

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18TH JULY 2017

DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G HOPKINS

Author: Giovanni Isingrini, Group Director, Community & Children's Services - 01443 424140

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 includes in Part 8 a Code of Practice with regards to the role of the Director of Social Services.
- 1.2 This replaces Statutory Guidance issued in June 2009 regarding the Duties and Accountabilities of Directors of Social Services in Wales and includes an ongoing requirement for the Director of Social Services to publish an Annual Report.
- 1.3 The new code of Practice states that the Director of Social Services must prepare and publish an annual report about the exercise of the Local Authority's social services functions and that this annual report must be published as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of a financial year.
- 1.4 The annual report must evaluate the performance of the Local Authority in relation to the delivery of its social services functions in respect of that year and include lessons learned. It must also set out objectives in relation to promoting the wellbeing of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, for the forthcoming year.
- 1.5 The purpose of this report is to present the first draft of this revised reporting framework for Cabinet consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the draft Rhondda Cynon Taf Director of Social Services Annual Report (Appendix 1)
- 2.2 Note the final report will be presented to Cabinet following consideration by relevant Scrutiny committees and wider consultation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To meet the statutory requirements on the Director of Social Services and ensure the report is circulated for public consultation.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Director of Social Services must prepare and publish an Annual Report about the exercise of the Local Authority's Social Services functions. This annual report must be published as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of a financial year and address the following requirements:

- It must evaluate the performance of the local authority in relation to the delivery of its social services functions in respect of that year and include lessons learned.
- It must also set out objectives in relation to promoting the wellbeing of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, for the forthcoming year.
- It should be presented in such a way as to set out how the Local Authority has achieved the six quality standards in relation to well-being outcomes as described in the *code of practice in relation to measuring social services performance*, issued under section 145 of the Act.
- It must set out how the Local Authority has promoted the wellbeing of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, identified in the Population Assessment Report produced in relation to that local authority area.
- It must include details of the extent to which the authority has acted in accordance with relevant requirements for assessing and meeting needs (Part 3 and 4 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014)
- It must set out how the Local Authority has exercised relevant requirements contained in the code of practice so as to provide:
 - a) Assurances in terms of structural arrangements within the Local Authority that enable good governance and strong accountability;
 - b) Assurances in relation to effective partnership working via Partnership Boards;
 - c) Assurances in relation to safeguarding arrangements;
 - d) Information in relation to the performance of the handling and investigation of complaints and representations;
 - e) A response to any inspections undertaken in relation to social services functions.

- 4.2 The Welsh Government is committed to the delivery of high quality health, social services and social care services that are centred on users' needs. *More than just words* is its strategic framework to realise this aim.
- 4.3 Directors of Social Services are, therefore, required to provide an update on Welsh language provision and their implementation of *More than just words* as part of the annual report.
- 4.4 It is important that the views of service users in relation to the way the Local Authority has discharged its social services functions are included in the annual report. People, including children, who have experience of using care and support services, the parents of children who have care and support needs, and carers in the local authority area must be engaged in the process of producing an annual report and the annual report must set out how the Local Authority has engaged with people in its production.
- 4.5 Annual reports are a key way for local authorities to demonstrate accountability to citizens and should therefore be accessible to people, including service users. The Director of Social Services should, therefore, ensure that annual reports are not overly long and are written in a clear and concise way.
- 4.6 To ensure effective accountability, the annual report must be presented to the Council by the Director of Social Services, a copy of the published annual report sent to Welsh Ministers and copies made available on the local authority website.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no implications associated with this report

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 This draft report will be subjected to a formal consultation process during July - August this year. The results of which will be reported to Cabinet prior to the completion of the final report

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 For 2016/17, the Annual Director's report is required under Part 8 of The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP.

- 9.1 The Annual Director's Report publishes the delivery, performance, risks and planned improvements of the Social Services function in the Council.

As such it provides the public with a summary of the Directorates performance in meeting the Corporate priorities for its Social Services

10. **CONCLUSION**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

- Health and wellbeing scrutiny committee
- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers:

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Part 8 Code of Practice on the Role of the Director of Social Services

<http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/160322part8en.pdf>

Officer to contact:

**Giovanni Isingrini, Group Director, Community & Children's Services.
Tel. No. 01443 424140**

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Social Services Annual Report
2016 - 2017**

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1. Introduction

As the Statutory Director of Social Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf, I am pleased to present my annual report for 2016/17 that sets out how the Council's Social Services performed last year and highlights the direction and priorities we have set for the year ahead. In doing so you'll notice how different this report is, linking the delivery of information, advice and services to the promotion of the wellbeing of those people who we support

Social Services provide a wide range of activities across the County Borough that protect and support vulnerable children, young people, adults, families and carers. Helping people to be safe, independent and free from poverty is our aim as we know that this is how we can best support people's long term wellbeing.

Whilst we continue to provide a good quality of service to people in Rhondda Cynon Taf we do so in a changing environment where more people are living longer, and whilst most people are able to live active and independent lives, a number need care and support to overcome the effects of long term illness, disability or family breakdown.

The implementation of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 places the individual at the heart of what social services delivers, it emphasises earlier intervention and prevention, and new ways of delivering care to people, involving our statutory partners and the third sector. This new style of report aims to reflect how we work together in promoting the wellbeing of local people.

I am pleased to be able to report that there have been many achievements. The Cwm Taf Partnership had access to the Intermediate Care Fund from Welsh Government which has allowed us to introduce new service models together, some of which operated throughout 2016/17 such as our enhanced Re-ablement service, Re-ablement service for people with dementia, the Early Stroke Discharge service and the Community Co-ordinators. Other projects, such as the Stay Well @Home Service and the Integrated Autism Service, are just starting after some intense service design and recruitment to the teams. These projects will play a significant role in helping people in need of care and support to achieve their personal well-being outcomes.

As a key part of the Council we are playing our part in implementing our 2016 – 2020 Corporate Plan, delivering health and social care services that are personalised and integrated, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes. Our longer term objectives are that:

- By 2020 social care services for adults will be remodelled to focus on minimising intervention and maximising independence, with a greater emphasis on early intervention. This approach, working with housing, health services and other partners, will enable more people to stay independent and live for longer in their own homes;
- We will better manage the huge costs of A&E and hospital admissions, we will work towards social care commissioning becoming fully integrated with health services, such as primary and community care thereby improving the experience of those using health and social care services;
- We will ensure that more young people with complex disabilities will stay in Rhondda Cynon Taf, where they grew up, and live in their own homes, with opportunities to engage in education, training, culture and the arts, helping them to grow in independence;
- More people with mental health issues will receive support in the community to help them stay well, reengage in learning, get a job and remain active, with support focused on helping people with their whole life, not simply providing a diagnosis;

- Rhondda Cynon Taf's residents will be some of the most active and healthy in South Wales, benefitting from improved leisure facilities, visiting our theatres, libraries and heritage sites and making use of the County Borough's parks and open spaces.

2. Director's Summary of Performance

I said last year that I wanted to ensure that during 2016/17 we would deliver good quality and consistent practice across all our statutory functions. I am pleased that our staff and partners working together have delivered what I had set out. In doing so we have demonstrated how our Council, along with colleagues in Merthyr Council and the Local Health Board can plan and deliver good local services.

The completion of the Population Assessment for example has been a significant milestone for the Cwm Taf Partnership Board, and it helps us to understand better what matters to our residents and communities. I believe that the Assessment provides us with a stronger platform from which we will develop our future plans together.

The Cwm Taf Social Care Workforce Development plan and programme (SCWDP) is part of the Regional Leadership arrangements in Cwm Taf. This Programme aims to improve the quality and management of social services provision by applying a planned approach to learning and development, and by seeking to increase the take-up of training across the social care sector. In 2016/17, we:

- Worked hard to ensure that staff across all partners engaged in our delivering the Act have the knowledge, skills and competencies to operate under the new legal framework and that the necessary cultural changes are driven forward
- Ensured that all core learning and development for social care staff, including induction and qualification training, is reframed to reflect the new legal framework
- Supported Social Work training
- Supported skill development for frontline social care workers
- Supported the infrastructure for learning and development

The 2016/17 corporate performance report for the Council shows that we were in the top quartile for:

- Making sure that children in our care had less than 3 placements during the year, bringing more stability into their lives.
- Visiting children in our care, in line with regulations
- Pupils leaving school with qualifications
- Pupils in our care leaving school with qualifications
- Assessing the needs of Carers of adults
- The high proportion of our older residents that we support in the community
- Delivering disabled facilities grants quickly, so helping people to maintain their independence
- Adult protection referrals where the risk has been managed

We also know that we need to do more to improve the length of time it takes for us to help people leave hospital and return to their home or care home, and to address the high numbers of our residents that we support in care homes. Much of our work on these big issues is done with other organisations. Working collectively, as we all face similar challenges, we have more scope to provide better solutions over the years ahead.

