

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2014

REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Welsh Assembly Government published Statutory Guidance in June 2009 regarding the Duties and Accountabilities of Directors of Social Services in Wales. Amongst the Guidance was a requirement for the Director of Social Services to publish an Annual Report on the delivery, performance, risks and planned improvements of the Social Services function in the Council.
- 1.2 The first Director of Social Services Annual Report was published in July 2010. This is the fifth Annual Report.
- 1.3 As required within the Guidance, the draft Director of Social Services Annual report has been subjected to formal consultation, involving scrutiny by staff and stakeholders.
- 1.4 Following amendment resulting from the consultation process, a final version of the report is now presented to Cabinet for formal approval prior to publication.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

Members note the outcome of the Consultation process and approve the Rhondda Cynon Taf Director of Social Services Annual Report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Welsh Assembly Government issued Statutory Guidance in June 2009 regarding the Duties and Accountabilities of Directors of Social Services in Wales. Under this Guidance each Local Authority in Wales is required to appoint a Statutory Director of Social Services.
- 3.2 In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the duties of the Director of Social Services are located within the role of Group Director (Community & Children's Services).
- 3.3 Amongst the duties laid out in the Guidance is the requirement for the Director of Social Services to produce an Annual Report.

3.4 The Guidance states:

“The Director of Social Services must report annually to their Council on the delivery, performance and risk as well as plans for improvement of the whole range of Social Services functions. The report will have an important role in the development of the Council’s overarching Improvement Plan (WPI). The report and the underpinning evidence will inform the development of the CSSIW work programme for the authority including the overarching authority wide regulatory plan. It will be important that the report and underpinning evidence is shared at appropriate points in the cycle with CSSIW.”

3.5 Each Authority has discretion as to the format of the report but it must:

- be published as soon as possible after the end of the financial year to which it refers;
- report performance and risk and set out plans for improvement

3.6 This is the fifth Director of Social Services Annual report published in Rhondda Cynon Taf and has been subjected to a formal consultation process.

4. CONSULTATION PROCESS

4.1 The draft Director of Social Services Annual Report was circulated to staff, partner agencies and the Community & Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee.

4.2 In general, respondents endorsed the priorities contained within the draft report with feedback primarily offering suggestions to promote the work being undertaken within various service areas.

4.3 A record of all comments received will be kept for the purpose of the CSSIW inspection of our work supporting the Director of Social Services Annual report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 All comments received were considered by the Director of Social Services and staff working on the Director of Social Services Annual Report and appropriate changes made.

5.2 Most feedback was positive and constructive, in some instances also highlighting the factors influencing, and needing to be considered, when delivering improvements in the priority areas.

5.3 Detailed action plans to support delivery of the Director of Social Services Annual report are included within the Business Plans of the individual Services which form the Community & Children’s Services Group.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Social Services Annual Report 2013/14

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Introduction

As the Council's statutory Director of Social Services, it is part of my job to report to you every year on how well I think the Council's Social Services are working. In this report, we summarise what the Council has achieved and how we have performed in social care during the period of April 2013 to March 2014, the challenges we face and those areas we plan to focus on and improve in 2014/15.

Social Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf aim to provide a range of services which are responsive and well coordinated in protecting and supporting the population as a whole and vulnerable people in particular. However, like all Councils, Rhondda Cynon Taf is facing considerable financial challenges with significantly reducing budgets at a time of increased demand, higher expectations and legislation change with the implementation of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014.

Notwithstanding these financial challenges, we delivered services within our overall budget in 2013/14. Despite the significant challenges we face, we have continued to improve services in 2013/14 and our overall performance has remained generally good, relating in particular to, adult and children safeguarding; looked after children services and enabling more people to live more independently in their own homes through reablement and intermediate care.

Having said that I can also assure you that we are and will need to continue to critically review what services should be available to meet need in the most appropriate way and to manage demand to limit the impact of budgetary pressures on our most vulnerable people and families. We have already had to make some very difficult decisions relating to our community day centre provision and charges for adult social services.

One of the major challenges going forward will be to maintain our focus on maximising independence so that we can help more people and families to manage risks, to stay safe and to stay independent at home for as long as possible. This requires us to continue to promote ways in which we can focus on early intervention and prevention approaches by working with local communities to meet the specific needs of the people who live within them.

Prevention and early intervention are central to our ambition to offer more opportunities for people to stay safe, active, healthy and independent for longer. We have made good progress in this area, but more needs to be done.

One of the things we will focus on in 2014/15 is to develop a more robust and formal overarching framework that will provide a coherent and consistent approach to quality assurance processes and service involvement across social services that will contribute to service improvement and evidence the way that this is achieved. Having such a framework is key at a time of reducing budgets and service change.

Our workforce is the single most critical factor in sustaining long-term change and improving performance across social services and whilst positive steps are being taken to tackle some of the longstanding issues of high staff turnover and staff absences in some teams, there is no quick fix for the challenges we face and this will continue to be a priority area for us in 2014/15.

As reported in previous years, we have a comprehensive workforce development programme that is focused on ensuring that all social care staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to undertake their duties, which is kept under regular review. Our commitment to workforce development was recognised at the 2103 Social Care Accolades where we scooped three awards, in the following categories

- excellent outcomes in the care of older people
- developing a sustainable workforce
- better outcomes through working together

Our staff and partners do a magnificent job and are making a real difference to people's lives, many of whom are the most vulnerable in our community and I would like to take the opportunity to thank them all.

