



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

17TH NOVEMBER 2020

DRAFT DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, COUNCILLOR GERAINT HOPKINS AND COUNCILLOR CHRISTINA LEYSHON

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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 Despite the current circumstances this report provides a first for Cabinet consideration prior to its content being made available for public consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

2.1 Note the draft Rhondda Cynon Taf Director of Social Services Annual Report (Appendix 1) and scrutinise its contents.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To provide Cabinet with the Director of Social Service's report on Social Services Functions.

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 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 report will be subjected to scrutiny by Cabinet and relevant Scrutiny committees. Consultation on the draft report has been made difficult by the ongoing pandemic restrictions. However, the views of 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 have been considered in the process of service delivery and the report sets out how the Local Authority has engaged with people.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The Annual Director's report is required under Part 8 of The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

9. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 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

- 10.1 The Director of Social Services Annual Report sets out how the Council's Social Services performed last year, highlighting the direction and priorities we have set for the year ahead.

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>

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**Rhondda Cynon Taf
County Borough Council**

**Director of Social Services
Annual Report
2019-20**

2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 I am pleased to present my Annual Report for Rhondda Cynon Taf's Social Services Department for the 2019-20 financial year. The report explains our performance throughout the year and the progress made in further developing and improving services. It summarises developments against the priorities set out in my last annual report and, as part of our rolling programme of work, it highlights the priorities we have set for 2020-21.
- 1.2 Delivering high quality social care for adults and children is one of the Council's most important responsibilities. We have a skilled and experienced workforce committed to providing services to meet the needs of our residents, some of whom find themselves in difficult circumstances.
- 1.3 Our aim is to keep people safe and improve their well-being. We help people to live safely and independently in their own home for as long as possible and we help children and young people to get the best possible start in life to be able to fulfil their potential.
- 1.4 My report is different this year in view of the outbreak of Covid-19 and the extensive action taken to respond to the crisis. The Council has put in place a range of financial and practical support to people, businesses, and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. In Social Services, we have focused our effort on minimising the impact on the most vulnerable, working hard to build community resilience by recruiting local volunteers, and engaging with our third sector organisations who are at the front line.

Our priorities and where we are heading

- 1.5 A significant part of our work is governed by law. It includes the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, both of which focus on wellbeing, prevention, partnership, and collaboration between organisations and integration, and involving people. Working with other organisations, we have also assessed the needs of the population.
- 1.6 We are committed to meeting the care and support needs of all those who need our help, and the wider community. We have an emphasis on helping:
 - People with learning disabilities
 - Older people with complex needs and long-term conditions, including dementia
 - Carers, including young carers
 - Families and individual members of families
 - Children with complex needs due to disability and illness
 - People with physical impairment and / or sensory impairments
 - People who have experienced adverse childhood experiences
- 1.7 We know the following are important to people:
 - Helping to meet people's needs and doing what matters to them
 - Preventing problems from happening in the first place or preventing problems from escalating and getting worse
 - Providing people with good quality information, advice and assistance
 - Helping people to access services and support and to connect with their community and other people
 - Seamless services i.e. different organisations working together as one

- 1.8 Our goal is to minimise the need for intervention and to maximise people's independence to prevent problems in the first place or to stop them from getting worse. We do this by working with other organisations and by developing more integrated services. Ensuring more young people with complex disabilities can live in their own homes is a priority, as is creating opportunities for them to engage in education, training, culture, and the arts, thus helping them to grow in independence. Overall, the Council aims to help our residents to be active and healthy, benefitting from our leisure facilities, theatres, libraries and heritage sites, parks, and open spaces.
- 1.9 Ensuring children have the best start in life and opportunities to fulfil their potential is particularly important to us, particularly for children looked after. Our values are:
- All children have a right to a family life.
 - Where possible, this should be within the child's birth family.
 - Where it is not possible for children to live with their birth parents, alternatives within their wider birth family or family friends should be explored.
 - Where children need to be looked after by the local authority, the aim should be for them to be placed with a safe, stable and loving alternative family.
 - Where possible children will be placed with their siblings
 - When decisions are made about the permanent placement of children the child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language will be respected.
 - Permanence and stability ought to give a sense of belonging.
 - Permanence and stability relate to the continuity of relationships as well as the continuity of where the child lives.

What is in this report?

- 1.10 This report summarises our performance in 2019-20. It explains our performance in the day-to-day delivery of services and describes what we have done against the priorities for action we set out in last year's report. We are accountable to the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf and this report helps us to fulfil this by being open about what we are doing and why, and what we have achieved.
- 1.11 **Part 2** summarises the performance of our Adult Services and Children's Services. **Part 3** explains how people are shaping our services and what we do.
- 1.12 **Part 4** reports on action we have taken to improve people's well-being. It explains how we work with people to help them achieve the outcomes they want and what we have done to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and well-being. This part of the report also says what we have done to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect and harm, and to help people develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.
- 1.13 **Part 5** explains how we operate as a department including our workforce, our financial resources and how we plan, and our partnership working with other organisations. **Part 6** provides sources of information for further reading if required.