3. How Are People Shaping Our Services?

Over the last year we have continued to make information easier to find and understand. By making sure that our information is clearer, more user friendly and easy to read we hope that everyone, whatever their age, can better understand the issues and challenges faced by the Council.

We have included:

- more information in our reports
- provided easy to read summaries which also contain 'Frequently Asked Questions'
- made more use of social media and of our online Engagement Hub, which makes it easier to see what residents are being asked about in surveys
- road shows and other events.
- more use of the partnership engagement twitter account @cwmtafconsult, to make residents and other stakeholders aware of all partner consultation and engagement activity, including event listings and surveys.

During 2016/17 we have continued to use 'RCT Together' to introduce a refreshed approach when involving residents and communities in the future delivery of services and facilities. 'RCT Together' is about involving residents, so that the Council and communities work together to look at different ways to deliver services and manage buildings, which would allow them to continue in the future. We have delivered drop in sessions with Cabinet Members to discuss service change proposals e.g. Libraries and youth services, Town Centre 'Roadshows' to take part in a new interactive budget simulator as part of the discussions on the budget challenges facing the Council, and used social media, to get better and more up to date information about things that matter to them.

During 2016/17 there have been 4 productive Citizen Panel sessions working co – productively with different population groups to further improve services for people in need of care and support. The Panels covered the following areas:

- A young people's citizen panel considering the perspective of looked after children (outcome recorded as a film) - an outcome of this panel has been the development of the Life story project for children looked after
- An adult citizen panel facilitated to consider the perspective of service users and carers with regards to integrated services (outcome recorded as a report) - the outcome of this has supported the development of the Stay Well @ Home service and reinforced the need to pursue the WCCIS system
- An adult citizen panel facilitated to consider the perspective of service users and carers to support the wider engagement of the public with regards to the Population Needs assessment (outcome recorded as a report)
- An adult citizen panel to consider the perspective of services users and carers regarding the workforce and workforce development (outcome recorded as a report) - the outcome of which will be used as part of the training needs analysis for the Social Care Workforce Development Partnership.

We are also continuing to conduct consultations and surveys so that we get views from as many residents as possible. We are grateful to everyone who provides feedback to help us shape the services we deliver. We mostly ask you for your views because it is a fair and right thing to do. Getting your views and opinions helps us to check what we are doing and how it is making a difference to the people that live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

We are improving how we engage with young people, by setting up a Young Persons Forum across RCT. This Forum will be made up of young people representing their schools who in

turn will report back to their School Councils so that young people can be more involved in important issues that affect them. We are also continuing to work with the five Older Persons Forums across RCT so that the views of older people are known and considered.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requires Directors of Social Services to carry out a qualitative survey of users of the service. As a priority area of work for 2017/18 we will ensure that this information starts to impact on how we work. Overall our assessment of the survey returns tells us that:

- 87% of respondents felt that they live in a home that supports their well-being with 13% responding that their home sometimes or did not support their well-being.
- Only 50% of respondents felt that they can do the things that are important to them with 36% responding that sometimes they can do the things that are important to them.
- Only 52% of respondents feel part of their community. There was no significance of age with results averaging across all age groups.
- 84% of respondents reported being happy with the support from their family, friends and neighbours.

4. Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help

People's well-being and outcomes are at the heart of our approach to sustainable social services. The new Act was implemented in April 2016, and we have been working hard to ensure that we are equipped to meet its aim of supporting the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support. We want to ensure that citizens have a voice and real control over their own lives, and that means in working in partnership to shape the support and services in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

This section sets out our performance in promoting and improving the well-being of people in the Vale who need care and support, and carers who need support. We have set it out to show how our work is linked to the six National Quality Standards for wellbeing. It sets out the priorities we identified in the Annual Report last year, plus additional priority actions related to new ways of working and gives information on our progress. It provides data where available, gives real life examples of the impact on people, as well as setting out priorities for 2017/18.

(a) Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

What did we plan to do last year?

Our plans for last year included:

- Managing the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 requirements and completing the changes planned for -
 - the adult services operating model including the information, advice and assistance arrangements.
 - the children's services operating model and consolidate the changes to the revised operating model for 16+ services
- Working with children and young people who need care and support to define and co-produce the personal well-being outcomes that they want to achieve
- Evaluating the impact of changes made to the Enquire and Assessment Service
- Managing the implementation of an Information, Advice and Assistance Service (IAA) for Children's Services

How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?

Good progress has been made in the implementation of the Act with changes in the operating models for both Adults and Children's services. During 2016/17, Children's Services implemented a significant programme of change, primarily due to service remodelling and in response to the Act, key elements of which were implemented. Good progress has been made in delivering the improvement actions contained within the 2016/17 business plan, many of which have been completed.

The revised operating model and delivery model for Adult Services has been agreed. The implementation of the new model was to coincide with implementation of new structure, and although the staffing structures consultation took longer than anticipated it has been completed. The recruitment to new staffing structures is now underway and the implementation of the new operating model will be delivered in June 2017 once this restructuring is completed. Staff have been trained to support implementation of these new arrangements in the Act, and an independent evaluation has commenced and is on timescale.

In 2016/17 we established an Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service following a public consultation exercise. The findings and recommendations of the report have been used to support the redesign of IAA services and implementation of the remodelled service is progressing well although the planned restructuring has taken longer than anticipated. All services providing information were mapped and reviewed to ensure Adult services are compliant with the Act. The new documentation, staff guidance, and public information has been compiled and shared with other LA's across Wales. In line with national developments, the Council implemented a national wellbeing portal called DEWIS to provide information to the public and professionals for all wellbeing services in the Cwm Taf area as well as nationally. The DEWIS website was launched in Cwm Taf in July 2016 with information for over 800 organisations.

Looking at the data, the percentage of adults who have received advice and assistance from the information, advice and assistance service and have not contacted the service for 6 months is 78.57% demonstrating that our staff are providing helpful advice and support to people seeking information. We are trying to give people more options about the range of support and services including signposting people to help from external partner organisations, working in collaboration.

Some examples of collaborative working in 2016/17 included:

- Development of the Dewis Cymru portal across Cwm Taf
- Location of third sector community coordinators to the adult services
- The Single Point of Access linking people to community groups and activities
- Working with Communities First and Supporting people to source alternative support in our community.

Children's Services also recognised the importance of information, advice and assistance to enable children, families and carers to take control of and make well-informed choices and decisions about their care and support and how they fund it. One of the objectives is to ensure clear, accurate and sufficient information; advice and assistance are available and accessible to all children and families in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). We have reconfigured the front door of Children Services to provide a single point of access that ensures a consistent Information Advice and Assistance model that is compliant with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. The Integrated Children's System (ICS) went live in on the 14 April 2016 and is being used by practitioners across Children's Services. All new contacts to RCT Children's Services are now directed to the IAA/MASH, who hold a conversation with the individual to identify what matters to them and whether there is a need for the provision of information, advice and assistance or the investigation of safeguarding concerns.

In 2016/17, we widened the advocacy service we commission to include all service user groups as good practice and to ensure compliance with the new Act. Evaluation of this service by service users indicates it is a valued service that is of direct benefit to individuals who need assistance to have their opinions heard.

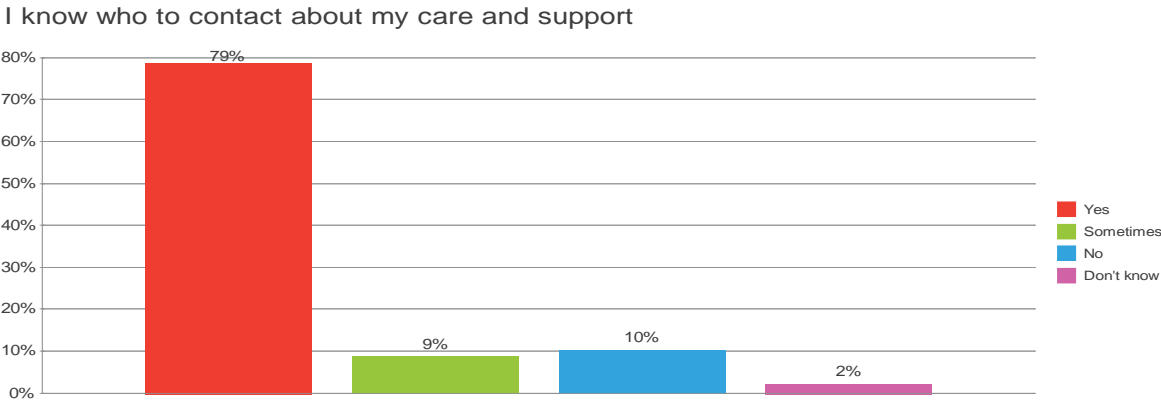
The focus of work with children and families has shifted towards well-being outcomes and having 'what matters' conversations with service users. Consequently, all our assessments and care and support paperwork has been altered to reflect this and Staff have received bespoke training on how to implement this in practice. This has meant that the pockets of good customer engagement that were evident across the Service have been extended, although further work on measuring outcomes needs to be completed.