Adult Services

The aim of adult services is to support people in Rhondda Cynon Taf to lead independent and healthy lives in strong and vibrant communities and to provide protection to vulnerable adults living in our communities.

Progress against our 2013/14 priorities

In last year's annual report we committed to a number of priorities for 2013/14 and said we would improve in a number of areas. Here is the progress we have made:

We said we would...

monitor, develop and evaluate the impact of the revised operating model on services provided by the: first response service; short term intervention services and locality services

We have...

implemented the revised operating model and there has been a positive response from staff to the new model.

The new model has created capacity, through the better use of existing resources, and has led to improvements in managing the first point of contact with greater emphasis on prevention and demand management.

A short term intervention service has also been established to ensure that service users are offered a reablement service that can assist them to remain as independent as possible whilst being supported to live in their own homes and communities.

In addition, locality based services have been established to bring existing service structures in line with the Cwm Taf University Health Board operating models - laying the foundation for more integrated working.

We said we would...

progress work with the Cwm Taf University Health Board on closer co-operation

We have...

- secured European funding to support some project management resource to increase the pace of integration at a localities level with the emphasis being on the implementation of the Welsh Government's integrated assessment, planning and review guidance for people over 65. We will further progress our work by revisiting the assessment process in 2014/15, including the development of our social care IT system.
- put plans in place to develop joint commissioning arrangements for older people services, through the development of a joint Statement of Intent for integrated services, for older people with complex needs.

- explored the potential for collaborative commissioning of preventative services from the third sector with Health and the need to provide some pace to this work is recognised for 2014/15. A collaborative group with the Health Board has been established to consider further opportunities.
- with partner agencies established “a together for mental health” Partnership Board and agreed a work plan to deliver service priorities for 2014/15.

We said we would...

implement priorities for improvement from the adult social care commissioning strategy (2012/15)

We have...

- opened two new supported living schemes in Penygraig and Ynysybwl in June 2013. The two schemes have been refurbished to modern housing standards to accommodate up to 35 adults with learning disability and mental ill health.
- retendered externally commissioned supported living accommodation, securing enhanced service quality at reduced cost.
- commissioned the building of a new extra care housing accommodation for 40 older people in Talbot Green. The scheme is planned to open in autumn 2015.
- recommissioned CAB to provide dedicated welfare rights advice and guidance to people with mental ill health.
- changed the balance of domiciliary care provision between in-house and the external sector, with the external market increasing to 60% of the market share.
- commenced work to establish how an outcomes based approach to service delivery can influence the re-tendering of our home care contracts to secure a more needs led provision.
- expanded the reablement service to respond to all hospital discharge cases including those who are at risk of residential admission directly from hospital. Delayed transfers of care have therefore remained low and demonstrate the effectiveness of the intermediate care and reablement approaches.
- commissioned local a housing provider to pilot new model of community based outreach housing related support to older people.

We said we would...

implement Phase 2 of the adult services integration programme

We have...

- reviewed the effectiveness of specialist assessments undertaken in the ACE Team to improve the timeliness and quality of occupational therapy assessments. This has resulted in the reduction in the number of adults waiting for a specialist assessment during the year
- commenced reviews of learning disability services and in-house direct services and these are on-going with completion dates changed to March 2015

We said we would...

respond appropriately to requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act

We have...

ensured that our service developments and priorities for improvement, for example, placing greater emphasis on early intervention and prevention and strengthening of safeguarding arrangements, as referenced within this report, will complement the new Act.

We said we would...

consolidate arrangements within the Cwm Taf Adult Safeguarding Board

We have...

continued to work with partner agencies to ensure that the profile and commitment in relation to safeguarding and the delivery of services to protect vulnerable adults is strengthened. Terms of reference and membership of the Board and operational groups have been reviewed and a draft business plan for year ahead prepared.

We said we would...

contribute to the development of Multi Agency Safeguarding Assessment Hub (MASH) with Children's Services

We have...

continued to make good progress with the development of the MASH. The aim of MASH is to share information from all key agencies to risk assess safeguarding referrals on a multi-agency basis and decide upon the required response on a timely basis. A draft joint regional delivery model for adult services has been agreed for implementation in 2014/15.

We said we would...

review the existing arrangements for the discharge of our deprivation of liberty duties

We have...

reviewed our partnership arrangements for the delivery of deprivation of liberty responsibilities and this has led to the establishment of a multi-agency rota of best interest assessors for the Cwm Taf Region to manage the increasing number of deprivation of liberty assessments.

Also, agreed that Deprivation of Liberty Partnership arranged for the Cwm Taf Region to be formalised and strategically aligned to the Adult Safeguarding Board. The other recommendations of the review will need to be further considered in 2014/15.

Our performance in 2013/14

88% of our performance indicators hit target or were within 5% of the target

Overall performance for adult services has improved when compared to the previous year. Most targets have been achieved and **73%** are better than the 2013/14 Wales average and **56%** of indicators are better or similar to last year's performance.

Further information on our performance is contained in the pages that follow.