2. Summary of performance

- 2.1 As the Director of Children and Community Services I am pleased to report that our dedicated and committed workforce have continued to deliver high quality and well-regarded services to people needing care and support. We have done this in partnership, working with many local, regional, and national organisations to help people to improve their wellbeing and to live safely and as independently as possible.
- 2.2 The first eleven months of the year saw us deliver a significant amount of services. At the same time, we also made significant progress on the priorities we set out in my previous annual report. Both are featured later in this report. The highlights are:
- Developing new accommodations models for adults
 - Continued development of Community Hubs
 - A 24-hour mobile response service to support people in their own homes by responding to non-medical emergencies.
 - A new Quality Assurance Framework in Children Services
 - Improving our Residential care options for children and young people
 - Enhanced recruitment arrangements for foster carers
- 2.3 **We have been under no illusion about the impact of Covid-19 on children, families and adults who rely on a range of services for support. I must pay tribute to our staff for their incredible response to the crisis. They have shown incredible commitment, resilience & compassion & have worked tirelessly throughout what has been a very difficult & challenging period of time to ensure that essential support has continued to reach the most vulnerable people across the County Borough. Through everyone's efforts we have been maintaining our key support services. We have worked with providers to sustain our care home and domiciliary care services and have been able to coordinate the supply of protective equipment to staff working for the council and our external care providers.**
- 2.4 We established Resilience Hubs to support those who were self-isolating, those who were over 70 years of age, had a pre-existing health conditions, were pregnant or displaying symptoms of the virus. The hubs combined Council Staff, Community Resilience Volunteers, alongside the third sector, to support between 10,000 and 15,000 vulnerable people who were advised to self-isolate
- 2.5 Covid-19 has also had a significant impact on our statutory care services. In adult social care our services and our providers are supporting over 4,000 vulnerable people in their homes and in care settings every day. As the outbreak has progressed, services have been disrupted and inevitably, this will impact on the sort of priorities we will need to focus on for the next 12 months. Maintaining essential services with our partners and providers is vital but we will also continue to look to the future to continually develop our workforce, our services and our community resilience.
- 2.6 Our main priorities during this crisis have been to
- Keep our most vulnerable people, with care and support needs, safe and well in the community.
 - Develop a community service that can respond quickly to help people who may be isolated and in need of support, such as the new hubs.
- 2.7 What this crisis means however, is that we are continually refocussing our priorities. We will need to continue to respond effectively to the immediate and ongoing impacts and consequences of this pandemic. Much of our response will be in line with every other local authority but where possible we will also seek to tailor our response to the specific needs of

our residents. We want to do all we possibly can to continue to support people at their time of need.

3. How are people shaping our services?

- 3.1 During the year we have reached out to people who use our services and to the public more widely to understand their experiences and to get their input on our ideas for the future. We continue to use a range of approaches including information and awareness raising, social media, surveys, meetings with people who use services and feedback questionnaires.
- 3.2 We welcome feedback whether positive or negative. We also welcome feedback from other organisations with whom we engage regularly in the course of our work and the regulatory bodies.

Inspection

- 3.3 In its annual letter CIW summarises the strengths and areas for improvement in line with principles of 2014 Act. The strengths and priorities for improvement are identified by the Care Inspectorate Wales under the four underpinning principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. The four themes are:

- Well-being
- People – Voice and choice
- Partnerships and integration (co-production)
- Prevention and early intervention

- 3.4 **Well-being:** CIW highlight the strong corporate support for social services in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and referenced plans to change the delivery model for supporting disabled children prior to their inspection of this service. These included greater support for siblings of disabled children and increased assessment of parent carers. CIW expressed confidence in practitioners and managers who were promoting the legal rights of parents to assessment of their needs for support. However, they also found assessments of disabled children and care leavers could be improved by focussing more on the strengths of the child, and their family where appropriate, and the wishes and feelings of the child. Young care leavers valued their personal advisors; but there were resource pressures on this service.

The local authority has begun to introduce innovative practice in relation to support for carers of adults in response to our inspection of services for older adults in March 2019. In March 2020, we could see proactive efforts to support those caring for people in the community through 'carers' conversations' which can form the basis of assessments for support. At the time of our visit, senior managers were about to evaluate the impact of the new approach; our findings were positive.

The local authority continues to review care packages for adults where two care workers are delivering domiciliary care. The local authority has achieved considerable success in identifying additional equipment or techniques to allow a single care worker to deliver the same level of care. This has resulted in promoting people's independence as well as freeing up capacity to care for other people, where demand is high. Senior managers continue to review their care home provision and plan to further reduce capacity while establishing more extra care facilities.

The local authority has tried to meet demand for care placements for children with very complex needs and has registered a care home for emergency placements. The local authority is endeavouring to create a therapeutic approach within its placements and has trained staff accordingly. The therapeutic team, comprising psychologists and family therapists, supports children receiving early intervention and prevention services as well as care experienced children. The local authority has also been innovative in employing four practitioners to undertake life story work using digital technology and a proactive model of work.

As with all local authorities, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to reduce the number of children in care where safe to do so. A recent rise was due to an increase in babies being made subject to Care Orders and senior managers were ensuring vulnerable women were receiving the support they need in pregnancy.

People

Parents have found it difficult to employ personal assistants for their disabled children. Senior managers in children's and adult services are looking to review how direct payments are promoted and used across Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. The local authority has improved its provision of advocacy services for older people since our inspection last year. We identified take-up of advocacy services for disabled children as an area for improvement and, generally, more could be done to ensure the voice of the child is central to decision making.