We have been successful in meeting high response rates where the percentage of assessments completed for Children within statutory timescales was 98.04% and the percentage of clients choosing their own service providers through Direct Payments has increased to 14.34%.

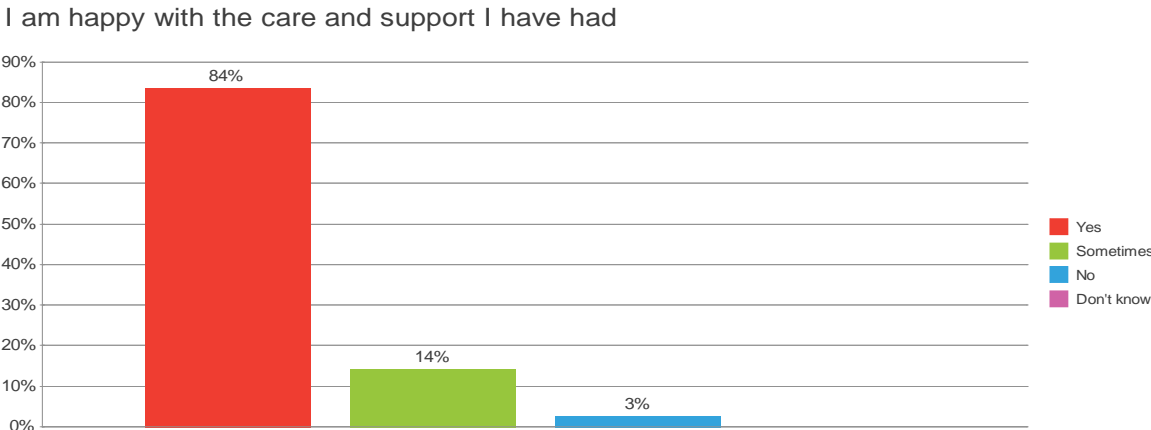
We also know that our partnership working to support carers is having an impact with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) confirming that “there are good working partnerships with a number of third sector organisations and the local authority values and supports their role in assisting carers.” They also said that carers they spoke to were “very positive about the continuity and accessibility of named social workers and the support offered by them.” We do know that more needs to be done to promote the rights of carers to access an assessment of their needs.

A qualitative survey has been carried out with people receiving care and support to assess if people know who to contact about their care and support.

79% of adults who responded to the survey reported they know who to contact about their care and support

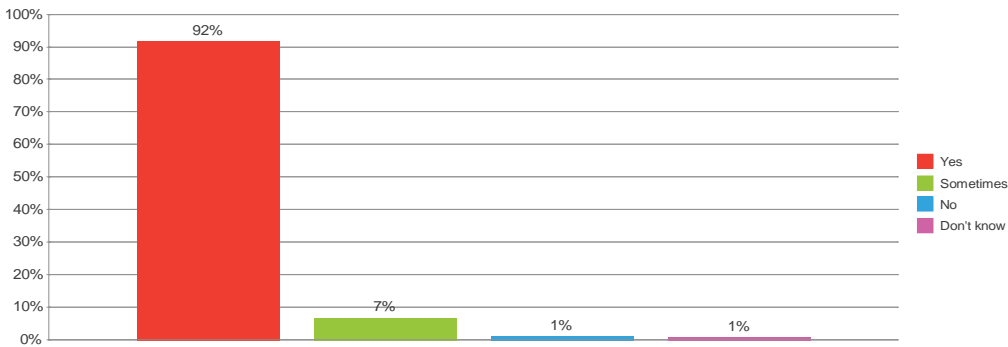


84% of adults who have received care and support and responded to the survey reported they are happy with the care and support they have had.



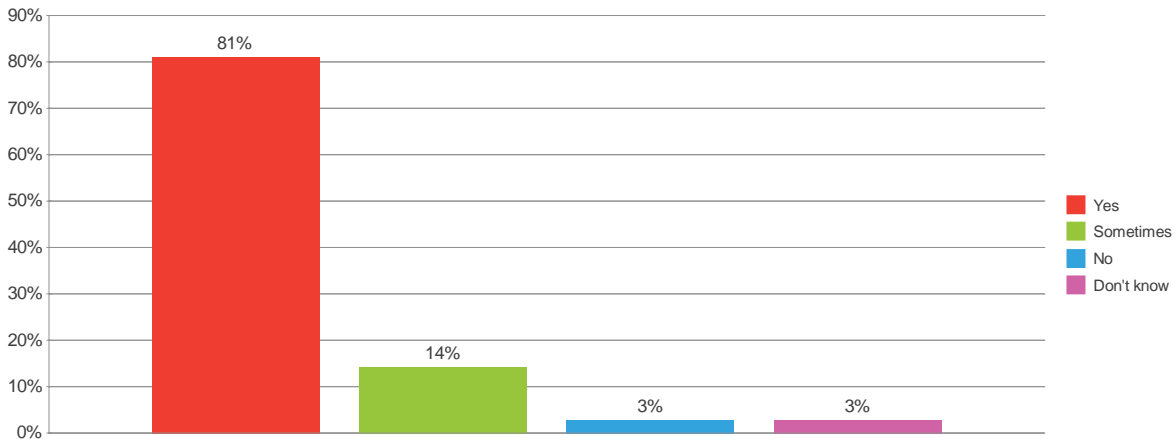
99% of adults receiving care and support and responded to the survey reported that they had been treated with dignity and respect

I was treated with dignity and respect



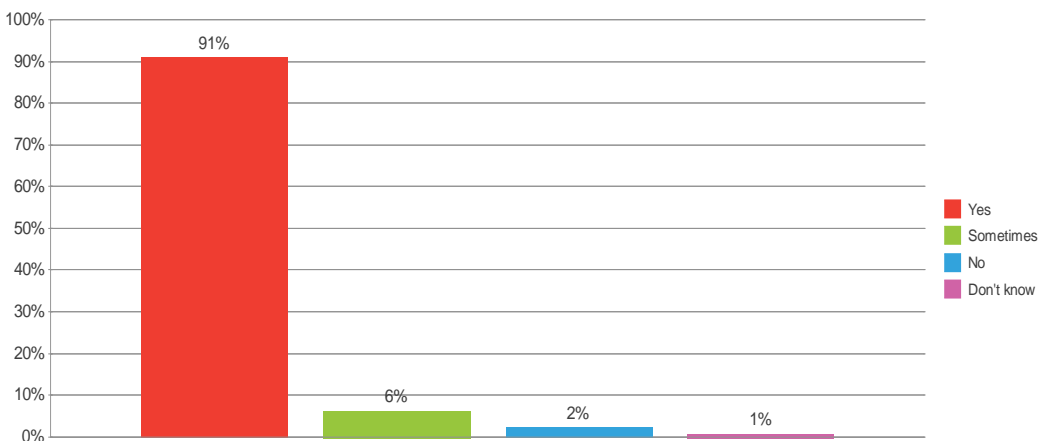
81% of children with a care and support plan who responded feel their views about my care and support have been listened to

My views about my care and support have been listened to



91% of children with a care and support plan who responded to the survey reported they had been treated with respect

I was treated with respect



What are our priorities for next year and why?

We have identified a range of priority actions arising out of our self - evaluations of both our adults and children's services:

- Delivery of personalised and integrated services that promote choice, control and independence. Health and Social Care services will be personalised and integrated, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes. This will also mean that we will work in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our limited and decreasing resources, always looking at alternative ways of doing things, to limit the impact on the Council taxpayer.
- Ensure that families have access to the right support and information, earlier, so that fewer children and young people require statutory Children's Services support.
- Develop and deploy the Wales Community Care Information Service (WCCIS) to provide more accurate up to date information and create and sustain a unified approach for people in need of care and support. Implementing the WCCIS as a national ICT system will help us to deliver our key priorities and address the considerable technical and practice challenges involved in creating and sustaining a unified approach. Once implemented the new system will give us: Better management of care through improved communication between agencies; Less onerous assessment and opportunities for repeating information to multiple agencies; Fewer opportunities for duplication and error particularly for vulnerable people, and more efficient business processes across health and social care services
- Increase the number of social care clients that receive direct payments to enable them to make personal choices to manage their own needs.

(b) Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

What did we plan to do last year?

Our plans for last year included:

- Working with our regional partners to complete and agree the statement of strategic intent for commissioning services for people with learning disabilities, (complex needs and autism) and their families and pursue the development of a new and dynamic service model that keeps people safe, builds community support, emphasises early intervention and prevention and enables people to live fulfilling lives in their own homes.
- Working with our regional partners to continue the implementation of the regional older peoples commissioning statement to pursue the development of new service models for home care, accommodation with support and day services; continue the emphasis on the reablement and intermediate care services and provide further support to social enterprise and the third sector to develop the resilience of community networks of support.
- Prioritise investment in improving the physical fitness facilities at the Council's leisure centres and work with local sports clubs and community groups to increase participation in sport and leisure
- Improving the offer to carers for both assessment and support in accordance with the
- new legislative duties.