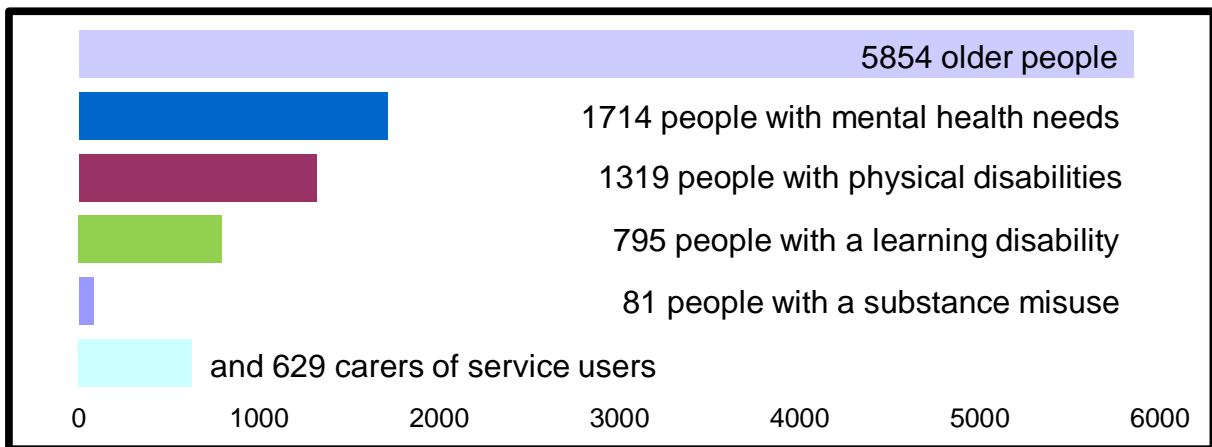
Responding to need

Did you know?

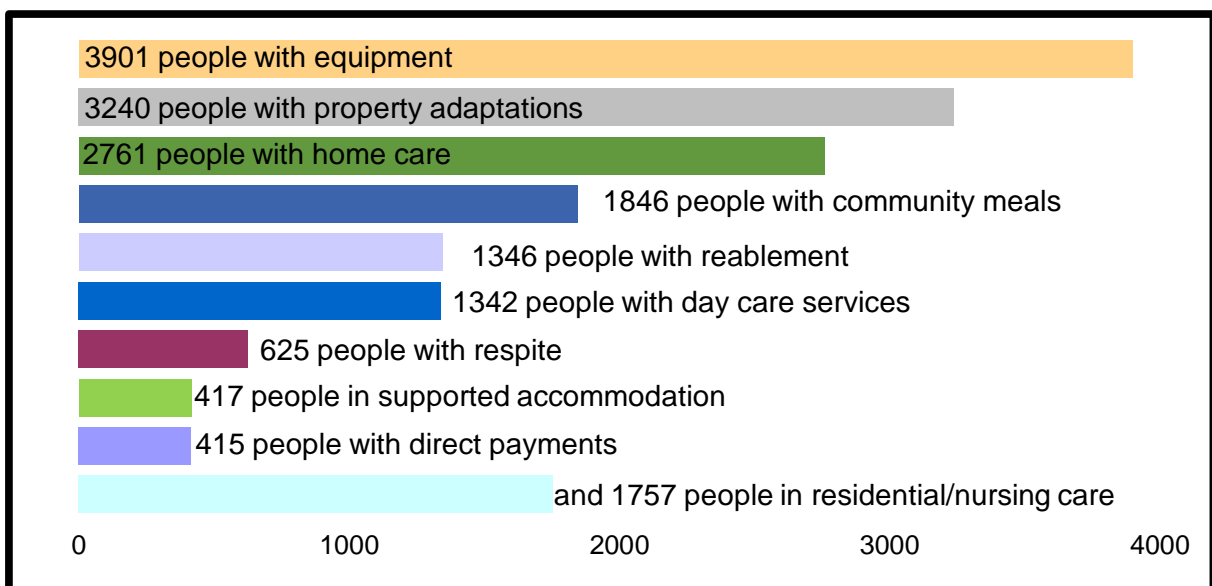
Local authorities use a common framework of four bands to determine eligibility for individual packages of care services: critical, substantial, moderate or low needs.

Local authorities currently can select which band they set. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is the only local authority in Wales that provides care and support services across **all four bands**.

During 2013/14 we supported....



We offer a wide range of services for adults with care and support needs to promote independence and support individuals to remain in their own homes or when necessary in a care home setting. Services provided during 2013/14 included....



Since 2010/11, there has been an overall reduction in the number of referrals to adult services because of a greater focus to signpost and intervene early to prevent access to care services. There is also a corresponding reduction in assessment activity up to 2013/14.

Number of:	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	% reduction
referrals	6736	6889	6626	6428	4.6%
clients assessed	8967	8596	8745	8345	6.9%

However, the demand for adult social care continues to increase:

9763

people were provided with care and support in 2013/14. This represents a **6.2%** increase in the number of people supported since 2010/11

17650

services were provided to adults in 2013/14. This represents a **5.8%** increase in the number of services provided since 2010/11

Since 2010/11, the number of people receiving homecare has fallen by 218 (**12%**), but the number of homecare hours provided has risen by 26,300 (**3%**)

108 people receive more than or equal to 20 hours of homecare per week. This represents a **170%** increase since 2010/11

1757

people received residential care services in 2013/14. This represents a **4.0%** increase in the number of people in residential care since 2010/11

Since 2011, the number of nursing care residential placements has increased from 506 to 636 (**26%**). Nursing care placements represent **40%** of the total number.