The local authority has consulted people about the development of its services. Staff have undertaken structured engagement with carers to understand their views about the carers' assessment format and process. This has influenced a new approach. Managers have also undertaken an extensive staff consultation exercise this year about remodelling teams to support disabled children.

CIW found positive and committed staff when they visited children's services this year. Recruitment remains a challenge and recent improvements to salaries and other financial benefits for some staff has led to a more comprehensive review across the wider workforce.

Prevention

During its inspection of children's services, CIW noted an improved initial response to enquiries and referrals at the 'front door'.

The Children with Additional Needs Service (CANS) delivered support focused on family strengths and personal outcomes for disabled children and their families. A planned review of commissioned services should ensure provision meets the needs of families and will map future demand and help shape the market. The 'sitting' service was clearly valued and senior managers were planning to develop alternative approaches to the more traditional model of respite care/short breaks.

Partnerships

The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) is well established and evidences good joint working arrangements. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is a strong and committed partner to the regional safeguarding board and other regional fora. The local authority entered into new regional working arrangements in April 2019 due to re-alignment of health board boundaries. There was considerable work to establish new operational and strategic partnerships across Bridgend County Borough Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB). Senior managers in the local authority wished to use the opportunity to strengthen and build on joint working arrangements with the health board.

CIW also highlighted the need for the local authority and health board to reach greater resolution on eligibility for continuing care arrangements for children with complex needs. This is an outstanding challenge that results in intra-agency discussions, which can be time consuming. It is important to note, however, that we did not see this impact on provision of services for children.

The local authority is establishing an emotional well-being service with CTMUHB, which is a positive example of joined up working that is designed to meet the needs of children in the region.

An improved offer to care leavers may be achieved by a more pro-active approach from the local authority's housing department.

- 3.5 In March 2019, our service was inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales, working with the Healthcare Inspection Wales as part of a national review of how well local authorities and health boards work together to promote independence and prevent escalating needs for older adults. It looked at the experiences of older adults as they use, and move through, social care services until the time they may need to enter a care home. The report was published in June 2019¹. Overall, the findings of the inspection were positive. Many strengths were identified. Where areas for improvement were required, and these are welcomed as opportunities to get even better at what we do, many were consistent with what we had identified in the self-evaluation assessment we had undertaken towards the end of the previous financial year.
- 3.6 As well as the usual identification of service priorities presented throughout this document the specific action plans will be implemented in response to the areas on improvement identified during inspections. These will be monitored through the formal scrutiny processes.

Engagement

- 3.7 During the year, we engaged with people in many ways: For example:
- Engagement with people with learning disabilities and their families in July 2019 for the development of a housing and accommodation strategy, and events to showcase the new Penllew Court supported housing scheme in Aberdare.
 - Our "Voices for Care" project is a joint project with Voices from Care Cymru. We have developed a framework which supports and consults with care experienced young people on their educational experiences. It also provides them with the opportunity to influence national policy, practice, and guidance. In 2019-20, we engaged with 32 care experienced young people.
 - Service user event as part of a review of our Direct Payments to help us explore the barriers for people taking up the scheme. The feedback is informing a review of our policy and support service contract
 - Our Council-wide County Youth Forum and local fora across the area are managed by our Youth Engagement and Participation Service. It has led to several projects during the year including one which seeks to prevent and reduce the number of young people affected by homelessness. There was also a roll out in July 2019 of the "Young People's Vote which was linked to "Make Your Mark". The top three themes for action were raising awareness and supporting positive mental health, tackling youth homelessness, and exploring the fear of knife crime.
 - Our Youth Forum has been active in Welsh Government consultations including the development of a Welsh Parliament and the review of Extending Entitlements. The Forum has identified mental health and anti-bullying as priorities to be addressed, and sub-groups have been established.

- Service users contributed to a discussion on advocacy we agreed the circulation of information and publicity to clarify and the development of a champion network across all teams
- We commissioned an extensive, independent, consultation with residential and day service staff, care home residents and their families and day centre users on the future delivery model.
- We worked with carers to develop a “blueprint” for what a comprehensive carers service should look like. By doing this, we identified their preferences and their concerns. The feedback *informed* a revised approach to carer assessment and the updated public information
- We undertook a public consultation exercise on the proposed budget for 2020-21 engaging with people in a variety of ways

3.8 Reviewing our services to ensure they meet people’s needs and provide value for money is a core feature of the way we work. We analyse the findings of reviews, evaluations, the results of surveys, the views expressed in consultations and people’s comments when they contact us with complaints or to compliment us.

What do people think of our services?