How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?

We completed the reconfiguration of the support@home service (in-house homecare and intermediate care and reablement services). This new support@home service became operational in 2016/17 with over 40 current home care workers being trained to provide additional intermediate care support services providing greater operational service resilience.

We have worked with Public Health Wales to deliver programmes that focus on providing support and information to our residents who are over 50 years old to improve their health and wellbeing. This included piloting a 10 week 'Falls Awareness' course with 'RCT Homes' which included presentations from dieticians, physiotherapists, Age Cymru as well as information sessions with Drink Wise Age Well, RNIB, RNID Cymru, Age Connects Morgannwg and Vision Products. Feedback from this pilot was positive with residents saying they were "happy with the course", "learnt a lot" and "enjoyed the learning".

In addition the Day Services Strategy has been completed and the future preferred model agreed in principal. The draft commissioning strategy for people with learning disabilities was reported to Cabinet on 3rd November 2016. Arrangements for the public consultation was agreed with partners and commenced in February 2017. The final commissioning strategy and implementation plan will be completed early 2017/18.

We have effectively trialled an Integrated Assessment and Response Service which has:

- Undertaken initial assessments and commissioned/provided health, social care and third sector community support to facilitate safe and timely return home from A&E and the Clinical Decision Unit (CDU) to prevent unnecessary admission.
- For those patients who are admitted, undertake integrated complex discharge assessments utilising the default position that individuals are supported to return to a community setting.

This service has evolved into the Stay Well @ Home Service which will be fully implemented in 2017/18. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in their 2016/17 performance review have commented that:

"The development of the 'Stay well at home' and hospital-based rapid response services, with additional social worker resource, has resulted in a quicker more efficient assessment of individual need at an earlier stage. This has resulted in more people reaching independence within six weeks."

Helping people to be supported at home remains a key priority for the Council.

- The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over is 4.95
- The percentage of adults who completed a period of reablement and have a reduced package of care and support 6 months later is 42.11%
- The percentage of adults who completed a period of reablement and have no package of care and support 6 months later is 77.23%
- The proportion of people assessed by adult social care in receipt of a care and support plan is 67.04%

We delivered a successful pilot with Community Co-ordinators in the Single Point of Access to support the developing approach to the IAA service. The Co-ordinators are able to identify at an early stage when an individual may benefit from being connected to activities in their community to promote emotional well-being.

- Of the 57 cases referred by SPA, 30 cases avoided progression into other statutory services (53%)
- In the remaining 27 cases, these were jointly referred to Adult services based on presenting need – needs were met jointly by SS and CCs
- Of the 66 cases referred in total, 48 have not returned for a further assessment of need (73%)

Case Study example from the Community Co-ordinator Pilot

Mrs C is 91yrs old and not in receipt of any care package with all support provided by her daughter who made a referral to SPA as her mother was becoming increasingly isolated and lonely. She didn't go out or see anyone.

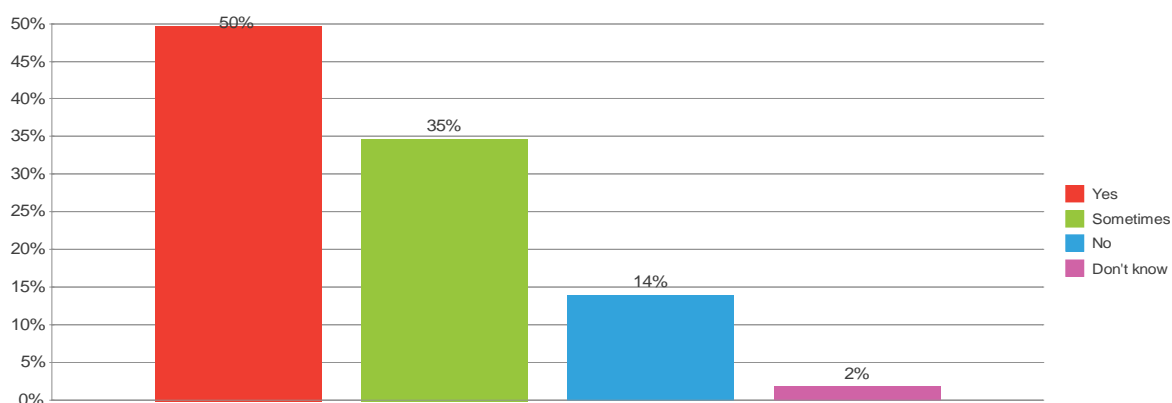
The Community Co-ordinator explored what activities Mrs C would like and explored local social groups. Helped daughter make contact with local Salvation Army centre and mother & daughter now attending 2 x weekly coffee morning and lunch club. Spirits of both have been considerably lifted as meeting new people and getting out of the house. Daughter also given information about Carers support project

For those children that we support, we are in the top quartile in Wales for making sure that children in our care had fewer than 3 placements during the year, bringing more stability into their lives. In addition the percentage of children seen by a registered dentist within 3 months of becoming looked after was 58.11%

The new Cwm Taf Carers Strategy was approved by Cabinet. The review of the carers assessment operating practices and procedures has been completed and new arrangements implemented.

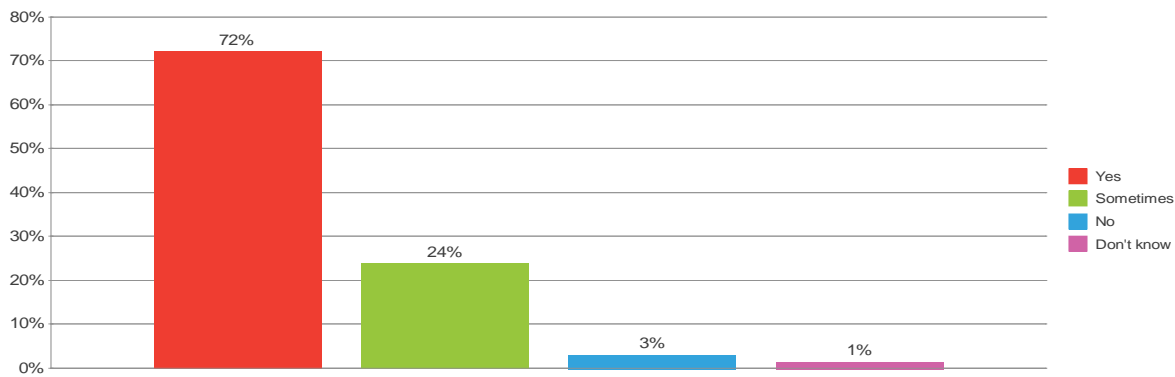
A qualitative survey of people receiving care and support has provided the following findings: 85% of adults receiving care and support who responded to the survey said they can do the things that are important to them some or all of the time

I can do the things that are important to me



72% of children with a care and support plan who responded, reported they are able to do the things they like all the time whilst 24% said they could some of the time.

I can do the things I like to do



What are our priorities for next year and why?

During 2017/18 our plans are to:

- Deliver the Stay well @ Home Service to provide an integrated response with partner agencies to reduce the total number of citizens who experience a delayed transfer of care from hospital. This service will operate 7 days a week between the hours of 8am and 8pm
- Work with Health to review our future approach to community mental health, including working towards integration of CMHT's
- Reduce reliance on statutory services by better targeting the provision of universal Early Years services
- Work with partners to form a strategic board to support sport and physical activity in RCT
- Develop and deliver services that focus on building more involved and resilient communities to tackle poverty and promote well-being. This will enable individuals and their families to access support as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating and reduce the demand for high cost specialist services and ensure that any adverse child experiences (ACE's) are identified addressed and their impact on children is minimised.
- Deliver the priority investments for Leisure, Parks, Playgrounds, Bereavement and Heritage Services. This investment in Leisure will allow the service to attract new customers from local communities to improve their inclusion in physical activity to benefit their health and well-being. The playground investment will provide more stimulating and safer play opportunities for children throughout the County Borough.
- Sport and Health Development functions to better deliver the priorities of the Leisure Strategy. This will increase active participation in physical activity across all age ranges with the aim of reducing levels of childhood and adult obesity, increasing overall life expectancy and contributing to the general health and well being of the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Case Study - How the Stay Well @ Home Service can make a difference

Prior to admission, Mrs B lived at home with her husband in a bungalow, x1 step to access with additional grab rails for support. Mrs B used a walking aid to get around the house and would use a wheelchair if going out with Husband. There was no previous care package prior to admission, and Mrs B's Husband supported with all domestic and meal preparation activities and would occasionally support Mrs B with personal care activities.