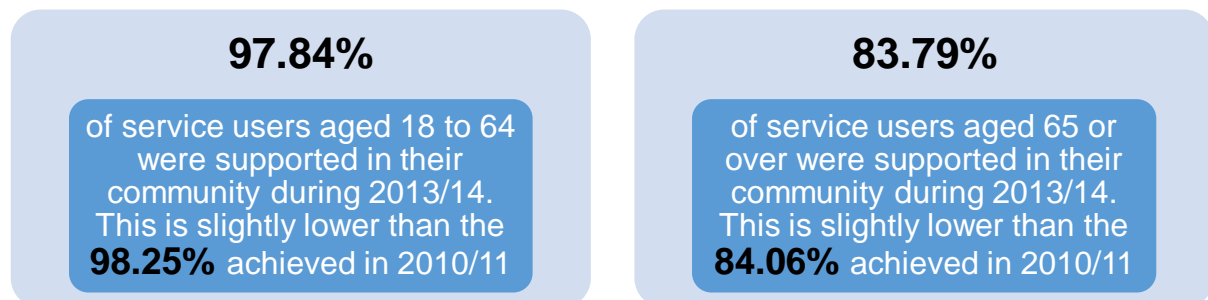
We believe that this is attributable to a combination of factors including: adults' care needs are rising and the complexity of care required is increasing; adults with long-term and multiple health conditions and disabilities are living longer and the number of adults aged 85 or over, the age group most likely to need care, is rising faster than the population as a whole.

In 2013/14, our budget for adult services was £71.562 million compared to £68.270 million in the previous year – an increase of **4.8%**. During 2013/14, we overspent by £0.561 million (**0.75%**) due to increased staffing costs and increased demand for home care; reablement and residential care services.

The new approach to supporting people and communities set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act will transform statutory social services, so that more people are enabled to find local solutions to meet their care and support needs, through better advice, information and sign-posting to community based resources. We will need to shift resources to deliver this change and improvement agenda whilst continuing to ensure that the most vulnerable within our community are supported.

As part of our approach to manage demand and provide better outcomes for service users, we implemented our revised operating model for adult social care in May 2013. The new model is designed to increase the emphasis on prevention and independence amongst people with developing social care needs through investment in a range of intermediate care and reablement services designed to assist people to live more independently in their own homes. This is usually better for them than moving into a care home.

In 2013/14, we have continued to support the majority of our service users to remain living at home:



We have continued to invest in services that help to delay or reduce the demand for services and keep adults living independently in their own homes.

These services include better information and advice, daily living equipment and home adaptations, telecare, and reablement and intermediate care services.

Despite our investment in these preventative services, we have seen a continued rise in the number of people supported in care homes from 1690 people in 2010/11 to 1757 people (**4%**) in 2013/14. This is largely attributable to the significant increase (**26%**) in placements for people with nursing needs. This is because more people are living and being supported in their own homes for longer and when they need accommodation their needs are far greater.

How are we making a difference through focussing on preventative services?

The number of telecare packages provided as part of a package of care continues to increase with **572** provided compared with 557 in 2012/13

The average number of days taken to deliver a disabled facility grant was **228 days** compared to 230 in 2012/13, which is better than the Wales average

The waiting list for aids and equipment assessments has reduced by **over 600** people in 2013/14

The number of home adaptations increased from 3457 in 2012/13 to 3901 (**20.7%**) in 2013/14

Daily living equipment provision increased by **12.8%** in 2013/14

In order to manage service user outcomes, service demands and budgets we need to regularly review care plans. However, care plan reviews are not completed as regularly as we would like. The percentage of service users who have had their care plan reviewed has fallen from 86.1% in 2010/11 to **79%** in 2013/14. Our performance is now worse than the Wales average and this is an area we will give priority to in the coming year.

Reablement and intermediate care

Our reablement and intermediate care service is delivered through our newly established short term intervention team. During 2013/14, the service has been rolled out Rhondda Cynon Taf wide and direct hospital discharge referrals have also been expanded to all acute and community hospitals.

The service aims to support older people, for up to six weeks, to regain or improve their ability to be as independent as possible. Work is needed to establish best practice in reablement for other particular groups, such as adults with dementia. Further evaluation will be required in 2014/15 to establish which services are most effective and how they are best implemented.

The number of people receiving reablement and intermediate care services has significantly increased since 2010/11 by **49.2%** (444 people). This has also meant that there has been a reduction in numbers of people receiving homecare (**12%**) and day care (**8%**) as many more older people are supported intensively and regain their

daily living skills and thereby avoid dependency on the more traditional forms of support in the community. In 2013/14:

79% of new service user referrals received reablement and intermediate services

73% of service users who received reablement services were able to regain their independence with no ongoing support from adult social care

91% of service users reported that accessing reablement helped them to remain living independently in their own home environment

Through our reablement and intermediate care service we work with our partners in Health to ensure that people are not kept in hospital longer than necessary. This is known as a delayed transfer of care. The number of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons reduced from 99 in 2012/13 to 84 (**15.2%**) in 2013/14. Our 2013/14 delayed transfers of care performance per 100,000 population compares favourably against other local authorities in Wales.

Direct payments

Residents assessed as being eligible for adult social care services are offered direct payments as a standard service. Direct payments enable people to purchase their own care and give them greater choice and control to organise their own services to meet their assessed needs and outcomes. However, the vast majority of people are still choosing to have their services arranged by the Council on their behalf, rather than arranging their own care with a direct payment.