- 3.9 We use a variety of surveys to measure the quality of our services and to determine what outcomes we achieve for people to meet their care and support needs. Periodically, our services are inspected by the Regulator, the Care Inspectorate Wales.
- 3.10 During the year, the Support @ Home Service (Home Care, Intermediate Care and Rehabilitation Service) and Supported Living, was inspected during the year by the regulator, the Care Inspectorate Wales. This was the first inspection since the service was registered under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. It is pleasing to know no areas of non-compliance were identified, and the service met all legal requirements. The Inspectorate made no recommendations for improvement.
- 3.11 The inspection report confirms people seem happy with the support they receive from the service, which is committed to achieving positive outcomes, and people’s rights and choices are promoted. People were treated as individuals, encouraged to be confident and independent, and supported with their goals and ambitions. Interactions between people and staff are warm and positive, and staff are familiar with the needs and likes of the individuals. Staff are well trained and feel valued; staff turnover is low. The service provides positive person-centred support.
- 3.12 The inspection concluded that governance, auditing and robust quality assurance arrangements are in place to ensure the service runs smoothly and delivers good quality care. It stated people benefit from a service which is well led and has an ongoing commitment to reflection and improvement.
- 3.13 We use the results of feedback to further improve the services we deliver. Both our Adults Services and Children’s Services teams undertake detailed annual self-assessment exercises. These assessments ensure we monitor what we are achieving and where we can improve. The assessments inform priorities for the following year.
- 3.14 The table below provides the results of this year’s survey for Adult Services and the two previous surveys in 2016-17 and 2017-18. The survey was based on a sample of adults aged 18 and over who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn. It measures things which people tell us are important to them.

**Table 1: Key service quality measures, Adult Services,
RCT, 2016-17 to 2019-20**

(%)

	Statement	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Change this year/last
1	I live in a home that supports my wellbeing	87	89	93	92	
2	I can do the things that are important to me	49	50	77	85	
3	I feel a part of my community	52	52	69	77	
4	I am happy with support from my family, friends, neighbours	84	88	97	96	
5	I feel safe	76	79	94	95	
6	I know who to contact about my care and support	79	79	83	87	
7	I have received the right information or advice when I needed it	79	75	91	92	
8	I have been actively involved in discussions about how my care and support was provided	73	78	90	88	
9	I was able to communicate in my preferred language	93	94	95	95	
10	I was treated with dignity and respect	92	91	97	99	
11	I am happy with the care and support I have received	84	84	97	97	
12	It was my choice to live in a residential care home	67	60	56	57	

Source: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Note: Percentages based on adults who answered each question with "Yes" or "Sometimes". Figures have been rounded.

- 3.15 The survey results show an improvement on seven of the twelve measures, no change on two and a reduction on three. All the reductions were between 1-2 percentage points.
- 3.16 Table 2 provides the results of this year's survey and the three previous surveys for Children's Services. The survey was based on children who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn.

**Table 2: Key service quality measures, Children's Services,
RCT, 2016-17 to 2019-20**

(%)

	Statement	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Change this year/last
1	I live in a home where I am happy	94	99	98	97	
2	I am happy with the people I live with	96	99	99	97	
3	I can do the things I like to do	97	100	96	96	
4	I feel I belong in the area where I live	92	92	92	92	

5	I am happy with my family, friends, and neighbours	97	97	98	95	
6	I feel safe	97	99	96	97	
7	I know who to speak to about my care and support	97	94	94	95	
8	I have had the right information or advice when I needed it	94	92	89	90	
9	My views about my care and support have been listened to	96	98	93	92	
10	I have been able to use my everyday language	98	99	98	98	
11	I was treated with respect	98	98	98	98	
12	It am happy with the care and support I have had	96	97	96	97	
13	I have had advice, help and support that will prepare me for adulthood (16 and 17-year olds only)	--	86	90	77	

Source: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Note: Percentages based on children who answered each question with "Yes" or "Sometimes". Figures have been rounded.

- 3.17 Of the thirteen service quality measures, performance was better this year on four, the same as last year on four, and less than last year on five. With one exception, the differences were between 1-3 percentage points.
- 3.18 More than four out of every five parents (84%) said they had been actively involved in all decisions about how their child's/children's care and support was provided
- 3.19 Over and above the national outcome measures, some of our individual service areas also have mechanisms for collecting feedback. For example, of the 300 people who responded after receiving help from our Support@Home (Intermediate Care and Reablement) service:
- 92% said they had discussed and agreed targets, goals and outcomes before starting to receive the service.
 - 91% rated the service as "very good" or "excellent".
 - 94% said they had achieved their goals.
 - 95% said they had been able to maintain or improve their independence.

Complaints and compliments

- 3.20 Where, occasionally we have not been able to meet people's expectations, we use the feedback to learn what we can do better and where necessary we make changes to do this. The following table summarises the number of complaints and compliments received this year and the four previous years.

Table 3: Number of complaints and compliments received, Adult Services and Children's Services, 2015-16 to 2019-20

		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Adult Services	No. of complaints received	68	82	51	56	54

	No. of compliments received	156	102	102	124	93
Children's Services	No. of complaints received	89	106	114	32	59
	No. of compliments received	86	62	41	39	59
Total	No. of complaints received	157	188	165	88	113
	No. of compliments received	242	164	143	163	152

Source: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

- 3.21 Overall, the number of complaints was higher than the previous year. A very small reduction in complaints to Adult Services was offset by an increase in the number to Children's Services. While Children's Services received more complaints this year, it also received considerably more compliments.
- 3.22 Complaints are used to improve our services. By way of an example, when issues raised around case transfers and delays in accepting responsibility for cases, a team learning event was held. This explored the issues and as a result, it was agreed to review policy and to consider a protocol with other local authorities on expectations when case transfers occur.