Mrs B was admitted to hospital for surgical intervention following a history of abdominal discomfort. She had been deemed medically fit for discharge however was awaiting a new package of care to support with personal care activities initially upon discharge. Under the traditional pathway, a referral had been sent to the local authority to set up a package of care however no discharge date planned. The therapists on the ward also noted concerns with bed mobility; Mrs B was requiring additional support to get out of bed.

The Stay Well @ Home Team (SW@HT) supported the ward in coordinating Mrs B discharge plans and linked with the ward therapists to look at options to support Mrs B discharge home. They worked with the community service to arrange for Mrs B to be supported by the 'holding service' the same day therefore discharge was planned for the same day.

During the course of the review undertaken by the SW@HT, appropriate equipment was identified and delivery plans arranged via the equipment store.

During the discharge planning process, an unforeseeable barrier arose which impacted upon Mrs B's ability to return home. Mrs B's Husband was admitted to A&E with a suspected pulmonary embolism. Mr B was the main source of support for Mrs B therefore concerns were raised regarding Mrs B's ability to manage at home with only one additional call per day. Issues were also raised regarding access to the property (as Mr B was not present at the property to open the door to care staff).

SW@HT members visited the A&E department to gain an update on the status of Mr B and to communicate with the family regarding concerns around discharge plans.

Following on from a lengthy discussion with Mrs B and the family members in A&E, the SW@HT staff were able to gain a better picture of the support needs at home.

Under the SW@HT process, the assessment was revisited and a request was made to increase the package of care from x1 call per day to x3 calls per day, which was built around compensating for the support Mrs B's Husband would have provided if he were at home. Ward therapists linked with Care & Repair to fit an emergency key safe to enable access to the property. The increase and flexibility with regards to the care package would not have been possible under the traditional ways of working.

Unfortunately, upon completion of the final plans for discharge, ward Therapists informed the SW@HT that there was no hospital transportation available and the family were unable to provide support, therefore the discharge was postponed until the next day. This information was provided to the team at 15:50.

In order to avoid an unnecessary delay, the SW@HT linked with the Age Connect 'Hospital to Home' service to support with transportation home and to provide a settling in service, which included preparing Mrs B with a hot drink and light snack, preparing the bed sheets and drawing the curtains. The Age Connect support worker also supported with placing the house key in the key safe. Prior to Age Connect supporting Mrs B home, the SW@H Therapist reviewed Mrs B's mobility and overall transfer abilities in/out of the car and assessed Mrs B's Ability to complete one step, which Mrs B would need to be able to do before returning home with the Age Connect worker.

Mrs B returned home the same day.

What this case tells us:

- Mrs B would not have been able to return home without the support of the SW@HT direct access to the local authority 'holding service'.
- This case demonstrates the overall flexibility and coordination within the SW@HT and

effective use of resources

- Effective use of Third Sector services to facilitate a timely discharge
- Holistic approach to discharge planning (taking into consideration the recent events concerning the Husband)
- Joint working with the MDT to facilitate a timely discharge
- Overall reduced length of stay

(c) Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm

What did we plan to do last year?

We set out to:

- Continue to respond effectively to adults at risk and make sure the revised adult safeguarding requirements within the Social Services and Wellbeing Act were implemented.
- Carry out an evaluation with our partners of the impact of the changes made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Undertake an evaluation of the impact of the newly established Regional Adoption Service

How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?

In 2016/17 we have continued to safeguard adults, children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and respond effectively to those at risk to make sure the revised safeguarding requirements within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 are implemented. We have put in place effective governance arrangements for safeguarding adults and children and established two Boards, the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Adults Board (CTSAB) and the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board (CTSCB). Both have a vision to ensure that adults over the age of 18, children and young people in Cwm Taf up to the age of 18, are protected from abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm and are prevented from becoming at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm and they live in an environment that promotes their wellbeing. The CTSAB has been working within the ethos of Voice and Control engaging with, listening to and hearing the views of adults, children and young people.

Both Boards have prepared an Annual Plan 2017/18 which was published on the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Boards website (www.cwmtafsafeguarding.org) for the 31 March 2017. The following achievements have been delivered:

- All partner agencies represented on the Boards have responsibilities for safeguarding those at risk.
- The Boards have clear structures in place for delivering their functions and to report on their effectiveness
- Protocols and procedures are in place to escalate issues to the Boards and risks are identified and managed appropriately.
- The Boards ensure that there are adequate systems are in place to enable the effective sharing of safeguarding information amongst all agencies.
- A new Information System for social care and some elements of the NHS is being developed and will be introduced by the end of 2017.
- The Board's Quality Assurance Group monitors, audits and quality assures the effectiveness of local organisations' and individuals' work to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of adults.
- The Board established the new joint adults and children Training and Learning Sub Group (TALG).

- An Adult Safeguarding Training Calendar has been developed and themes from audit and reviews are being collated to inform future training and learning events.
- A combined Safeguarding Business Unit has been established to support the effective operation of both Boards.
- The CTSCB has appointed individual Board members to champion specific areas of vulnerability. These were: Children subject to neglect; Children looked after; Children at risk of suicide and self harm; Children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

We have completed an evaluation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub following its first year of delivery and identified a need to review the current processes to ensure that they are achieving the best possible outcomes for children and adults at risk. A survey carried out with a range of professionals identified that the MASH has made a positive difference to safeguarding in Cwm Taf and Information Sharing protocols have been put in place between MASH partners.

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales produced a follow up report on the Adult Safe Guarding arrangements and reported that the introduction of the MASH has had a significantly positive impact on the authorities' response to and management of adult safeguarding. They also said that the need to realign processes and teams with the new Act requirements is seen as productive, for example resulting in closer working arrangements between adults and children services.

They were 'impressed by the strength of partnership working, with an evident focus on individual health and well-being outcomes; co-location has been key to facilitating this, enabling informed conversations based on shared information. There has been an increasing consistency of decision making over the time that MASH has been in existence, particularly in relation to stages 1 to 4 of the safeguarding process. They found that decisions around safeguarding are generally sound, with proportionate and effective action taken in response to referrals; however, the recording and evidencing of decision-making and outcomes is not always in place, or undertaken in a timely manner to support and evidence this'. Work is continuing to improve the recording of information.

Between April 2016 & March 2017, 15,579 contacts were made to MASH

MASH contributes to the reduction in repeat referrals through providing good quality information sharing and intelligence to Social Care practitioners. As at March 2017, the percentage of repeat referrals for child protection was 20.5%. Between April 2016 & March 2017, 1609 Section 47 investigations were undertaken in response to reported safeguarding issues. This is less than the 2030 S47's undertaken during 2015/16.

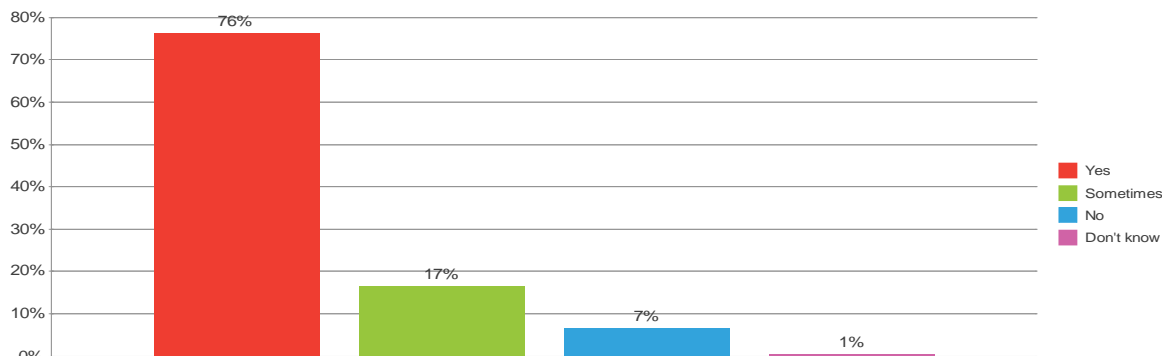
As part of our work to safeguard the wellbeing of children and ensure that we place young people in the most appropriate setting, the evaluation of the Regional Adoption Service has commenced and will be completed in 2017.

Looking at the data we know that:

- The percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within 7 days was 93.19%
- The overall numbers of Children on the Child Protection Register has decreased by 10%.
- The percentage of re-registration of Children on the Local Authority Child Protection Register is 9.40%.
- During 2016/17 13 children become looked after on more than 1 occasion. This equates to 4.86% of all admissions

We have completed a qualitative survey of people who are receiving care and support which has confirmed that: 76% of Adults who are receiving care and support reported that they feel safe, with 17% reporting that they feel safe some of the time.