The number of people in receipt of a direct payment increased to **373** at the end of March 2014 from 360 (**3.6%**) in the previous year (some **12.54%** of service users using community based services)

Our direct payments support contract with the DEWIS Centre for Independent Living has been reviewed to improve the range and quality of support, to encourage greater uptake of direct payments and to make improvements to the process. This has involved piloting a direct payments managed account scheme, in which the DEWIS Centre for Independent Living deals with all payments and financial returns on behalf of service – an evaluation will be undertaken in 2014/15. Our pilot programme to deliver vocational diplomas to personal assistants has continued this year and the first cohort of nine learners are due complete their diplomas in early 2014/15.

Carers

Did you know?

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is now offering all RCT Carers discounts of up to 60% off the cost of its Leisure MoreMax and Leisure MoreValue pay monthly (direct debit) plans and its pay-as-you-use prices. Pay as you go access to classes and swimming pools are at least half price.

More information is available from the Carers Support Project.

We know that unpaid carers – friends or relatives who support an older or disabled person without payment – make a significant contribution to the care and support of our residents helping them to stay independent and live in the community.

In 2013/14, the number of carers, who are known to adult social services, increased to **629** from 547 in 2012/13. 380 carers (**60.2%**) were offered an assessment in their own right in 2013/14 and 206 of them (**54%**) had an assessment of their needs, with 200 carers (98%) provided with a service. Our performance overall remains low when compared to other local authorities across Wales and we know this is an area where we need to make improvements.

In June 2013, the Cwm Taf Carers Measure Information and Consultation Strategy was launched. During the year, we have worked with the Health Board and Merthyr Tydfil Council to:

- identify over 130 carers champions in numerous settings within our three organisations, including: hospital wards, GP surgeries, social care teams, communities first offices and leisure centres
- appoint three carers coordinators to support the implementation of the strategy
- develop a carers awareness e-learning toolkit for staff to raise awareness of carers issues
- produce a carers Cwm Taf A-Z information booklet
- deliver regular carers' networking and training events.

Within Rhondda Cynon Taf, over 800 carers attended training events during the year.

Safeguarding adults

Safeguarding adults at risk from abuse is a priority for the Council.

We want to make sure that people with social care and health needs are protected from abuse, which may be financial, physical, sexual or emotional. We work with our partners, across the Cwm Taf area including Merthyr Tydfil Council, Cwm Taf University Health Board, South Wales Police, the voluntary sector and other community services to prevent abuse, stop it where it occurs and provide support.

With our partners, we have reviewed the terms of reference and refreshed the membership of the Cwm Taf Adult Safeguarding Board and improved our quality assurance processes to ensure that lessons learnt can inform service and practice improvements, which has further strengthened safeguarding arrangements from a multi-agency basis.

We have also continued to work in partnership with, Merthyr Tydfil Council, the Cwm TAF University Health Board and South Wales Police to develop a “Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub” (MASH) to co-ordinate our response to safeguarding concerns regarding vulnerable children and adults. The MASH is expected to be operational from early 2015.

In 2013/14, we have continued to see the year on year increase in the number of adult safeguarding referrals. This has been attributable to a combination of factors including: increasing professional awareness as a result of multi-agency awareness raising and training and the increasing public awareness of adult protection. The remodelling of adult social care in May 2013 leading to the establishment of an adults safeguarding service is also a contributory factor in raising the profile of the service with a particular increase in community referrals.

96.1% of adult safeguarding referrals managed risk appropriately with the remainder representing people who have capacity to say that they will manage their own situation. This represents an increase in our performance and is better than the 2013/14 all Wales average

We, along with all other social service departments across Wales, are currently trying to deal with a significant increase in referrals and specialist assessment activity arising from two recent Supreme Court judgements relating to the law on deprivation of liberty safeguards (DOLs). The judgements have introduced a new test for deprivation that has the effect of lowering the threshold for a DOLs assessment to the extent that it may now include all people who lack capacity and live in a public sector funded placement. Further evaluation will be required in 2014/15 to understand the impact on resources to meet an increased demand for assessment.

Our priorities for 2014/15

Priority 1: to safeguard adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect and are protected from avoidable harm

Our objective is to ensure that adults will be able to retain their independence and wellbeing and be kept safe from avoidable harm.

Our key critical improvement actions are to:

- Implement the Multi Agency Single Hub (MASH) across the Cwm Taf region, which co-ordinates referrals received where there are safeguard
- Strengthen quality assurance approaches to ensure that agreed standards are being achieved and the needs of the people we support are being met
- Ensure early identification of people with a caring role
- Continue to focus on the quality of the Council's residential dementia service to better support the dignity and wellbeing of service users and carers and protect people from harm

Priority 2: Promote wellbeing and independence, choice and control of adults who need support, within available resources, through prevention and greater integration of health and social services

Our objective is to give more people will be given greater choice to help achieve more for themselves and retain their independence and wellbeing whilst living in their own homes for longer.

Our key critical improvement actions are to:

- Utilise intermediate care grant funding to expand current intermediate care and reablement services to support more timely discharge from hospital and help more people live independent of social care services
- Increase the use of technology to support people to live independently and manage the risks associated with vulnerable people living at home
- Expand the opportunities for more people to access Direct Payments
- Increase the supply of specialist community based housing accommodation and support to enable people to remain in their own homes
- Make best use of our available resources to meet the needs of a growing population and future commissioning intent in line the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act
- Shift more of our resources to services that promote independence and support communities to find solutions for themselves
- Ensure people's needs are assessed in a timely manner and the care provided is appropriate

Children Services

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's services for children and young people aim to ensure their care, safety, health and wellbeing. We do this by working with partner agencies to ensure the assessed needs of children are met by supporting families to meet these needs, to protect children and young people at risk of harm and only when absolutely necessary seek to look after children outside of their family home.