Welsh language

- 3.23 According to the 2011 Census, nearly 28,000 people in Rhondda Cynon Taf speak Welsh, which is slightly more than 1 in 10 of the population (12.3%). The Welsh Language Standards apply to all local authorities. This means everyone in Wales can expect the same approach to the Welsh Language in services, ensuring it is treated the same as the English language with all Councils offering people the opportunity to receive services from us, as well as from those funded by us, in Welsh.
- 3.24 Our approach is shaped by the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and the Welsh Government's "Follow-on Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health and Social Services" but also by our commitment to delivering services which meet people's needs. In line with our commitment to continuous improvement, we said in 2019-20 we would:
- Ensure compliance on Welsh language preference at review when the core data is checked and ensure the Welsh Community Care Information System is updated
 - Work with external providers via the contract terms and conditions to ensure Welsh language requirements are met
- 3.25 The Council's Recruitment and Selection Procedure and Policy has been updated to include a language skills assessment for all new vacancies. Welsh Language Level 1 Skills is an essential criterion on all job descriptions where a Level 2-5 is not required. Introductory lessons are provided to new staff who do not have Level 1 skills upon appointment. This increases basic knowledge and further encourages an Active Offer in our services. We ensure an active offer at the first point of contact, asking clients whether they wish to receive a Welsh Language service as part of the assessment / review process and then recording accordingly on their electronic file. Where capacity allows, a Welsh speaking officer is then allocated the caseload.

- 3.26 Each year, the Council runs four campaigns to increase the use of Welsh in the workplace and visibility within our communities. It also employs an internal tutor to ensure we have a flexible, service provision to help our staff to learn.
- 3.27 The Council's tender and contract processes have all been updated to include a list of all the applicable Welsh Language Standards required of any commissioned service. This ensures that the Welsh Language is an integral part of commissioning. Monitoring officers ensure compliance as part of our monitoring of independently run care homes.

What are our priorities for next year?

- Develop and fully implement, across all Service Areas, a systematic and collaborative process for capturing the views of service users and their families about the impact of our support and services and inform service development and change
- Continue to promote engagement with children and young people and partner agencies to ensure coproduction and that the voice of the child is heard including developing an action plan to meet the needs of young people identified within the Your voice Survey

4. Promoting and improving the wellbeing of people we help

- 4.1 Working with individuals who need care and support to improve their wellbeing is at the very heart of our work. We cannot do this alone. We work with many other organisations to help vulnerable children, young people, adults, and families.
- 4.2 In discharging our statutory duties and in delivering an extensive range of other services to meet people's needs, we continue to face immense challenges from increasing demands and complexity of needs, and financial pressures. And just before the end of the period covered by this report and as mentioned earlier, we experienced the considerable impact from the outbreak of Covid-19.
- 4.3 Our work is framed by action set out in the Cwm Taf Regional Plan 2018-23², which identifies what we need to do to meet the needs of our population. This part of the report summarises the considerable action we took during the year to deliver services and support and to develop new and improve ways of helping meet people's needs. It also includes the priorities we have set for 2020-21. Reviews undertaken by other organisations also informed what we do.

(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?

- 4.4 We said we would:
- Strengthen the participation of children and young people in service delivery by continuing to promote engagement specifically with children looked after and partner agencies to ensure coproduction and the voice of the children and young people are heard.
 - Improve local access to information advice and assistance provision for children, young people and families to promote their participation and engagement.
 - Strengthen systems for recognising and supporting the needs of carers. Increase the number of carers assessments completed and offers accepted of support when needed.
 - Remodel the delivery of Early Years as a result of the Regional Early Years Co-construction Project.
 - Continue to work to reduce the need for statutory services by ensuring that children and families have coordinated integrated family support.
 - Manage the Children and Communities Grant to commission effective integrated early intervention and prevention services.
 - Further develop integrated service delivery to improve early intervention and prevention support informed by Vulnerability Profiling data.
 - Develop and fully implement, across all service areas, a systematic and collaborative process for capturing the views of service users and their families about the impact of our support and services.
 - Continue to embed strengths-based and outcome-focused assessment, support planning and review across Adult Services

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

4.5 In June 2019, Care Inspectorate Wales published their report into our work and that of the Cwm Taf University Health Board. Our strengths on the theme of well-being are as follows:

- People can be reassured the local authority recognises adults are the best people to judge their own wellbeing.
- The local authority can demonstrate a good understanding of its own strengths and areas for improvement through a developing approach to quality assurance and learning across service areas.
- Professional disciplines work effectively together to support wellbeing. Prompt professional responses are evident at times when people experience acute ill health or crisis, this is integral to help secure independence for people.

4.6 Our priorities for improvement were identified as:

- To consistently recognise carers' roles and to ensure the voice of the carer is heard; with improved support for carers tailored to enable them to achieve their own wellbeing outcomes.
- Ensure teams working with people with longer term needs satisfactorily manage the volume of work and ensure people's needs are appropriately reviewed.

4.7 We recognise the pressure some of our staff are experiencing managing the volume and increasing complexity of caseloads. This is an ongoing challenge particularly where we have seen significant staff turnover. This is covered in Section 5. We have started to remodel our Care and Support service and the Complex Learning Disability Team to create a new expanded Learning Disability Care and Support Team in addition to the existing Care and Support Teams.