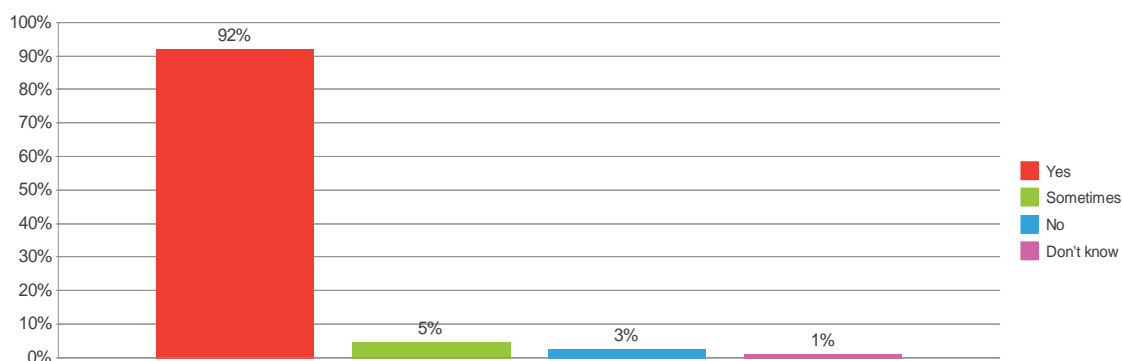
I feel safe



92% of children with a care and support plan who responded reported they feel safe all the time

I feel safe

(For example, cared for and safe from anyone who can hurt you or treat you badly, both inside and outside your home)



What are our priorities for next year and why?

During 2017/18 we will:

- Continue to ensure that Children and Young People are protected from abuse and neglect and take appropriate steps to protect and safeguard children and young people who need care and support and carers who need support from abuse and neglect or any other kinds of harm.
- Implement a Risk Framework Model to ensure consistency in decision making relating to the lives of Children.
- Reduce the number of repeat episodes where Children and Young People are placed on the Child Protection Register
- Equip staff with the skills and knowledge to ensure groups with protected characteristics are not discriminated against and to identify safeguarding issues with the aim of preventing problems from getting worse or happening. This will mean that housing services is assisting the Council to fulfil its safeguarding duty under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 and staff will have the skills and knowledge required to identify safeguarding issues and prevent problems from getting worse or happening

- Put in place a greater choice of high quality local placements available for children who cannot remain at home, by increasing the number of Rhondda Cynon Taf foster carers.
- Undertake a programme of audit and review work via the Quality Assurance Sub Group (AQA) to identify themes and trends to inform best practice in relation to adult safeguarding
- Complete the review of the adult safeguarding processes and the thresholds for decision making, in line with the new Welsh Government guidance
- Ensure that there is a robust performance management framework in place for the MASH which is aligned to the work of the Board's AQA Sub Group.
- Continue to develop the multi-agency training calendar and identify any gaps in provision
- Develop a programme of Multi Agency Practitioner Events to share learning from audits and reviews with a wide audience of practitioners involved in safeguarding
- Increase the pool of appropriately skilled reviewers/facilitators to carry out Adult Practice Reviews

Case Study 1- how is MASH making a difference for adult services?

A is a 59 year old woman who has a mild learning disability and was not known to the Council's Adult Services prior to last year, when the Safeguarding Team, based at the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), received a report from a local Communities First worker. A had gone to her local community centre saying she didn't know how she was going to manage because her 'mam', who was, in fact, her ex-boyfriend's mother, had recently died and she used to look after A. A went on to say that she didn't have any money because her sister-in-law had all her money. She also said that she had a boyfriend in prison who she was going to marry when he was released and that her sister-in-law (her Mam's daughter) had put her in touch with him and wrote letters for her to him. A told the worker that her sister-in-law had taken her to the prison to meet other men too before this one. The worker subsequently visited A at home and reported squalid living conditions and very little food at the flat.

The Safeguarding Officer who received this report arranged for the Learning Disability Team to undertake an assessment under Part 3 of the Social Services & Wellbeing Act, with an initial focus on building rapport and encouraging disclosure of abuse and exploitation. Whilst this work was being undertaken, the Safeguarding Officer shared the information obtained initially with other MASH partner agencies, particularly South Wales Police, Prison and Probation agencies and as it emerged from the social worker undertaking the assessment and, over the course of a few weeks, it became apparent that A was not capable of managing her money or keeping herself safe from sexual exploitation and that she was being abused in a variety of ways by a number of perpetrators. Measures were taken to safeguard her money, such as the Council obtaining an appointeeship from the Department of Work and Pensions to manage her benefits, and the social worker and safeguarding officer worker with Trivallis to secure her tenancy on the flat and improve her living conditions. A was introduced to support workers to provide her with practical and emotional support, with the aim of reducing her dependence on her abusers and disrupting their activity. South Wales Police undertook a range of criminal investigations into apparent sexual offences, theft and fraud, some of which are still live.

A continues to receive support from a range of council services: she has moved from her flat, where she was still extremely vulnerable to predatory and opportunistic abusers, into the new extracare facility, where wrap-around support is available. She is thriving, with her confidence and life skills improving month on month

Case Study 2- how is MASH making a difference for children's services?

X is aged 8 months and was referred to MASH by the GP as there were concerns that he had a number of bruises that could not be explained by the parents. The MASH team instigated Child Protection enquiries under the Child Protection procedures and a multi agency strategy meeting was held with partner agencies based in MASH within an hour of the original referral being made. Further enquiries facilitated within the MASH resulted in X being placed safely with family members the same day

(d) Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

What did we plan to do last year?

In 2016/17, working with other Council departments and in collaboration with our partners, set out the following priorities:

- Narrow the gap in attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils including: focusing on improving the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged or living in poverty by sharing good practice between schools; further developing the role of the Looked After Children's Coordinator to make sure schools have policies in place to support Looked After Children; setting targets for schools specifically for improving outcomes for this group of pupils, introducing a project in which ten Primary schools within valley communities in RCT work together to find ways to work with and help pupils living in deprivation.

How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?

We promoted the wellbeing and engagement of all learners, with a focus on school attendance and an environment for all learners. Overall outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals in RCT are not improving as quickly as those pupils not eligible. The gap in achievement is still too wide at the Foundation phase and Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. Work to address these gaps remains a priority for the Council and the Central South Consortium. Attendance levels for pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) have risen over the past 5 years and it is hoped that this will have a positive impact on future attainment levels.

- 52.43% of children achieved the core subject indicator at Key Stage 2
- 7.69% of children achieved the core subject indicator at Key Stage 4
- 13.91% of looked after children experienced 1 or more changes of school, during a period or periods of being looked after, which were not due to transitional arrangements,
- 50% of all care leavers who were in education, training or employment at 12 months after leaving care
- 53.33% of all care leavers who were in education, training or employment at 24 months after leaving care

- 85.8% of our 11 year olds achieved the Core Subject Indicator, but this is still below the Welsh Average.
- 81.6% of our 14 year olds achieved Level 5 or above in the Core Subject Indicator. We are now nearer the Welsh Average.

CASE STUDY - Supporting people with learning disabilities into employment

M, an adult with a learning disability was brought up in a family with parents who were very heavy drinkers but wasn't known to social services. When his parents passed away, M tried to live at home but he became homeless living on the streets and abusing alcohol. A member of the community rang social services. M was moved into supported living away from the area he had lived all his life to give him a fresh start. M agreed to counselling and adjusted to a new way of living.

As a result of this and other help M received from our Transition Team, he started voluntary work which helped him to complete training and gain certificates. He works well alongside other workers and his confidence has grown. M no longer drinks alcohol and has turned his life around, he is now a contented person who no longer needs support from the Transition Team.

What are our priorities for next year and why?

In 2017/18 our plans are to:

- Work with communities and the 3rd sector to build community resilience and capacity as a means of improving general health and wellbeing whilst facilitating and promoting social enterprise.
- Engage with the communities and third sector organisations to co-produce community hubs that can: offer information advice and assistance to people in their area; link to the wider network of community based activities and facilities; offer some simple community based solutions to meet some the low level support needs of the people living in the area (i.e. dementia cafe etc.)
- Work with key stakeholders to identify the optimum network areas and most beneficial locations for community hubs
- Seek third sector partners across the county borough and set out a critical path for development

(e) Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

What did we plan to do last year?

Our council is committed to ensuring that children and young people are able to have the best start in life. We do recognise that some families need support and we said that we would intervene where issues arise and commission effective family support arrangements to keep families together, where it is in the best interest of children to do so.

