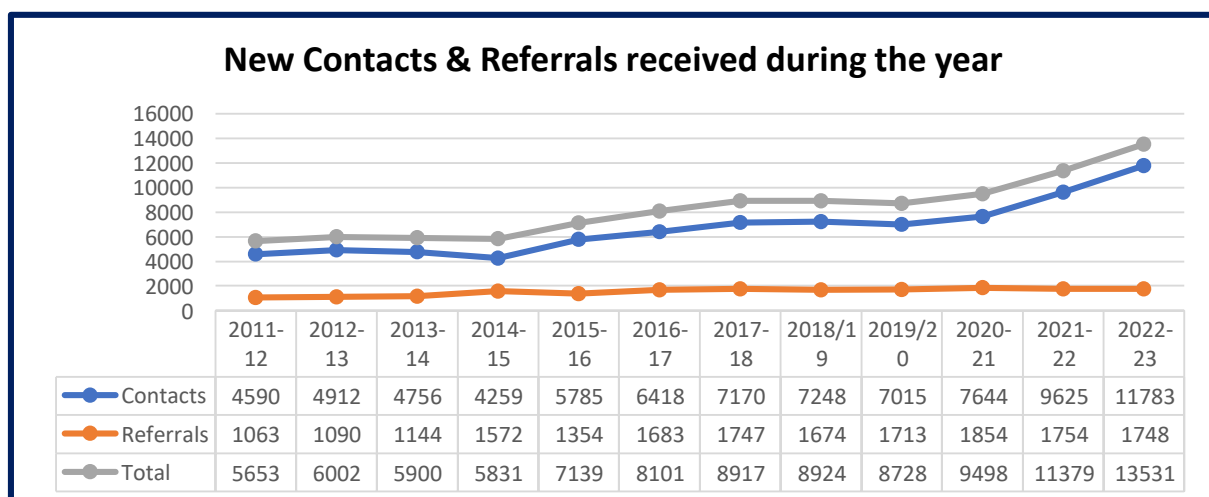
During 2022/23 Children & Family Services has seen a number of changes including a new Head of Children & Family Services, Jan Coles who started in September 2022. This is only our fourth Head of Children's services in the last 28 years! 2023 will also see most of the 3<sup>rd</sup> tier in the service retiring. This is something we have prepared for, and we anticipate a new structure will be implemented in the Autumn of 2023 with new senior managers in place across much of the service.

We are rightly proud of our children and family services and the new team will retain our focus on ensuring our children are safe, keeping our looked after children numbers low and cared for locally whilst providing comprehensive family support and early intervention services.

As the service moves on from the COVID dominated years there are significant pressures on the service. Our teams are increasingly seeing families who struggled during COVID and are now facing hardship as the cost-of-living crisis hits the poorest families the hardest. As a result, we have seen an increasing demand for our services and support and the number of contacts to the department continuing to rise. We are dealing with more than 70% more referrals than we were 10 years ago and since the pandemic we have seen a huge rise in activity reported to the initial assessment teams and recorded as contacts in the graph below.

This increase coupled with on-going challenges in recruiting social workers all added to the challenges faced by Children & Family services teams. Managing the increase in demand and the ongoing challenges in recruitment of Social Workers will be our priority for 2023/24.

The graph below illustrates the level of contact and referrals during the year.



There has been a significant rise in the number of contacts, but the referrals are stable. We believe this reflects the inter-agency activity across the Local Authority

Children & Family Services continue to embed a **relationship based systemic approach to delivering social work** in order to improve partnership working with families and increased engagement through assessment and in the provision of support, which in turn improves the well-being of children. The approach is also underpinned by Signs of Safety which allows the department to set goals in partnership with families which are achievable by them. The systemic approach is being introduced to more Teams across Children & Family services including the Child Assessment Teams. Feedback from families highlight these approaches help them feel valued and listened to. Training has been provided to newly recruited social workers along with refresher training for more experienced staff to ensure we continue to strengthen our relationship-based approach.

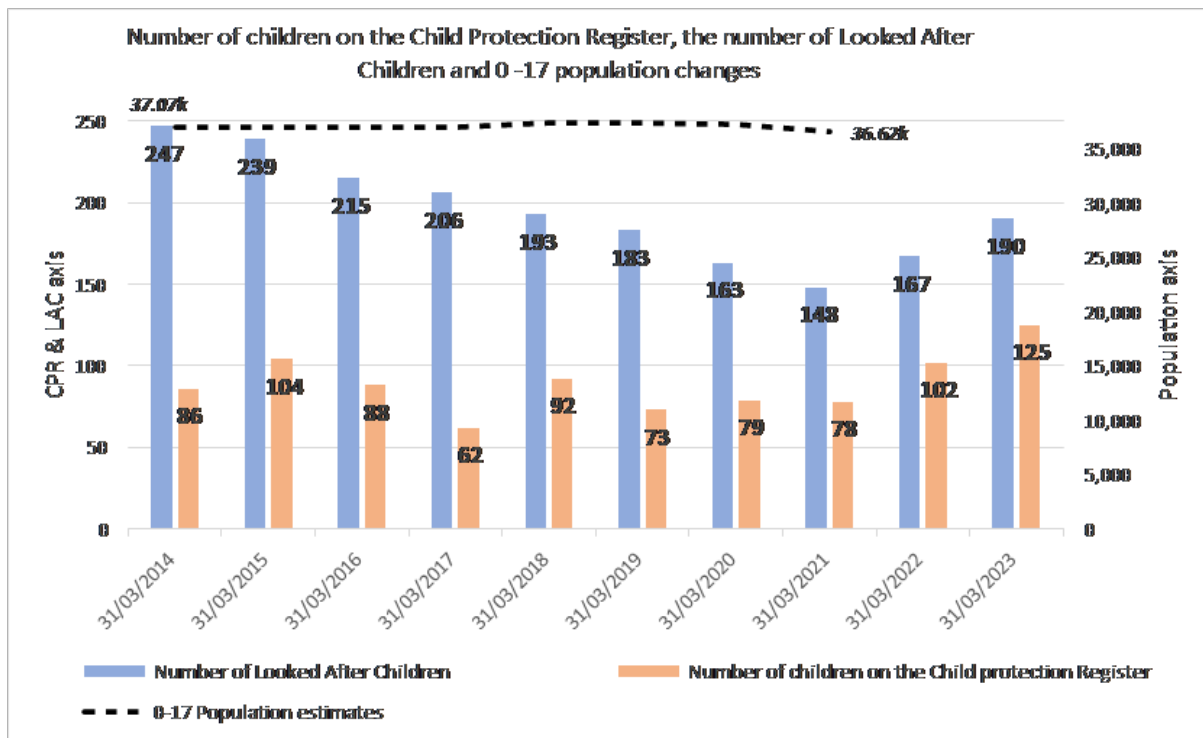
The Senior team report that the **Auditing of assessments and plans of care and support** has continued throughout the year to ensure they are developed in partnership with children and families. There is good evidence of direct work with children and the child's wishes and feelings regards their lived experiences and the support they are receiving. The assessments are also audited to ensure they reflect the five principles of the SSWBA, that families have a voice and control over intervention, focus on wellbeing, assessments and plans are co-produced with families and has a multi-agency approach. In addition, that families are provided with early intervention and preventative support to ensure they are supported earlier.