Supporting carers

4.8 According to the 2011 Census data, nearly 30,000 people in our area were providing care to a family member, friend, or neighbour. Our figure is slightly higher than the England and Wales average of 10%. We know that people do not always recognise themselves as being a carer and therefore, the true level of informal caring is probably higher.

4.9 We identified strengthening the way we recognise and support the needs of carers as one of our priorities for the year. This included increasing the number of carers assessments completed and accepted offers of support

4.10 We made a significant contribution to the development of a regional strategy for carers. The key elements of the Cwm Taf Carers Strategy³ are:

- (i) Identifying Carers of all ages and recognising their contributions
- (ii) Providing up to date, relevant and timely information, advice & assistance to Carers of all ages.
- (iii) Providing support, services, and training to meet the needs of Carers of all ages.
- (iv) Giving Carers of all ages a voice, with more choice & control over their lives.

- (v) Working together to make the most of our resources for the benefit of Carers of all ages

4.11 In implementing the strategy, we were also required to implement three national priorities for 2019-20 set by the Welsh Government. These were:

- (i) Supporting life alongside caring: all Carers must have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain their capacity to care, and to have a life beyond caring.
- (ii) Identifying and recognising carers; fundamental to the success of delivering improved outcomes is the need to improve recognition of their role and to ensure they can access the necessary support.
- (iii) Providing information, advice, and assistance to carers

4.12 The Welsh Government also expected identifying and recognising carers and providing information, advice, and assistance to be key areas of action.

4.13 We have worked with partners to implement a scheme which supports GP practices to develop their awareness of carers and ways of working to support them. We are implementing an accreditation scheme with Agored Cymru in GP practices.

4.14 Discharge from hospital was also identified as an area for improvement. There is a need to improve the information, advice and assistance provided to all carers following discharge from hospital of someone who is cared for. This includes involving carers in developing discharge plans.

4.15 On a regional basis, we have worked with our partners to pilot a Carers Hospital Discharge Project. This offers advice and information to carers, be they staff, patients or visitors, to support them in their caring role. During the year, 387 new carers were identified regionally.

4.16 We have developed a “blueprint” for a comprehensive carers service. Working with carers we identified their preferences and how to ensure that their needs are prioritised, making sure we work across the council to coordinate our offer.

4.17 Our Carers Support project remains the key source of support and information. We have appointed a new Service Manager to strengthen our leadership capacity on helping carers and to implement our “blueprint”, achieving a more coordinated approach across the Council.

4.18 We have engaged with carers and staff to get a better understanding of the barriers to take up of carer assessments are. As a result, since December 2019, we have been piloting a new approach to carer assessment. This has been evaluated and has informed our plans for 2020-21. The full evaluation could not be completed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. However, there are early indications the Carer Conversation pilot has been an improvement on the previous process. Feedback from council staff who carry out assessments with carers has been positive. Carers gave positive feedback on their experience of the assessment to the inspectors from the Care Inspectorate Wales.

4.19 During the year, 331 assessments of need for support for adult carers were undertaken during the year. This is an increase on the 246 undertaken the previous year. Eighty led to a support plan

4.20 Requests can be made for care and support plans & support plans for adult carers to be reviewed before the agreed timescales for review. During the year, 1243 requests for early

review of care & support plans & support for adult carers were made of which 1207 were undertaken. This compares to the 2018/19 figures of 1180 and 1170 respectively.

- 4.21 Helping young carers is also one of our priorities. During the year our team undertook 87 assessments of need for support, which is higher than the 71 undertaken the previous year. Of these, 62 (71%) resulted in the development of a support plan. This compared with 61% in 2018-19.
- 4.22 During the year 4851 care and support plans and support plans for children & young carers were reviewed during the year. Of these, 4157 plans were reviewed within agreed timescales.
- 4.23 The total number of requests for repeat assessment of need for care and support and need for support made by a child, young carer or person with parental responsibility during the year was 20 (45 in 2018-19). All these requests for repeat assessment, resulted in an assessment being undertaken and of these 4 (20%) led to a care and support plan or support plan.
- 4.24 The Cwm Taf Carer's Strategy ended in March 2019 when Bridgend became part of the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, joining Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil in the region. A new regional Statement of Intent for Carers was produced. At the time of writing this report, our regional steering group was awaiting guidance from the Welsh Government on the development of a new regional strategy or a regional action plan to implement the Welsh Government's proposals.
- 4.25 Our development in response to the three Welsh Government priorities for 2019-20 include:
- 125 training sessions, workshops and events to adult carers provided by our Carers Support Project, with more than 2,000 attendances from carers. Nearly 1,800 people have registered their interest with the project.
 - We commissioned a sitting service to allow carers a break from their caring role and an opportunity to pursue their own interests. In 2019-20, this helped 192 carers, 127 for adults & 65 for children.
 - A Carers Hub is being developed in Pontypridd. This creates a dedicated centre for carers of all ages, with publicity to encourage increased self-identification and recognition. The hub will become home to our Carers Support Project and our young carer support service
 - Significant effort put into improving the transition from young carer to young adult carer by providing support for carers aged 16-17, and improving links between support services.
 - One-to-one support and regular group sessions for young carers aged 5-18, including overnight residential, commissioned from Action for Children.
 - Our Carer Conversation pilot project, which is designed to removing barriers to carer assessments to improve uptake. Initial feedback is very encouraging.
 - A dedicated young carer assessor based in our children's services first contact team. This has streamlined the identification of young carers and has resulted in more referrals.
 - An open referral for young adult carers. Some are also identified by peers and through various other council support services. Upon entry, they have a one-to-one conversation with a dedicated support worker and receive a support plan based on their needs.