Progress against our 2013/14 priorities

In last year's annual report we committed to a number of priorities for 2013/14 and said we would improve in a number of areas. Here is the progress we have made:

We said we would...

respond appropriately to the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act

We have...

- ensured that our service developments and priorities for improvement, for example, placing greater emphasis on early intervention and prevention and strengthening of safeguarding arrangements, as referenced within this report, will complement the new Act
- worked with Merthyr Tydfil, the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Councils to develop a regional adoption service that will meet the requirement in the new Act to implement an all Wales adoption service. The new service will be hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan and be operational by November 2014
- worked with Merthyr Tydfil to merge the youth offending services of both local authorities. The new joint service will be hosted by Rhondda Cynon Taf and the target date for the new service to become operational is July 2014
- acted as one of the pioneer sites for the Welsh Government 'When I am Ready' scheme which will allow care leavers to remain in their foster care placements under a type of 'supported lodgings' arrangement

We said we would...

develop services to support a new preventative strategy, including team around the family, rapid intervention response team and IFSS services

We have...

- drafted a new prevention strategy that focuses on how we will target our resources and work with partners to develop and enhance early help and prevention services for children and families
- rolled out our team around the family model across Rhondda Cynon Taf – supporting 133 families during 2013/14
- launched our new rapid intervention response team in early 2013/14 and supported 155 children and young people during the year
- extended Flying Start provision to 768 more children - there are now 2508 children entitled to access 'Flying Start' support across Rhondda Cynon Taf

We said we would...

continue to develop approaches and use of systems to establish more effective use of resources

We have...

- reviewed and challenged the commissioning mix of looked after children placements in line with our agreed commissioning intent
- delivered the key actions within our looked after children action plan, as referenced later within this report, to mitigate the pressures over the medium to longer term
- focused, as referenced above, on developing early intervention and prevention services, including the implementation rapid intervention response team
- explored alternative service models, including the reconfiguration of the existing after care team into 16 plus team

We said we would...

further implement quality assurance framework and creation of a practice development programme

We have...

not made as much progress as we had planned and recognise this has to be a priority in 2014/15

We said we would...

review services for disabled children

We have...

reviewed the service and made changes to the way we work, for example we:

- streamlined occupational therapy services, which has led to a reduction in the average number of calendar days to deliver a disabled facilities grant for children and young people from 389 days in 2012/13 to 295 days in 2013/14
- audited transition planning arrangements with a view to updating existing protocols with adult services in 2014/15

We said we would...

implement the new neglect guidance

We have...

implemented the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board endorsed neglect assessment tool and accompanying guidance in 2013/14. This also included delivery of multi-agency training to partners as part of the implementation.

We said we would...

contribute to the development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Assessment Hub (MASH)

We have...

continued to make good progress with the development of the MASH. The aim of MASH is to share information from all key agencies to risk assess safeguarding referrals on a multi-agency basis and decide upon the required response on a timely basis. The project is on-going and go-live is expected to be in late 2014/15

We said we would...

implement recommendations from child practice reviews conducted to date

We have...

implemented the recommendations due to date and will continue to monitor others through the agreed Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board procedure

Our performance in 2013/14

68% of our performance indicators hit target or were within 5% of the target

Whilst 2013/14 has been a challenging year for Children's Services, in terms of increased service demands, overall performance levels have continued to improve when compared to the previous year. **53%** of indicators are better or similar to last year's performance and **55%** are equal to or better than the 2013/14 Wales average.

In May 2013, we were subject to an inspection of children's services by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). We received our report in November 2013 and we were commended for the:

- sound base of good social work and case management on which to build further improvement of child focused work
- good track record in taking an innovative approach to strategic service and practice development and improvement
- development of a strategic approach to reduce the number of children it looks after and delivering more locally based placements

However, a number of risks / improvement areas were identified:

- consistency of thresholds and decision making
- high numbers of looked after children and the cost of placements
- long term staff vacancies, which could potentially compromise safe practice
- the absence an effective workforce strategy that could further de-stabilise the workforce and a need for improved training and development opportunities

Our Fostering Service was subject to an annual inspection in February 2014. The overall inspection report was very positive and highlighted that:

- Children receive good quality care with positive outcomes
- Children's educational needs are being met
- Children's physical and emotional well-being is being promoted

Although, the inspection highlighted a number of areas where practice had improved there was still areas where further improvements were needed, including the:

- inclusion of foster carers as part of the quality of care review
- timeliness of foster carer reviews

Neither inspection identified any areas that needed immediate urgent improvement. Nor were there any non-compliance notices issued on the service areas inspection.

Responding to need

Protecting the most vulnerable members of our community is a key priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf. This is why we have invested an additional **£10.3 million** into our frontline children's social care services over the past 4 years. This large-scale investment has helped to ensure that our most vulnerable children and young people are kept safe and are well supported.

As part of our investment, we have enhanced our existing social care services by recruiting additional new frontline social workers and support staff. We have also used this investment to redesign services to provide more support to families as early as possible to prevent them from getting into difficulties.

We have made this investment to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of children and young people who are requiring protection and who are coming into our care.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has around **1500** children in need, **471** children on child protection register and **650** children in care. In addition to this, more young people are also qualifying for support after leaving care, and the costs involved with looking after children with complex needs and disabilities are rising. These pressures are not unique to Rhondda Cynon Taf – they are being experienced by local authorities across the country.