**83% of new assessments completed during the year were completed within statutory timescales** (within 42 working days). Although we have not met our internal target of 91% it is an acceptable result based on an approximate 'all Wales average figure' of 79% during 2021/22. Assessments are also dependent on the availability of relevant multi-agency professionals and family members which can result in some being completed outside of timescales. Assessments may require a longer period of time ensuring quality and meaningfulness to achieve better outcomes for the child. The continuous monitoring and auditing of Assessments allows feedback to teams on what improvements can be made and highlight any training needs for the service. The inability to fill social worker posts have also inevitably had an impact on our overall capacity. However, despite these added pressures we have continued to perform well.

The **regional threshold and multi-agency child protection arrangements** are continuing to work effectively 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 last year facilitated by Gladys White OBE which was an opportunity for staff to consider legislation, guidance, and child protection practice across the region to ensure risks are understood and consistently applied. The day was well received as it enabled an opportunity for participants to consider best practice, understand the importance of effective risk assessments and a rich debate on how thresholds and risks are understood and applied and the roles of different agencies in contributing to assessing risks. Feedback highlighted the benefit of having time to reflect on the procedures and best practice examples, work alongside colleagues from different agencies, and provided assurance that arrangements are working effectively across the region. Threshold meetings continue to be held quarterly. The **'Right Help at the Right Time'** framework launched in December. It includes a directory containing up

to date, accessible information on the range of services available at various levels of need to assist professionals when deciding whether to refer to preventative or statutory services. It is available on the [FIS website](#)

The graph below illustrates the key area on service provision and demand over the past 10 years despite the small fall in the number of children in the county.



The number of children on the Child Protection Register has seen a significant rise this year (an increase of 22.5% since last year) and have continued to rise in 2023. Recent times have been particularly challenging for families whilst every effort has been made to maintain children at home for as long as possible where risks remain a concern through a robust child protection plan. Of those children placed on the Child Protection Register during the year, the number of children that were previously on the register in the last 12 months was low at 5.9% (9/153) and we are pleased to have performed better than our target of 7.8%. De-registrations and registrations are subject to multi-disciplinary case conferences. Children are subject to child protection planning and cases are closely monitored particularly where child protection concerns remain high. Early intervention is key to practice and the involvement of preventative services to reduce the need for children being subject to child protection plans. Childcare teams are supported by the Integrated Family Support Team (IFST), Edge of Care Team (EOC), and Family Intervention Team (FIT) who provide additional intensive support. Figures are scrutinised at the Audit and Evaluation Group. Further work will be completed this year to ensure we are operating with the optimum levels on the CP register. If these numbers are sustained, then more capacity in Social Work teams will need to be considered.

We have done all we can during the year to try and reduce the number of children becoming looked after, but despite this we have seen a sharp increase in the number of **looked after children**. Families have struggled in the aftermath of the pandemic compounded by the cost-of-living crisis which has added stress on families, issues arising increasing risks in relation to abuse and neglect, and mental health.

We continue to monitor and review all children where requests are made for accommodation through our accommodation panel and try to ensure alternative support options to care are considered through Edge of Care, IFST and Family Intervention Service and other preventative services. We are developing our parenting programmes to assist families and maintain children at home or rehabilitate them home following a period of foster care.

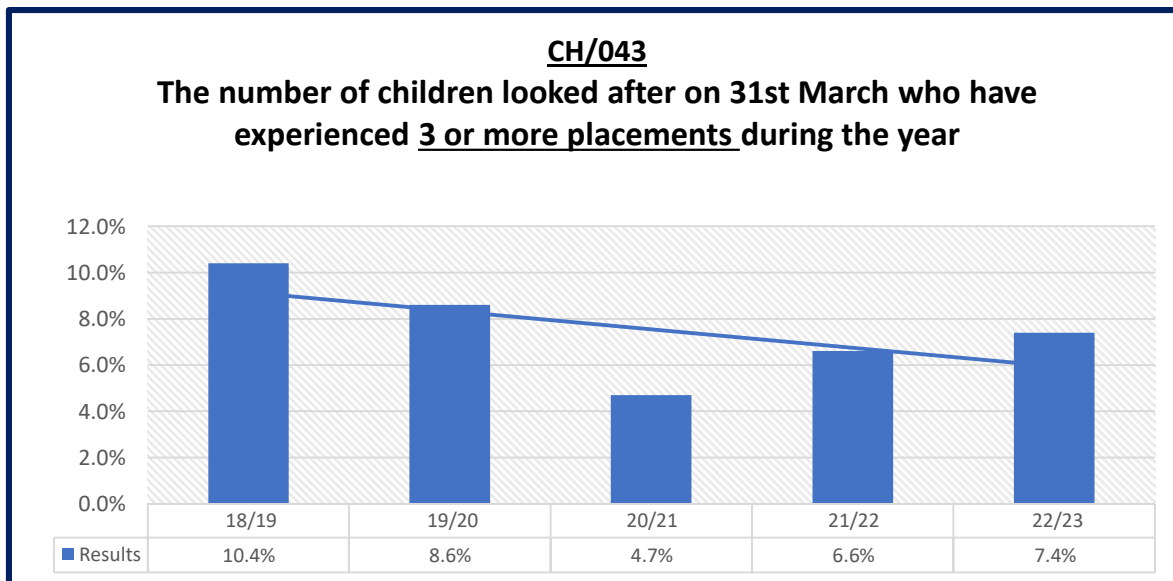
We are in the process of reviewing our service in Edge of Care and IFST to develop further support to front line teams to ensure the right help at the right time is received to support families within the local community. The significant number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers has contributed to this rise.