4.26 Our Carers Support Project provides a newsletter three times a year for young carers, young adult carers and parent carers. We were pleased the inspection by the Care Inspectorate Wales found evidence of excellent carer information and advice and the first point of contact, as well as throughout the assessment process. During the coronavirus lockdown, the carer's project has issued a newsletter to 2,400 carers in the area and information through social media. The carer's telephone counselling services has also been supplemented by well-being calls and issued activity packs etc.

Information, Advice and Assistance Services

4.27 Information on our Carer's Support project and our Carer Conversation pilot project earlier in this section demonstrates how we have reached out to people with information, advice, and assistance. Later in this section, we report how our Resilient Families Service has reached out in communities, and developments by our Youth Participation and Engagement Service.

4.28 In 2019-20, we provided 6957 adults with information, advice and assistance. This is an increase of 2% over the 6,800 adults helped in 2018-19.

4.29 During the year, 2299 assessments of care and support needs were undertaken for adults. This compares with 2,990 in 2018-19, which represents a 23% decrease. It follows a 10 per cent increase seen between 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Table 4: Key local performance indicator - Care and Support Plans, RCT, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
Percentage of people assessed by adult social care in receipt of a care and support plan	72.7%	70.47%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

4.30 Of the assessments made, 7 out of every ten (70.47%) led to a care and support plan being prepared. This is a small improvement on the figure of 72.7% the previous year. Our target for the year was 72.7%. We aim for the lower figure as this means we are getting better in helping people to find different solutions to a formal care and support plan.

4.31 During the year a total of 3787 care and support plans were reviewed, which was 11% lower than the 4,286 completed the previous year (2018-19), which in turn was higher than 4,013 in 2017-18. Nearly 1203 of the reviews (32%) were completed within an agreed timescale, which is a decrease on the 49.6% completed in 2018-19 and 46.5% in 2017-18.

A programme for remodelling of Care and Support was agreed by management with staff and Trade Unions, but progress has been delayed due to COVID-19 Pandemic and will now be completed in 2020/21.

Table 5: Key national performance indicator - Information, Advice and Assistance Service, RCT, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
Percentage of adults who have received advice and assistance from the IAA Service and have not contacted the service for 6 months (Measure 23)	80.0%	91.62%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

- 4.32 As the above table shows, more than 9 out of every ten adults (91.62%) who received information, advice and assistance from our service did not contact us in the 6 months after. We exceeded our target of 80% for this year by a fair margin and improved on the 2018-19 figure of 74.64%.
- 4.33 Our Children's Services provided information, advice or assistance to 5261 children and families. This compares with 5,670 in 2018-19, which represents a decrease of 7 %. A total of 6801 assessments were undertaken this year, down from 7,170 the previous year and 6,488 in 2017-18.

Table 6: Key national performance indicator - Information, Advice and Assistance Service, RCT, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
Percentage of assessments completed for children within statutory timescales	98%	88.79%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

- 4.34 Our performance on completing assessments for children within the statutory timescales was 88.79%, which was lower than our target of 98%. This also reflects a reduction on our 2018-19 performance of 97.14%.

Case Study - Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.

A relative of a young person aged 11 years contacted the Information, Advice and Assistance Team. The young person was living with a mother who had health and physical needs, which impacted upon her parenting ability and her ability to manage the household. Both the young person and the parent had agreed to the relative making contact, and as a result, they both had a 'What Matters' conversation. This led to an assessment, which identified him as a young carer.

The outcome was he was referred to the Young Carers project to enable him to socialise and participate in activities with other young people who had similar experiences. In addition, the school was advised of his circumstances and agreed to monitor and support him. He and his mother both reported improvement in their well-being.

Voice and Choice

- 4.35 The inspection of adult services by the Care Inspectorate Wales considered our strengths those of the Cwm Taf University Health Board to be:
- People who lack mental capacity can be confident assessment and decision making is made in their best interests.
 - Our clear understanding of the learning and development needs of its workforce and has a programme to address those needs.
 - Our workforce is well supported by the management group, with leaders who provide clear direction.
 - We work collaboratively and responsively with the Cwm Taf University Health Board to support people's independence at times of acute ill-health and during their recovery.

4.36 The priorities identified for improvement were:

- To ensure consistent consideration is given to both informal and formal advocacy as outlined in Part 10 Code of Practice (Advocacy).
- To ensure a consistent approach to reviewing people's needs and if their outcomes are being achieved.
- To ensure a consistent approach to involving people's networks of significant family and friends' as appropriate so they actively participate and contribute to the assessment, planning and safeguarding process.
- To ensure a consistent approach to people having choice, control, and improving opportunity for take up of Direct Payments.
- Develop wider opportunities for people to access assistive technology

4.37 During the year, we engaged with staff, service users and providers to determine barriers to the provision of advocacy. This identified increasing demand and the need for more training and awareness raising. We established a Champion network to give staff access to advice, information, and support about advocacy, delivered training to raise its profile. We also revised the information we make available to the public.