Did you know

Demand for services has increased year on year since 2010/11

Referrals received have increased by **54.4%** from 2229 to 3441 in 2013/14

Children on the child protection register has increased by **38.9%** from 339 to 471 in 2013/14

Looked after children have increased by **17.3%** from 554 to 650 in 2013/14

Children in need have increased by **5.9%** from 1441 to 1526 in 2013/14

Assessment and care planning

During 2013/14, **93.7%** of referrals received (3225) progressed to initial assessment. **72.2%** were allocated to a social worker.

Despite an increase in demand, the timeliness of decision-making on information received continues to be very good with **all** referrals decided upon within 1 working day (higher than the 2013/14 Welsh average). This is crucial as early decision making helps to ensure that vulnerable children, young people and their families begin to receive the support they require as soon as possible.

However, there has been a decrease in the percentage of initial assessments completed within 7 working days falling from 51.7% in 2012/13 to 48.9% in 2013/14, which has to be viewed in context of the significant increase (**19.2%**) in the number of initial assessment completed - **2646** in 2013/14 compared to 2219 in 2012/13. Whilst not all initial assessments are completed within 7 days, the average length of time they are taking to be completed has improved from 24 days in 2012/13 to 23 days in 2013/14.

Our performance in relation to core assessments has also declined this year with **80.4%** being completed within timescale compared to 85.1% in timescale in 2012/13, although performance still remains above the 2012/13 Wales average. The timeliness of those core assessments not completed within timescale has improved this year to an average of **68 days** compared to 71 days in 2012/13.

Work to improve the timeliness and quality of assessments will continue in 2014/15 to ensure statutory guidance is complied with. This will include implementation of a single assessment to replace the existing separate initial and core assessments.

The number of young carers who had an assessment of their needs also reduced in 2013/14 to 37 (**59.6%**) from 65 (97%) in 2012/13, but performance is expected to improve in 2014/15.

With an increasing number of children and young people needing our help and protection in 2013/14, allocating all cases to a social worker represents a significant challenge for Rhondda Cynon Taf. Our performance remains below the Wales average - with just under **69%** of looked after children allocated to a social worker in 2013/14 and the rest to suitably experienced staff and just under **56%** of children in need cases allocated to a social worker.

These workforce pressures are mainly attributable to increases in demand and longstanding issues of high staff turnover and staff absences in some teams, as well proactive management of caseloads to reasonable levels. We have recognised the need to tackle this as a priority and have commenced a comprehensive workload and service review within Children's Services.

All children supported by social services have an individual care plan, which we have to regularly review in accordance with statutory timescales. During 2013/14:

98.9% of first placements began with a care plan in place and **100%** had a plan for permanence before their second review. Our performance is better than the Wales average

98.5% of reviews for looked after children took place within statutory timescales, which is also better than the Wales average

83.2% of reviews of child in need plans occurred within statutory timescales. Again our performance continues to be above the Wales average for this area of work

Early intervention and prevention services

Children's Services has developed a number of family-based services in response to the increased demand for support. The new services include the Rapid Intervention Response Service, which is linked into frontline services and is delivering targeted intervention to provide an urgent intense family focused service to both children and young people on the cusp of becoming looked after and children who are in the care system that need to be returned home quickly.

In 2013/14, the service has supported 155 children and young people and completed interventions involving **138** children and young people. These interventions have prevented children and young people from entering the care system, assisted in repatriating others back to their family home or facilitated moves to more appropriate and cost effective care settings.

The actual cost savings for the year where children and young people were returned home from care placements were just over **£147,000** - the whole year actual cost savings would be equivalent to approximately **£356,000**. The cost avoidance of the children not coming into care and having to be placed in a fostering or residential placement whilst interventions work was carried out was just under **£763,000**.

A number of our early intervention and prevention family support services are supported by the Families First Programme and these services are designed to help families who are in need of support and advice as problems begin to emerge. This includes the Team around Family (TAF) model which has now been rolled out across Rhondda Cynon Taf. TAF provides a framework for a common way of assessing children, young people and their families for all agencies and reduces duplication so that families are not subject to multiple assessments. The purpose is to prevent problems escalating and ensure all families receive appropriate support at the point of need. During 2013/14, **133** families were supported via TAF.

The Families First programme also now delivers a dedicated TAF Disability Service to support families, with children with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

(ADHD) and other behavioural issues, to address the multiple needs of their children and improve their family circumstances. The Service is made up of three specialist key workers who ensure follow up support is provided, especially in relation to post-diagnoses and behaviour management, act as a central point to any service provided and deliver services that are needs led and cover the following key areas:

- behaviour management
- family support and parenting
- communication
- social integration

Feedback from families who have accessed the service tells us that this is a highly valued service for parents.

Looking after children

Some children are taken into our care when it is not safe for them to remain at home. This may be because of a legal order made by a court (such as a care order or emergency protection order) or because someone with parental responsibility has asked us to do so. When this happens the Council becomes their corporate parent and takes over the responsibility to make sure that these children are looked after properly.

The number of looked after children has increased from 621 in March 2013 to **650 (4.7%)** in March 2014. Whilst an overall increase this does represent an on-going stabilisation of the looked after children population with the number of admissions into care reducing from a 20% increase during 2012/13 to **8%** during 2013/14.