However, despite this work numbers have continued to rise above 200 and whilst this is still the lowest rate in Wales this is creating pressure on the budget and staffing resources which is a significant concern. Further work will be undertaken to consider what the detailed reasons are for this to ensure they can be addressed.

The education stability of children looked after remains excellent with only 3 children needing to move which has been down to the hard work of social workers, schools, foster carers and other professionals (one move was the young person's choice, one due to a change in circumstances of the young person and the other due to the distance involved). However, maintaining children in the same school has placed additional pressure on our transport service where costs have risen due to taxi services needing to be used in our rural communities.

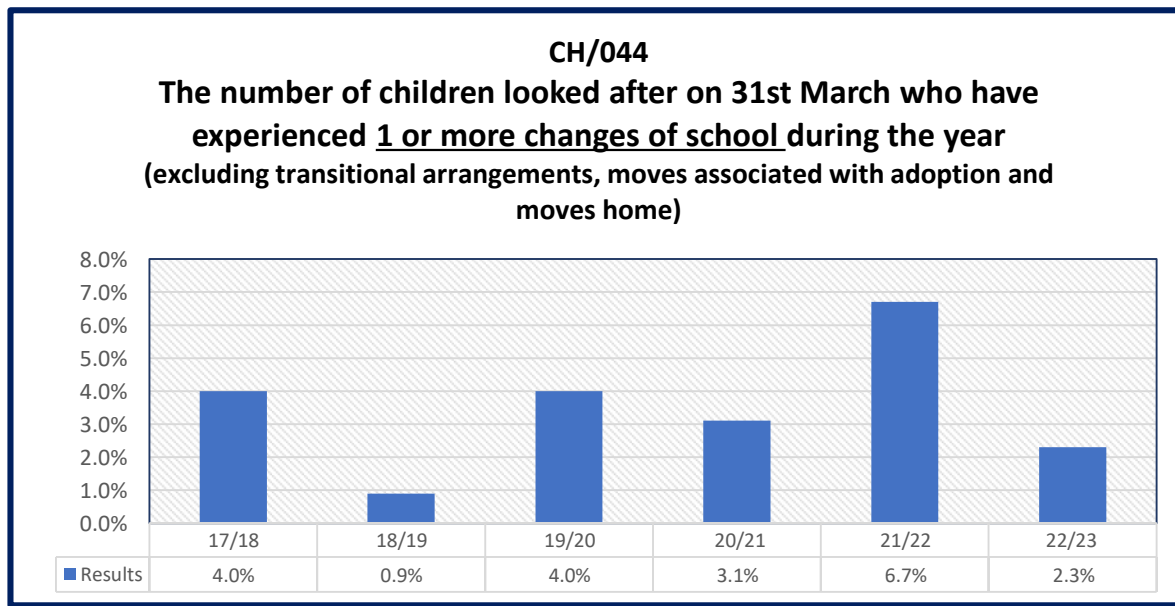
A review on how this is commissioned is underway as the individual cost of some trips seem disproportionate.

The graph below illustrates the number of children looked after who have experienced 3 or more placements.



The number of children experiencing 3 or more placement moves during the year has seen an increase, however we have only just missed our target and there have been many successful outcomes for those children and young people despite the number of moves.

This reflects the hard work the schools and other professionals have done.



The focus remains on increasing foster placement choice by recruiting more foster carers with the skills and experience to manage children who have more complex needs. If we are to manage the budget effectively the recruitment of more foster carers will be essential.



The **Fostering service** continue to drive our recruitment campaign and have close links with Foster Wales and our regional marketing officer to enable us to focus priority on recruiting more foster carers. During the year Carmarthenshire has approved and recruited 14 new foster carer households and it has been important to offer intensive support to these new carers to manage the children under a care and support plan. We have continued to provide a range of support to foster carers including 24 hrs out of hours support from the fostering service. We have a peer mentoring service of experienced foster carers also supporting all our foster carers. The uplift in fostering allowances has taken place and is a more generous offer to retain and recruit more foster carers and assists towards the cost-of-living crisis that many carers themselves have experienced. However, recruitment has only just kept up with the numbers leaving. Recruitment within this area will need substantial investment to continue to cope with the demand.

The fostering service continue to have responsibility for around 100 **special guardianship carers** who require to be reviewed for support both practically and financially on an annual basis subject to good practice guidance from Welsh Government. This work is progressing but staffing to cover this role has been difficult during the year and access to funding a fostering support worker on a permanent basis to work alongside a social worker from the fostering team has now been achieved through Welsh Government funding. This is an area of growth which will require careful monitoring in the future as many special guardianship families have experienced more hardship due to cost-of-living difficulties which is impacting on their family circumstances, and we need to support such children living in these permanent places with their extended family to avoid placement breakdown.