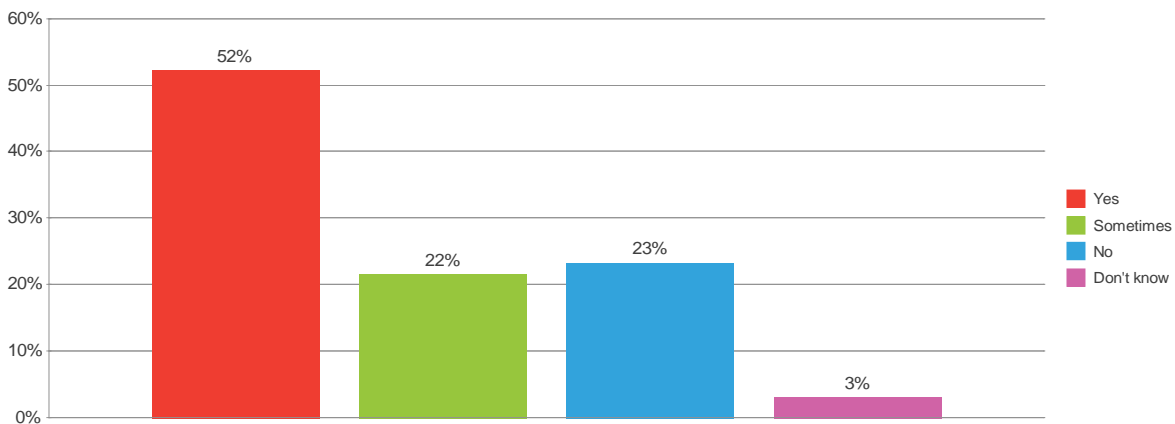
Our plans for last year focused on our efforts to continuing to reduce looked after children looked numbers in accordance with the 2016/17 target of 5%

How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?

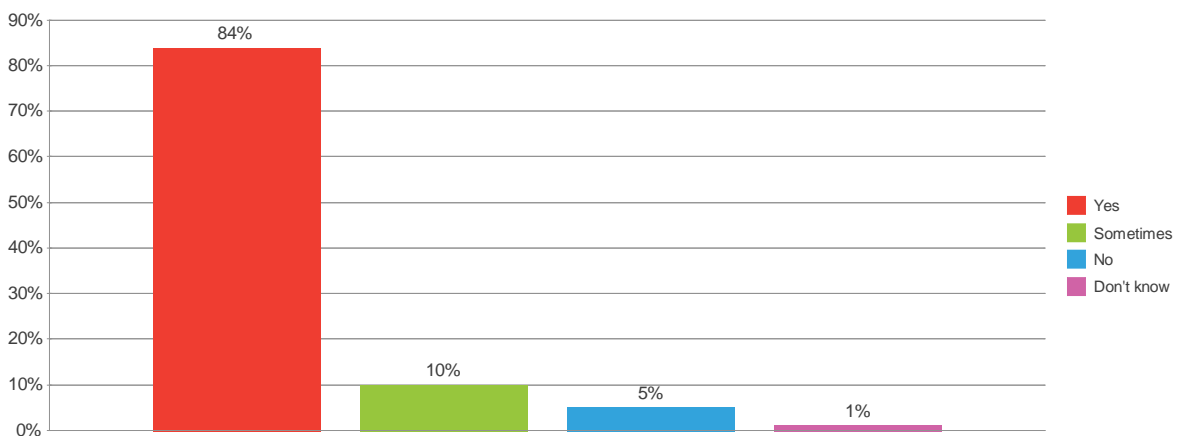
Looking at the work we have done to safely reduce the numbers of looked after children

In addition we do know from our local surveys that for adults receiving care and support, 74% reported that they sometimes or always feel part of their community and 84% said they were happy with the support from family, friends and neighbours

I feel I am part of my community

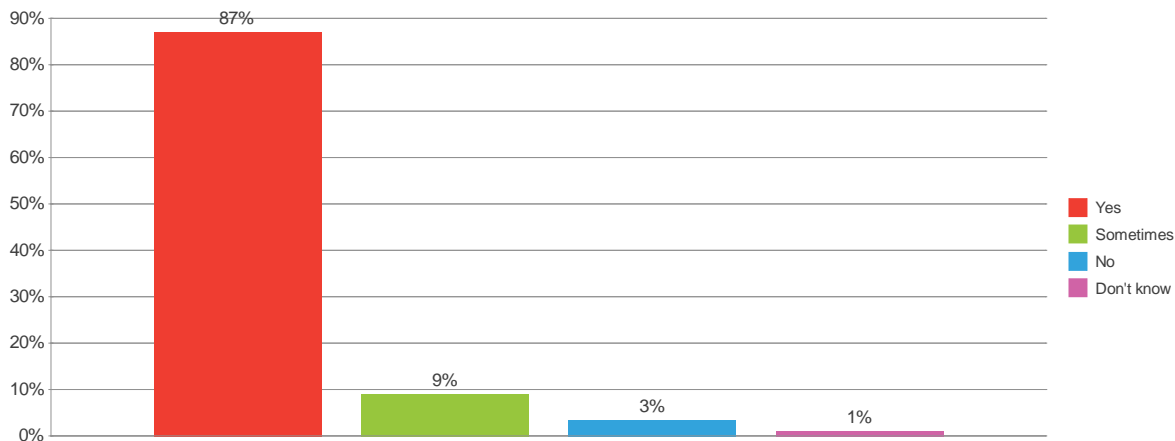


I am happy with the support from my family, friends and neighbours



We also know that 87% of children with a care and support plan who responded to our survey reported they are happy with my family, friends and neighbours.

I am happy with my family, friends and neighbours



What are our priorities for next year and why?

We will:

- Reduce the need for Statutory Services by ensuring that children, young people and families have coordinated integrated family support earlier.
- Support children who cannot live with their own parents so that they are able to live in suitable accommodation within RCT. This will enable children and young people who need care and support and carers who need support to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships. This will engender a feeling of belonging and they will be better able to contribute to and enjoy safe and healthy relationships.
- We will support children and young people who need care and support and carers who need support to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships. It is important that they feel they belong and contribute to and enjoy safe and healthy relationships
- Support the implementation of the Team around the Family review recommendations. in order to improve the long term prospects of the family and prevent problems from escalating. Implement the recommendations following a review into all Families First Commissioned services , with a focus on prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement
- Develop the kinship care service to support children and young people who are in need of care and support so that they can maintain connections with their families.
 - Improve the safety of victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and reduce the impact this has on their lives of the victims and perpetrators and wider families

(f) Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

What did we plan to do last year?

Our plans for 2016/17 included:

- Working with our regional partners to continue the implementation of the regional older peoples commissioning statement to pursue the development of new service models for home care, accommodation with support and day services; continue the emphasis on the reablement and intermediate care services and provide further support to social enterprise and the third sector to develop the resilience of community networks of support.
- Continuing to challenge the commissioning mix of placements to ensure, children and young people looked after, are accommodated in the most appropriate and cost effect care setting within the RCT area
- Reviewing the accommodation needs of Children Looked After including those who have recently left care
- Continuing to reduce children looked after (CLA) numbers in accordance with the 2016/17 target of 5%

How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?

CASE STUDY – The “Learning Curve” helps adults with learning disabilities with employment, education and skills. The Horticultural and Catering Centre in Llwynypia forms part of the Rhondda Cynon Tafwide ‘Learning Curve’. Twenty six individuals receiving our services aged between 18 and 70, work at the centre, growing flowers and preparing hanging baskets which are used to decorate the community. The centre provides all the flowers for Llantrisant Town Council and also decorates and landscapes RCT Homes’ housing complexes.

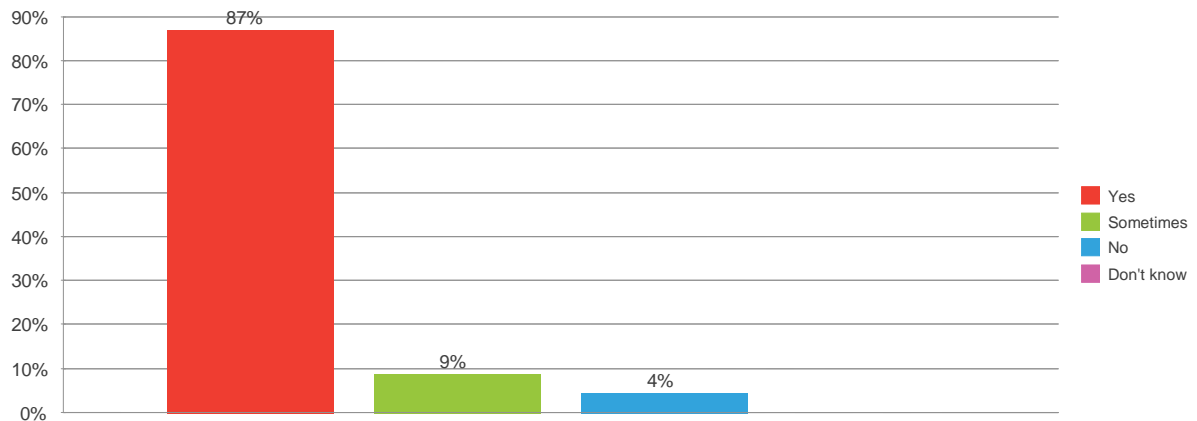
As well as securing essential work experience and skills, and enjoying social time with their peers, the individuals also work towards qualifications and accreditations, including City and Guilds certificates, from Coleg y Cymoedd and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council. The Centre also hosts a Catering section, where a further 16 individuals receiving services prepare up to 80 meals a day for others who use the day centre. They are also securing catering accreditation and qualifications through their work. One of the students, has secured employment in the kitchen at Wetherspools in Pontypridd thanks to the skills and experience he has secured through ‘Learning Curve’