Our performance with regards to children looked after by the Council is scrutinised quarterly by the Cabinet, Corporate Parenting Board and Scrutiny Committee and provides evidence of an improving service area. 2013/14 headline performance includes:

- The proportion of young people cared for via foster carers (**78.9%** of the looked after population) has continued to improve
- The proportion of young people in care placed with Council foster carers has increased to **46.6%** in 2013/14 from 44.8% in 2012/13
- The number of adoption placements increased slightly from 39 in 2012/13 to **40** in 2013/14
- The number of special guardianship order applications granted was **34** in 2013/14, exceeding our target of 30 for the year
- The proportion of looked after children placed outside of Rhondda Cynon Taf has from reduced to **26.9%** in 2013/14 from 29.8% in 2012/13 (10 young people)

- The average weekly cost of an external residential placement has reduced from £3140 in March 2013 to **£2917** in March 2014. This in part has been attributable to Rhondda Cynon Taf's membership of the Childrens Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) and use of the 4Cs framework agreements to commission additional exclusive residential capacity within the County Borough at a competitive and favourable price
- Looked after children services reported an under spend of **£0.351 million** in 2013/14. Despite this the total spend on looked after children services was slightly higher in 2013/14 at £24.7 million compared to £24.6 million in the previous year
- The percentage of our looked after children that changed care placements (**7%**) and / or schools (**13.5%**) during the year has reduced and is now below than the all Wales average
- The number of young people in residential placements has reduced from 56 (9.0% of the looked after population) in 2012/13 to **50 (7.7%** of the looked after population) in 2013/14. The majority of the placements (40 young people) are within external residential care settings outside the County Borough, and whilst this represents a significant reduction from a peak of 50 placements recorded at 30 September 2012, this remains an area for further improvement in 2014/15 through proactive targeted reviews of external placements.

During 2013/14, around **93%** of children in care attended a dental check up and **96%** were registered with a GP within 10 days of placement and **89%** have an up to date Health Assessment. Despite a slight deterioration in performance in 2013/14 compared to the previous year, our performance still exceeds the Wales average in this area.

Our Aftercare Team is responsible for young people aged 16 to 21 years who have been looked after. The Team offers support on a range of issues that affect young people, including housing, money, training, relationships and health and well-being. This includes ensuring that these young people have pathway plans in place for their future that they have contributed to and that they agree with. At the end of March 2014, **97%** of the young people had a pathway plan in place and **97%** had a personal advisor. This is good performance and is comparable with last year.

During 2013/14, the Team made contact with all of the young people in care who reached 19 years in year and:

- **92.1%** of them were in suitable accommodation (a reduction from 97% in 2012/13)
- **68.4%** of them were in education, training or employment (a reduction from 70.6% in 2012/13)

Despite this being slightly below the performance for last year, it still remains above the Wales average.

Safeguarding children

Safeguarding is **everyone's business** and anyone who comes into contact with children and families has a responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare.

As part of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board, we work together with our partners, including Merthyr Tydfil Council, Cwm Taf University Health Board, South Wales Police and the voluntary sector and other partner agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. During the year, the Board has continued to ensure improvement in multi-agency safeguarding, by providing staff with up-to-date guidance and access to training and by improving our quality assurance processes to ensure that lessons learnt can inform service and practice improvements.

2013/14 has seen significant increases (**29.75%**) in the number of children on the child protection register - with the **471** recorded on 31 March 2014 (108 more children than the previous year) being the highest it has ever been.

Despite an increase, our performance in this service area remains very positive, improving on last year's performances and bettering all Wales averages.

99.2% of child protection cases were allocated to a social worker during 2013/14 compared to 97.9% in 2012/13

96.7% of initial child protection conferences were held within 15 days in 2013/14 compared to 94.9% in 2012/13

95.43% of initial core group meetings due in the year were held within 10 days of the initial child protection conference compared to 90.94% in 2012/13

100% of children on the child protection register have a child protection plan in place

97.5% of child protection reviews were carried out within statutory timescales during the year compared to 96.6% in 2012/13

Our priorities for 2014/15

Priority 1: Enable children, young people and families to access appropriate support as early as possible, to help them maintain their quality of life, prevent problems escalating and reduce the demand for high cost, specialist support services

Our objective is to ensure that children, young people and their families will be supported to help themselves to achieve their full potential and thereby improve their overall wellbeing and quality of life

Our key critical improvement actions are to:

- Improve our capacity to prevent the need for statutory intervention by coordinating preventative and early intervention services for families in the greatest need more effectively
- Ensure that the current Team around the Family (TAF) model makes best use of the total resources available to assess the needs and to co-ordinate services for vulnerable families in need of our support.

Priority 2: Improve assessment, planning and decision making for those children who will require long term permanent care in accordance with legislative requirements

Our objective is to ensure that children and young people who are looked after will be supported to help themselves to achieve their full potential and thus improve their overall wellbeing and quality of life

Our key critical improvement actions are to:

- Develop and implement a new operating model for children's social care
- Achieve improved performance in assessment and care planning arrangements that is quality assured
- Ensure that business processes and information systems are fit for purpose, reducing bureaucracy and freeing up social work time for direct work with families
- Recruit, develop and retain a highly motivated and skilled workforce, which is responsive to the needs of children, young people, their families
- Implement Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for referrals received where there are safeguarding concerns in relation to Children and Young People
- Agree and implement a model for services for young people aged 16+ that ensures a consistency of approach that achieves the best possible outcomes for the young person involved
- Continue to provide sufficient, suitable and cost effective care placements to meet the needs of children looked after and care leavers