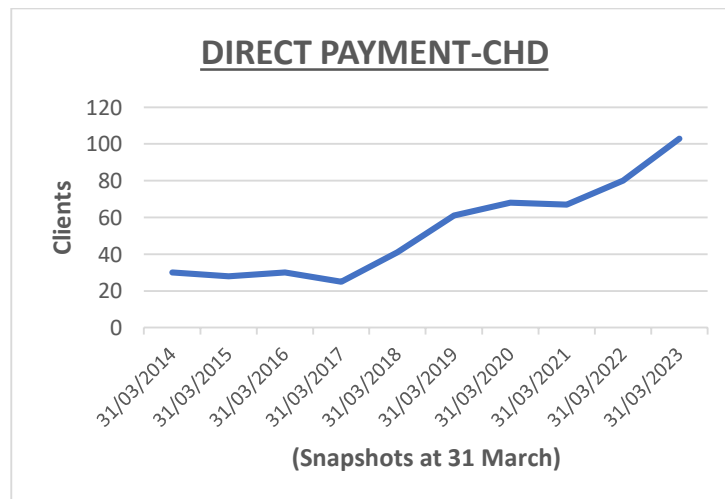
Children & Family Services has worked in partnership with the Housing Department, Youth Service and Commissioning to devise, develop and commission new **supported accommodation for young people aged 16-25** including children with disabilities. The new service is already providing improved accommodation and increasing support to young people in supported housing. One aim of the service was to move away from grouping large numbers of young people together in accommodation settings who had similar needs and experienced similar challenges. The new service comprises of smaller supported houses staffed with support workers and based around the three main towns of Ammanford, Llanelli and Carmarthen. This will allow more young people in need of accommodation to be supported in the areas they have lived through their childhoods which has the advantage of allowing them to live near extended family who are often the young people's support network.

Children & Family Services continue to collaborate with our colleagues in the Housing Department and in Youth Support Services to ensure the developments in respect of accommodation are underpinned by the Care Leavers Accommodation Framework. The new **In-House Supported Lodgings** Service has already approved eight supported lodgings providers who are providing supportive placements to 10 young people aged 16-18 years. The Service works in partnership with Fostering and the Housing Department to enable more choice and increased capacity of placements for our young people aged 16-21 years, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, or others who wish to move onto more independence. The service provides high quality placements which support young people to meet their needs

and promotes their pathways into further education, training, and work. It has increased capacity for young people who need accommodation to ensure they receive the best care and support to help give every young person the best start in life and improve their early life experiences. In addition, high quality carers are providing significant levels of support to young people who experience complex needs who have experienced homelessness.

## Direct Payments

The below graph illustrates the growth in the number of children in receipt of a direct payment.



We have seen a significant increase in Direct Payments as the department has found it challenging to meet the needs of families post pandemic.

A significant piece of work is underway to look at models of care in meeting the demand in the future for children with disabilities.

**Mid and West Wales Regional Adoption Service (MWAS)** is an integral part of the National Adoption Service (NAS) and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies in Wales to continually develop by embedding the four NAS Good Practice Guides into practice. In accordance with the guides, MWAS has already improved transitional work when children are moving to adoptive placements to ensure children and adopters are more effectively supported through the process. In addition, MWAS is also taking steps to improve support to birth parents by working with our partner Reflect to support birth parents at earlier stages in the Adoption Process. MWAS is providing a significant level of support to children and adopters to ensure the right support is provided at the right time.

The service has experienced Adoption Social Workers, Support Workers and an Adoption Psychologist who work with children and families to ensure the appropriate therapy/direct work can be provided to adoptive families to create stability for adopted children and prevent disruptions. The region is working in partnership with NAS to embed Welsh Early Permanence into its service. This will ensure children experience less loss and separation if there is a need for them to be placed with adopters which will improve their emotional well-being and outcomes as they develop through their childhood. Carmarthenshire continues to have very few

children waiting for an adoption placement and has an abundance of adopters waiting for a child therefore is in a strong position to enable choice of adopters for children to ensure the match is right for the child. Through effective marketing the service continues to attract enquiries from the public who are interested in adoption.

There are currently 4.26% of **Electively Home Educated** children who have not had a visit in the last 12 months. Last year this figure was 11.13%, reflecting a significant increase in number of visits completed. Many visits were cancelled due to illness in families (including Strep A and Scarlet fever during the last few months). Out of all visits completed, the child was spoken to in 64.97% of visits. Group work has continued to be funded by the EHE grant with workshops in Welsh, English, science, maths, outdoor learning, horticulture, art, mindfulness, and drama. Currently 14 EHE learners are being supported to complete their Art GCSEs this year. The team held a community-based wellbeing event for home educated learners which was attended by approximately 50 children. The local authority continues to work towards the Welsh Government's core offer for all EHE learners. This is being discussed at the strategic focus group for inclusion and engagement.

**Team Around the Family (TAF)** is fully staffed with an increased budget for 2023/25 to expand the direct work and prevent family breakdown. The annual parenting programme is being delivered providing support in terms of nurture based parenting and specific parenting for children with neurodiversity. There are no waiting lists. Where parents are unable to attend group work, the team continue to provide one-one support. The Team continues to link in with schools, health colleagues and community resources within the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and their input is well received. The Co-ordinators ensure that there is extensive local community knowledge and engagement and the team continue to focus on early intervention and support for families in their local communities.

The new membership has been established for the **Corporate Parenting Panel**. The new guidance has been provided by WG and there is a workshop planned to develop a new corporate parenting strategy to be compliant with the expectations of this. New targets for 2023/24 will be set and there will be an increased focus on accountability from all departments across the council and councillor leads for key areas to ensure that the excellent outcomes previously attained for children looked after and care leavers in Carmarthenshire is maintained. There is increased demand across the services with some children looked after not always receiving all that they are entitled to and this will be addressed as a priority.

There is a strategic development plan in place to recruit and retain more foster carers ensuring our children's care needs can be met locally, develop residential care options in line with eliminate (removing profit from care) and extend the level of well-being and community support available to our looked after children and care leavers.

There is now a small team of 3 staff within the Corporate Parenting Team who are supporting **Trauma Informed Practice and Attachment Awareness** training and professional practice in terms of children looked after by Carmarthenshire. Trauma informed practice and restorative models is now embedded in the 4 phase inclusive behavioural model. A senior Educational Psychologist leads on training and support

for schools. There are staff trained in trauma informed practice in every school in Carmarthenshire and in every department across Education and Children's Services.

Awareness raising about the implementation of the **Code of Practice for Autism** has been a key priority this year. Ensuring that managers, commissioners and Learning and Development are aware of their responsibilities under the Code has been a crucial step to ensure individual duties are being met. This has been achieved through training and information sessions, and publicised on staff bulletins, websites and via social media. Our recent Autism Support Services Event was attended by over 300 people and contributed to ensuring that we are compliant with many of the duties within the Code. Specifically, relating to awareness raising of the diagnostic, support services and carers services available to autistic people and their families. We are part of the Regional Strategic and Task and Finish Groups collaborating with the Local Authorities and Health Board to ensure a consistent approach and best practice sharing as well as with Welsh Government commissioned 'People at Work' to ensure a shared understanding of the duty's requirements.