- The percentage of looked after children returned home from care during the year was 16.1%
- The percentage of care leavers who have experienced homelessness during the year was 7.3%

In supporting people to be in accommodation that meets their needs we know that:

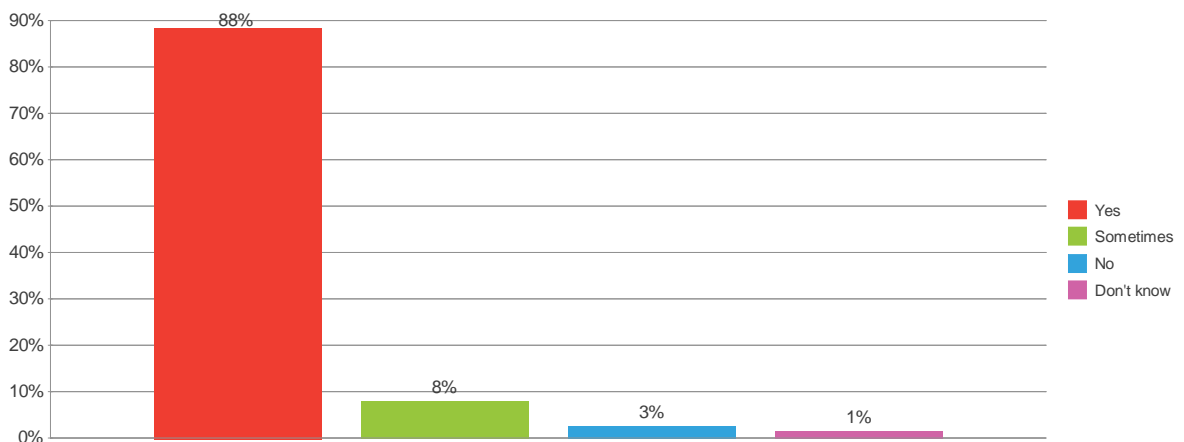
- 87% of adults receiving care and support who responded reported they live in a home that best supports their needs

I live in a home that best supports my well-being.



Also important are the views of children in our care. 88% of children receiving a care and support plan who responded to our survey reported that they live in a home where they are happy

I live in a home where I am happy



What are our priorities for next year and why?

Our vision for supported accommodation and housing with support is based on making the most effective use of existing supported accommodation and housing support services in terms of reuse/remodelling of buildings and sites. Fundamentally we need to increase choice and control for vulnerable people within supported accommodation and housing with support services, and maintain a focus on preventative services.

We will:

- Reduce the length of time Children and Young People remain within the Looked after Children (LAC) system
- Review the accommodation needs of Children who are Looked After (CLA), including those who have recently left care so that we can provide appropriate accommodation for the future and well-being outcomes are achieved.
- Ensure that children that cannot live with their own parents live in suitable accommodation in RCT

- Improve the integrated commissioning capacity of the Social Services and Wellbeing Regional team and deliver the statutory requirements of the Cwm Taf SSWB Partnership Board for 2017/8. This will help us meet the requirements under part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the establishment of pooled funds in relation to the exercise of care home accommodation function to improve better outcomes for people in need of care and support. An improved integrated commissioning capacity will mean that care is planned with organisations working together to fully understand peoples' care and support needs, it would include working with families and carers to achieve the outcomes that are important to them rather than what is important to each organisation in isolation.
- Deliver Community Safety Services and Programmes that promote Rhondda Cynon Taf as a safe place to live with high levels of community cohesion to help reduce crime and the fear of crime, this will promote community cohesion. We will work with partners to focus on early interventions which tackle incidents of anti-social behaviour and ensure victims feel safer as a result.

5. How We Do What We Do

(a) Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

Supporting our workforce is fundamental to delivering good quality care to those in Rhondda Cynon Taf who need our help with last year seeing the implementation of a new shared service across Cwm Taf with Merthyr Tydfil CBC. The newly formed Cwm Taf Social Care Workforce Development Plans will continue to improve the quality and management of social services provision through a planned approach to learning, development and qualifications to increase the take-up of learning and development across the care sector. Last year we set out and met the following objectives:

- To support staff across all partner organisations engaged in duties delivered under the new social services law to have the knowledge, skills and competencies and that the necessary cultural changes are driven forward.
- To ensure that all core learning and development, including induction and qualification training, is reframed to reflect the new legal framework;
- To continue the current support for both Social Work qualifying training and post-qualifying training in Wales;
- To support frontline social care workers to develop their skills overall in relation to social care;
- To support the infrastructure for learning and development across Wales, including local and regional partnership and joint working.

We will continue to further the scope and reach of the learning and development provision building on the initial approach of single service provision across the region and extend this to working in partnership with other partner Regions to build on the strengths of collaborative and shared delivery. Our objectives for the forthcoming year are that we will:

- Continue to support social care staff engaged in duties delivered under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to have the knowledge, skills and competencies to operate in the legal and cultural expectations of the Act
- Support the implementation of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act by supporting the domiciliary care workforce to prepare for registration and supporting knowledge of responsible individuals.
- Support efficient approaches by drawing upon and working with the Social Care Wales national plans/ programmes: including Step Up to Management; Social Services Practitioners; Middle Manager Development Programme; Team manager development programme; and learning and development programme for the Acts

- Continue the current support for both Social Work qualifying training and post qualifying training in Wales; support frontline social care workers to develop their skills overall in relation to social care, and support introduction of the revised induction framework from September 2017; and support the infrastructure for learning and development across Wales, including local and regional partnership and joint working.

(b) Our Financial Resources and How We Plan For the Future

We know that right across our council demand on local services continues to rise. In social services we face a number of challenges in meeting the demands and expectations of those who need our help. The demand is driven by a changing profile of the population, with the number of people aged over 65 rising. As a result the Council faces a possible budget gap of £80 million between 2016 and 2020. This is in addition to the £76 million budget gap the Council has dealt with between 2011 and 2016. At the same time, residents are facing greater financial pressures from increasing energy bills, housing costs, continued wage restraint and benefit reforms. People expect better services and more prompt responses from the Council.

In 2017/18 we will continue to deliver agreed budget efficiencies and manage Service within the resources available in the medium term plan.

(c) Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability

Partnership working across the wider region is strong, with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, the local health board, service providers and the third sector. Whether its planning our workforce needs and training requirements, intergrating our service provision or responding to region wide challenges, we are doing more collectively to deliver better services.

Political and Corporate Leadership is strong in Rhondda Cynon Taf, demonstrated by elected Members across the Group, with a pronounced focus in terms of challenging performance and driving service improvement and change. Our Cabinet Member is approachable, supportive and fully engaged in the delivery of services to children, young people and their families.

The Service Director meets the Cabinet Member monthly to discuss current issues and priorities and receive regular updates in relation to relevant topics. Cabinet Members attend GMT monthly and briefing papers relating to the service activity in children's Services are presented. Regular reports as part of our governance and accountability are presented to the Education & Children's Scrutiny committee to ensure appropriate challenge in relation to our priorities. The Leader is also engaged via service change update meetings and formal processes e.g. Private Cabinet, Cabinet and Council. All policy changes are taken through Cabinet for approval.

In 2017/18 we will ensure that performance and management information systems and frameworks support our strategic and operational needs. Implementing the WCCIS as a national ICT system could help significantly in delivering key priorities and address the considerable technical and practice challenges involved in creating and sustaining a unified approach. This will lead to better management of care through improved communication between partner agencies, ensure less onerous assessment and opportunities for repeating information to multiple agencies, and fewer opportunities for duplication and error particularly for vulnerable people.

6. Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

In producing this report we have relied upon a substantial amount of information, data, reports, surveys etc. It attempts to identify the progress of the local authority in improving the wellbeing of those people who need our help and support. This report is not the only source of information available to members of the public, key partners and service providers. We have a significant amount of background information that sits behind this report and that provide a lot of additional detail about what we do and how we do it. Importantly if something is not mentioned in this report as a key priority it doesn't mean we're not doing it, as there is a lot of activity across social services that plays a part in helping us to provide for some of the most vulnerable groups in our community.

To access further information about what we do then these are some of the documents that will provide more detail:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020
- The Cwm Taf Population Needs Assessment
- The Cwm Taf Wellbeing Assessment
- Departmental reports
- CSSIW Performance Review 2016/17