**The Family Information Service** Childcare Offer parent applications continue to be processed, and the following paid to local childcare providers delivering the offer during April-July 2023: £99,226.97\* (£81,997.50 General childcare and £17,229.47 SEN). August and September figures will be included in the next quarter report as these are not currently available from Ceredigion CO delivery authority and will be reported in Qtr3 the above figure is for the legacy system and it is important to note that July's payment may also include some August payments. Ceredigion CO delivery authority allowed providers to claim early for August as it was expected that September would be busy as the funding claimed through the legacy system ended 31/08/2023. National Digital Service £542,050 the new Digital system.  
Total Spend May – Jul 2023 £641,276.97

**Childcare Offer Additional Support Grant**

7 children received support through the CO Additional Support Grant.  
5 additional children received CO ASG for CO approved holiday entitlement until Sept 2023. No further updates from Welsh Government to commence the system build to incorporate the Additional Support Grant process for providers and parents within the New Digital system. (FIS) have ensured families and professionals have received updated information on services, resources, and developments.

During July – September the FIS website had 9,744 users, 15,731 sessions, and 34k pageviews. There was a 12% increase in users in this period. Carmarthenshire Flying Start was the most viewed page due to the expansion of the service, which has created much interest with parents checking their eligibility for the service. The FIS have received 436 enquiries in this quarter.

**Summer of Fun / Winter of Well-being** a Welsh Government funding enabled a significant package of support to be provided designed to help children, young people and their families recover from the pandemic to ensure no child was left behind. Several organisations received funding including family and children's

centres, youth service, Actif, Menter, Pembrey Country Park and theatres where children and young people were able to access free activities and workshops.

**15, 000 children and young people across the county from 0-25 years benefitted from these activities.**

Carmarthenshire's **local offer** is an electronic information hub to provide disabled children and their families an easily accessible platform to source information and support within their area. Consultation with Parents and carers has taken place to ensure it is accessible for all. The web page is set up for different age groups (0-5 years, 5-11 years, 11-16 years and 16 -25 years) with sub sections that can be accessed by 'One Click' to support such as - *Health and Wellbeing, Social Care, Education, Financial Support and Housing*. On-going training is being provided to the core staff who will manage the updates of the website to ensure it remains current. The webpage was finalised and went live on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

**Flying Start** case management discussion meetings are now aligned to the statutory services' Pods and systemic practice are working well in identifying support to meet the needs of the families. Delivery has been impacted by the lack of childcare staff. The **Flying Start App** is integral in reaching families, especially during the Flying Start expansion, providing key messages, such as health, language and play, safety messages, information, and links to the support services. The App has developed to reach families so that they can now book onto a course and have updates on their child when in childcare.

The FS team has needed to expand to meet the additional demands of the FS phase 1 expansion and prepare for phase 2 childcare expansion. The parenting team are developing services to meet the changing needs of families within the community. Staff training has taken place, especially around trauma based and systemic practice which has enabled upskilling and has built their confidence in delivering services and supporting families. Families are re-engaging with face-to-face services, with our language and play groups being oversubscribed, resulting in additional groups being run. The health visitors have continued to run clinics from the Integrated Children's Centres and the Early Years Centre in Trimsaran.

**Families First** have continued to develop early intervention support services (0-25) for disadvantaged children, young people, and families across the county in line with the **Family Support Strategy**, utilising opportunities for integrated services across the children and Communities Grant and Housing Support Grants, and all programmes have been successfully delivered. Action for Children were successful in their bid for delivering the Families First (FF) parenting project for the next four years. Challenges including staff vacancies, sickness, and rising demand of services have led to small waiting lists for support in some projects.

During 2022-23 outcomes and outputs for families have been positive in this family support programme:

- ✓ **9230** individuals have been supported from the Families First (FF) programme, of which 6011 (65%) were new individuals.

- ✓ **4621** families have been supported from the FF programme, of which 2881 (62%) were new families.
- ✓ **798** single agency JAFFs were closed with a positive forward movement of 749 (94%) on the distance travelled tool.
- ✓ **145** cases were stepped down from statutory social services to FF programme, and **25** cases were stepped up to Social Services.

## Direct Care Provision/Commissioned Care

### External Commissioning and Support

Carmarthenshire purchases most of its residential care for children and adults from the private sector. Approximately 36% of homecare is provided in house with the remainder purchased from the private sector through a specialist framework. During the pandemic we saw market failures across the private sector with the in-house provision increasingly seen as a provider of last resort to vulnerable people. Thus, it is crucial that we maintain an appropriate balance of in-house and externally purchased care and that no single provider monopolizes provision and prices in the county. As the market for care consolidates, this is becoming increasingly challenging to manage and, in some areas, we are seeing significant profits generated as the sector is under supplied to meet growing demand.

The last year has continued to be a challenging one, with ongoing covid related issues and market stability concerns. We continue to support the sector through the coordination and distribution of PPE, additional payments to the sector, and supporting Covid outbreaks. Market pressures continue in relation to workforce recruitment and retention of care staff both in-house and externally and this remains a key area of concern. This was especially evidenced in the domiciliary care sector where during 2022 we experienced our highest waiting lists for care and support at home. We are, however, cautiously optimistic that we are now seeing a downward trend and the sector appears to be more stable. We have also experienced two care home closures which were particularly complex from a legal and financial perspective which have led to contract terminations and the difficult transition of residents to alternative care homes.

Provision of residential care for children is problematic across Wales with huge costs for a very few children. There is some evidence the Welsh Government's strategy to take the profit out of the care market has reduced new investment in the sector as providers see little opportunity to make profit or expand further. Whilst I am wholly supportive of the approach, we are in a difficult transition period with a severe under supply in the market for children.

There are some notable areas of progress during 2022/23. This includes the publication of the Market Stability Report which has identified a number of key recommendations to ensure market stability and sufficiency of supply. We have also developed the West Wales Adult Advocacy Strategy and regional commissioning arrangements linked to this. We have recommissioned the third sector spend and developed five community/preventative hubs across the county as part of our

strategic preventative approach to reducing demand on statutory services and supporting people to live well in their local communities. This has strengthened our strategic approach to prevention.

We have developed and published the Housing Support Programme Strategy and continue to strengthen links with housing and accommodation, but still recognise there is much to do in this area. Following bringing our direct payment support service in-house, we have developed a much-improved approach to the management of direct payments which provides greater assurance both for those that use them and the Council.

## **In-house Residential Care**

We continue to maintain our in-house residential care provision to support residents in Carmarthenshire. We have started to remodel this provision to help meet some of the market gaps identified in the Market Stability Report and this will be an ongoing journey over the forthcoming years. As explained above, the investment in Ty Pili-Pala, a wing of Llys Y Bryn Care Home, as a 14-bedded step-down unit is proving hugely beneficial to those leaving hospital in reducing their long-term care needs. Recruitment remains a challenge in our in-house homes, but we continue to proactively market our vacancies to fill gaps as and when they emerge. We have advanced plans to expand an existing home or purchase a suitable site to further rebalance the market in the county.

In Children's Residential care we are maintaining our provision on 3 sites for children with disabilities whilst considering a new build to replace some respite provision linked to the Heol Goffa school development in Llanelli. We have developed a specialist Childrens home in Carmarthen and anticipate this will be completed by late Autumn 2024. Further developments of smaller longer term homes are under consideration to ensure we can meet need locally and in a way that is cost effective and keeps children local.

## **In-house Home Care**

The impact of the pandemic has taken its toll on our social care workforce, and this undoubtedly has been our greatest challenge over the last year. We have continued to have trouble recruiting Homecare staff. Within this context, our Homecare Team have shown great resilience in continuing to provide care in people's homes demonstrated through a very positive inspection from the CIW.

It's the department's priority to build an efficient, strong and sustainable in-house service. This will include enhancing the in-house provision and redeveloping the reablement services. We have successfully established a triage arrangement for intermediate care with health colleagues and this is already having an impact on hospital flow and reducing waiting lists. We have also progressed an aggressive recruitment campaign, streamlined our recruitment processes, introduced additional capacity to support recruitment and improved the grading structure for home care staff, which now means that our rate of pay is amongst the best in Wales.

Currently the in-house home care service provides approximately 37% of the overall domiciliary care market in Carmarthenshire. The service is focussing on strategies that promote expansion, but recruitment and retention challenges in the care sector has impacted on this objective. Our aspiration going forward, is to grow the in-house service to provide 50% of the market over the next year which will include supporting those with more complex needs. This strategy will ensure that we are able to have greater resilience within the domiciliary care market.

Key to developing our in house service is to increase its productivity so that it is more cost effective. Work is underway to address this and close the cost gap with the private sector. Hourly pay rates and travel reimbursement are not now dissimilar between the public and private sector in Carmarthenshire. The biggest differential that impacts on cost is now sick pay and pension both of which are significantly better in the County Council.

## What Others Say

A Care and Support survey was undertaken in March 2023 with users of the services with a 15% response rate, this is lower than previous years.

82% of respondents felt that their views were listened to by Social Care.

86% of respondents felt they/the person they care for were given the right information and advice when they had needed it.

80% of respondents felt that they/the person they care for was treated with dignity and respect.

84% of respondents stated that they/the person they care for has been happy with the care and support they have had.

As we have recovered from the pandemic inspections of services have resumed, comments lifted from the reports are illustrated below.

**“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.”**

*\*CIW Inspection report 2023 on the In house Domiciliary care service.*



**“Overall conclusion following the inspection is that West Wales Shared Lives endeavours to support people to maintain their independence. The staff team are enthusiastic and want to make a positive difference to people’s lives. Carers are focused on the person’s needs, to positively impact on their well-being. People say their placements and carers support them well. Many carers feel well supported by the Responsible Individual (RI) and the management team overall, although some feel there is little or no support. Good communication channels are evident throughout the service; however, some people feel the communication is poor. There are robust systems in place to monitor the quality of care provided. It was noted that some elements of communication could be improved as well as ensuring all carers are supported and these are key priorities going forward.”**

*\*CIW Inspection report 2023 on Shared Lives – inspection April 22*

**“ People staying in Tir Einon respite service benefit from the care and support they receive through the knowledgeable and caring staff team. Promotion of people’s individual health and wellbeing underpins the aim of the service. Care and support plans are detailed and provide a good sense of the individual, their complex needs and how best to support them. External professionals are actively involved in the support people receive. A dedicated and enthusiastic manager leads the ethos of the service. Staff respect and value the manager who is well supported by the Responsible Individual (RI). There are a range of monitoring and audit processes in place, and the RI has good oversight of the service”.**

*\*CIW Inspection report 2023 on Tir Einon Respite Centre – Inspection August 22*

**“  
Children are treated with dignity and respect and care staff take time to communicate with them and provide choices. Children can choose the activities they want to do and the food they want to eat. Children are encouraged to make positive choices and reminded of the benefits of this”.**

*\*CIW Inspection Report on Llys Caradog Childrens Centre - March 2023\**

# Complaints and Compliments

## Adults & Children

We have continued to learn lessons from complaints and ensure that any learning points that emerge are addressed and embedded across the service.

A Resolution and Complaints Manager commenced in post in October 2022 with the responsibility of coordinating processes relating to complaints and undertaking preventative work. The purpose of this is to increase learning within teams to improve the quality of the service provided and to reduce the volume of complaints received.

In March 2023, the team underwent an internal audit and some initial recommendations have been made including the production of a procedural document which will be a priority going forward.

Further to this, a complaints training programme has been developed, which will be rolled out in the coming months to include:

- Complaints awareness training for all staff
- Training for staff undertaking Stage 1 complaints resolutions.
- Complaints training for providers

There will also be a focus on preventative work to increase learning from complaints within the teams.

A total of 73 complaints were recorded at either Stage 1 or 2 in relation to Adult Services in 2022/23 of which 56 were investigated at the Local Resolution Stage 1 and 17 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/ legal proceedings or other.

Within Children services 10 were recorded at Stage 1 and a further 3 were recorded at Stage 2.

In the same period three complaints have been escalated to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales following completion of a Stage 2 investigation. The Ombudsman has not accepted any of these complaints and no further investigation has taken place.

If there are any recommendations made following the completion of the Stage 1 or Stage 2 process, the team log these on an action plan which is sent out to relevant managers to follow up. Trends and learning opportunities will be identified from these recommendations and are brought to Process and Practice Board and subsequently disseminated in team meetings on a quarterly basis by the Resolution and Complaints Manager. In terms of governance, the Complaints Audit Group continues to meet on a quarterly basis.

The team have also been working on increasing the pool of Independent Investigating Officers and over the last year, 3 new investigators have been commissioned. Going forward more work will be done to ensure a robust selection process whilst ensuring impartiality.

The Resolution and Complaints Manager links in regularly with her counterparts both regionally and nationally to share ideas and ensure a consistent approach across Wales.

\*2023/24 Social Care complaints report is available on request. \*

## Compliments

A total of 153 compliments were received and recorded in 2022/23.

Gair byr i ddweud bod Mam wedi trosglwyddo o Ysbyty [l'r gartref]. Mae hi'n hapus yno ar hyn o bryd a byddwn yn parhau i'w chefnogi i setlo. Diolch i ti am dy gyngor a help dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf. Mae'r gwasanaeth gofal o dan bwysau aruthrol ond mae yna bobl dda iawn yn cynnal y gwasanaeth a gallwn ddweud heb amheuaeth dy fod yn un o'r rheiny. Diolch."

I would like to say thank you to all the girls who have looked after me the last few months. My family and I are really grateful for the wonderful nursing that I have had. They have been caring encouraging and very professional. Please pass on my grateful thanks. I shall miss their visits and little chats".

As a family we wanted to express our thanks for the support offered at what has been a difficult transition for Mum. As Mum stated herself today, she wants to remain at home if possible, and it is good to know we are all working towards supporting her wishes.

"Newydd gorffen y supporting statement, ond I guess bo dim ishe fe nawr. Diolch i ti am y cymorth a'r cefnogaeth, mae'n teimlo fel bo pwys trwm wedi codi, allwn byth diolch digon i ti. Fe wnaï cysylltu a [the care home]

# Workforce

## Workforce

Our staff are without doubt our most valued asset – they are the front face of the Council and represent and uphold our key values as public servants. We recognise the challenges faced by staff and have ensured that we continue to support their welfare and wellbeing. Their resilience and dedication have been incredible. We continue to need an adequate workforce of well-trained, experienced staff with the right skills and approach needed to work with citizens and effectively in partnership with other organisations. This challenge will remain with us for some time and especially in the context of how we continue to respond post pandemic.

Our priority is to ensure that the social care workforce has the knowledge and skills to meet our business objectives and that service users in Carmarthenshire are supported by skilled and competent staff.

Our workforce strategies continue to evolve, and we must continue to work collaboratively with our partners in the region including Health, to minimise training duplication, maximise training attendance and share information regularly in order to meet the shared training needs of the sector and achieve our goals.

Being able to recruit social workers, carers, foster carers and personal assistants still remains a top priority for us in order to fill vacant posts across the sector.

We aim to attract more young people into the care profession by collaborating with schools and key stakeholders to deliver social care.

The Care Academi, which is the first of its kind in Wales is established and we currently have twelve individuals on this programme. The individuals are on placement in care settings, thus gaining experience whilst undertaking their care qualifications. They will go on to be supported to follow a career in management or social work.

'Growing our own' social workers is a priority. We are currently supporting individuals to undertake the part time Open University Social Work Degree and the full-time master's programme at Swansea University with 26 completing within the next three years. There is growing evidence that this number will need to be further expanded in the coming year.

## Rate your Division.

We asked all staff in the Department if they would “[Rate Their Division as an Employer.](#)” Using this national methodology it helps us to understand their experience working in the department and each division. Instead of asking hundreds of survey questions, we ask one key question:

“ *How likely would you be to recommend your division as an employer to someone you know?*

*1 = Not at all likely and 10 = Extremely likely.* ”

Our overall score for the Department result is: **Good**

Workforce remains our biggest challenge in terms of recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of social workers as well as Homecare workers. This issue is not in any way unique to Carmarthenshire. Locally we have made good progress in residential care recruitment but continue to have gaps in Social Work and Homecare.

In order to address the challenge, we established a Social Care Recruitment and Retention Group which I chair, to ensure that we have the focus that we need on the workforce challenges.

From a social work perspective, we have created 10 new social work trainee posts across both Adult and Children & Family Services to allow us to grow our own social workers. We have also recruited 2 overseas social workers who have now started in post and are working to recruit more. This strategy overall is allowing us to fill our vacancies and provides us with a long-term solution to social work capacity. We are also supporting 2 of our Occupational Therapy Assistants to do their degree with a view to becoming qualified Occupational Therapists following the launch of the new degree programme at Swansea University.

We held a joint Social Work Professional Development event back in March 2023 across Children and Adult services, 350 Social workers were invited to the event. Total of 191 Social Workers attended and was well received.



Using a NPS scoring, the event NPS Score came out as 'Great'. A further social work development session is now planned for October 2023.

During the event we celebrated the fantastic job many of our social workers do and asked them to reflect on examples that were magic for them. Examples of magic moments captured included:

- Doing last care and support visit with long term service user and seeing her do well with new-born baby having formed positive relationships with everyone.
- Upholding rights and promoting choices to stay in own home with his dog, despite visit from Fire Brigade.

- Working hard to get the right package of care for adult to stay at home, which was what they wanted and deserved.
- It is a privilege to sit in people's homes and be able to speak to both adults and children at the most difficult times in their lives, about the difficulties, strengths and to build relationships with them.
- Working with families in a way that restores their faith in SW. Empowers them to make positive changes, helping them to change their mindset on how to raise their children and manage challenges. Being told that she will tell others about her support from Social Services and how it has changed her family situation, when she had previously been worried about having Social Services involved.

From a care worker perspective, we have established a Care Academi which provides individuals with the opportunity to work in care settings and gain qualifications as part of a pathway to Social Work or management. Currently we have 10 people on this programme, and we are about to embark on a third stage of recruitment. We have had active recruitment campaigns to attract care workers to come to work in Carmarthenshire.

We have also supported the sector in recruitment and retention initiatives. Additional funding was allocated to local domiciliary care providers to lead on a recruitment and retention plan. The intentions being for local providers to work together to agree targeted initiatives that will raise the profile of care and to also develop/stimulate the market.

A project board was set up by providers to manage the allocation of monies and to agree priority areas. The project focused on the following areas:

- Social Care Champions: Each provider nominated a staff member to represent the role of a carer, visiting schools, colleges and attending events.
- Marketing: The group set up a web-based platform to post encouraging information to raise the profile of a career in care. This was not used to advertise jobs for care providers but had links to We Care Wales.
- Carmarthenshire Carers Awards: The group arranged a Carers Awards evening in the Stradey Park Hotel to recognise and promote the excellent work of care staff. Providers worked together to plan the event, which was a great success and which had a positive impact on staff morale.

The group continue to work on the project and are currently developing a care apprenticeship pathway for 16 to 18 year olds.

We are also building on the developments in Pembrokeshire and now extending the development of micro enterprises into Carmarthenshire. We have recruited a local Catalyst which is hosted by PLANED and will work closely with CAVS and other partners.

We have tried very hard to continue to support staff wellbeing and encouraged staff across the department to come forward as Wellbeing Champions to represent their teams as part of the Communities Wellbeing Group. This group is leading the way on taking a departmental approach to sharing good practice and also feeding through ideas of how we can support wellbeing such as better use of teams and diaries to give staff the space they need to work.

In the context of the huge challenges that they have faced, staff have continued to show determination, commitment and the highest levels of professionalism in supporting Carmarthenshire residents. They often go above and beyond what is expected of them. Testament to this is the high level of compliments that the service continues to receive as outlined above, as well as the awards that have been received over the course of the year. We are hugely grateful to our staff, but mindful that we need to support staff in every way we can to ensure that they can keep resilient and happy and productive in their work. Focussing on how we support staff and celebrate success is key to maintaining a healthy workforce This can include external recognition which has included a range of awards:

- ✪ The success of our Home First approach was recognised through 2 NHS Wales Awards for Delivery Person Centred Care and Outstanding Contribution to the Transformation of Health and Care. The team was also recognised as finalists in the UK Public Sector Transformation Awards.

- ✪ TSA ITEC Awards 2023
  - Partnerships in TEC Award (Telehealth with Hywel Dda University Health Board) WINNER
  - Transformation Award (Delta CONNECT) Finalist



- ✪ At the first Regional Safeguarding Award ceremony, Senior Manager for Safeguarding, Cathy Richards, was given the Outstanding Practice Demonstrated in the Safeguarding of Adults award.
- ✪ Adult Social Care division picked up awards at the Regional Partnership Awards:
  - Learning Disability Day Services won the innovation award for their innovative approach to day opportunities and the community groups they have set up.
  - Tir Einon respite centre and the Positive Behaviour Team were also highly commended for the team award.
  - The Regional Improving Lives Partnership Learning Disability, chaired by Sharon Frewin, Senior Manager, Community Inclusion and Dream Team a group of people with lived experience who co-chair this group were also highly commended for co-production.

- Mark Evans, Senior Manager for Mental Health and Substance Misuse, achieved the Outstanding Contribution to Practice award for his 34-years of service.

- ✪ The Long-Term Domiciliary Care Team won the team award at the Welsh element of the British Care awards.
- ✪ Gill Grennan Jenkins, Team Manager 0-25 Service (which is across adults and children) was also highly commended for the Front-line Leadership award at this event.



In addition to the above, our Cabinet Member, Cllr Tremlett, has introduced a Team Achievement of the Month Award through which good practice is recognised internally.





## Welsh Language

Within the Communities Department, we have ensured 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language remains a priority. We are confident that an active offer is provided in almost all circumstances. 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.

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.

People are able to have their care provided in Welsh, as a good percentage of the staff are able to speak Welsh.

*\*CIW Inspection report on the In house Domiciliary care service.*

Whilst the Welsh Language Board has not met as frequently during the year, access to training has continued and a total 22 staff have completed training.

Work is underway to ensure all staff have Welsh language attainments recorded on their training profile. Of those who have a speaking language level recorded, we know that:

- 63% are level 0-2
- 35% are level 3-5

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.

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 Government's vision to create a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

# Next Steps

## Children & Family Services

No	Action	By Who
1	Continue to provide support to keep children at home with their families and out of the care system wherever possible and better manage budget pressures in the service	
2	Invest in local efficient council run services to rebalance the market across all elements of adult and children social care enabling the service better manage budget pressures in the service.	
3	Work with the Health Board to provide readily accessible and appropriate levels of support to all with Mental Health issues with an expansion of access and support to Children and Vulnerable Adults.	
4	Support the ambition to rebalance the market and take profit out of children's care by opening a Children's Home for children with complex needs in Carmarthenshire.	
5	Further support a Care Academi giving a career pathway for care work, including professional development and training for young people leaving school. Work to double the number of staff supported to gain a Social Work degree.  Continue with the recruitment campaign of Social Workers.	

## Adult Social Care and Integrated Services

No	Action	By Who
1	Continue to better integrate health and care and work towards parity of recognition and reward for health and care workers.	
2	Continue to improve the support available to carers across the county.	
3	Develop preventative services to meet the demands of an ageing population and those with complex needs.	
4	To work with Hywel Dda University Health Board to deliver seamless integrated Health and Social Care wherever possible.	
5	Increase the range of supported accommodation for those with complex needs, reduce the reliance on residential care and facilitate safe discharge from hospital and/or the need for residential care for vulnerable adults.	
6	Further expand the Delta Connect service to provide proactive technology enabled care to vulnerable people within their own homes together with a package of emergency support, monitoring, and wellbeing calls	
7	Work with Welsh Government to create and define a National Care Service that delivers national standards of care with local delivery of services to meet our community's needs	
8	Continue to develop a 10 Year Social Services Vision with a short-term implementation plan that is consistently appraised.	

# Department's Management Structure