4.38 We have increased funding available to our commissioned advocacy Providers (Age Connect Morgannwg and Dewis) to employ additional capacity to meet demand and to reduce the risk of people having to wait for help. We have seen an overall increase in referrals and advocacy cases during the year.

4.39 The inspection identified a small number of cases where our records did not evidence the view of key family members. We have reviewed our working practice and procedures to ensure family/friends/carers are routinely invited to case conferences with consent or in the adult at risk's best interests. We have improved the recording and have been monitoring this as part as of our ongoing quality assurance processes. During the year, 44 case conferences were held, which is an increase of 70% on the previous year.

4.40 We also reviewed our approach to Direct Payments. More information on the progress we have made is set out later in this report.

Integrating services

4.41 We continue to work with many organisations to deliver more integrated services which is a key factor throughout this report.

4.42 Care Inspectorate Wales' report considered the strengths of the work undertaken by us and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board and concluded that together are delivering:

- Safeguarding coordination and communication across the multidisciplinary group ensures an effective process to safeguard people.
- Innovative and collaborative thinking by health and social care managers who can influence and demonstrate expertise and shared purpose.
- Strong relationships and communication between providers and local authority commissioning staff.

- Immediate and short-term response to acute referrals involving prompt multi-disciplinary responses.

4.43 The priorities for improvement were:

- Take time for structured joint learning across health and social care.
- Monitor the timeliness of provision of adaptations and community equipment.
- Develop more effective links with GPs to improve how community services can be used to reduce the potential deterioration of older people living independently in the community.

4.44 We know there is a need for more joint learning between health and social care staff. This will be a priority in 2020-21 as part of a joint evaluation and learning framework for the Welsh Government's Transformation Fund, prior to further roll out as part of a wider workforce development strategy.

4.45 We are continuing to work to reduce the waiting times for adaptations and community equipment. The waiting list initially decreased over the summer months but, due to a change of working patterns as part of the second phase of the StayWell@Home service and several vacancies for Occupational Therapists, the waiting list at the end of the year was higher than at the start. This is being addressed. We are working with Care and Repair to process simple equipment orders and additional Occupational Therapy resources have been allocated to address the waiting list. The service continues to prioritise all referrals with an initial triage with all priority 1 cases allocated within agreed timescales.

4.46 Since the summer of 2019, we have also been working closely with our partners on the development and implementation of the new Enhanced Community Cluster Team model in partnership with Health and Merthyr Tydfil Council, as part of the Welsh Government's Transformation Fund announced in summer 2019. The development is led by primary care and building on the "virtual ward" pilot in St John's medical practice in Aberdare.

Embedding strengths-based and outcome-focused assessment, support planning and review across Adult Services

4.47 We have continued to develop and implement quality assurance processes across all social work teams. This promotes a culture of learning and development and ensures consistent good practice. New processes and procedures have been implemented in line with a new Quality assurance Strategy, with progress monitored by a Quality Assurance Board

4.48 We have used action learning sets to support managers and practitioners in dealing with complex issues. From July 2019, a programme has focused on learning disability practice development. This complements a regional outcomes-based practice development programme to which we contribute, and which has been agreed with Social Care Wales.

4.49 We have worked with an external consultancy to review current practice and processes to assess if it delivers the best outcomes for individuals with a learning disability. Adult Services and Health staff have jointly reviewed current arrangements and to inform change.

Making better use of technology

4.50 With the support of the Welsh Government's Transformation Fund, we have developed and implemented a new Assistive Technology model. Operational from mid-January 2020, the new service provides a 24-hour mobile response service to support people in their own homes by responding to non-medical emergencies. It will help us do more to ensure

individuals have the right equipment to help them to remain living as independently as possible in their own homes and avoiding the need for admissions to hospital.

- 4.51 The new model is a whole system approach. It is responsive in the form of a Mobile Responder Service but later in 2020 it will also introduce well-being assessments and proactive outbound calling to residents to support their independence. Mobile Responders can assist in situations such as falls where no injury is reported, but there is difficulty getting back up, personal care emergencies, and welfare checks. It means unnecessary calls to the Welsh Ambulance Service can be avoided. It can also prevent unnecessary admission to hospital. The introduction of Mobile Responders has proved successful. By the end of March 2020 the Service attended over 700 calls to provide support to individuals.
- 4.52 We are also exploring ways of using new technology to improve the way young people can access help and support and how we support participation and consultation. With our colleagues in Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend, we have explored the development of an App on a regional basis to gather the views of children and young people using children's services.
- 4.53 We are also considering the potential of utilising the "Orb" software information platform for organising and improving access to online content of all types for children looked after.

Resilient Families Service

- 4.54 Our Resilient Families Programme plays an important part in responding to people who need help, assessing what help is needed, and delivering family support services, with the aim of reducing the need for statutory services.
- 4.55 We work with several organisations in partnership. Our Families Teams East and West work with families that require support to improve the quality of family life and are employed by Barnardo's. Our own Community Well-being and Resilience services provide early intervention support to build the resilience of families and prevent them from requiring statutory intervention. The Assessment Brokerage and Review Team undertakes assessments with all families referred to the Service, creates an individual plan for every family plan and reviews the plan to ensure the work has been done.
- 4.56 Our Families Plus Team works with families considered to be at the edge of care, for intervention and intensive support to reduce the level of risk within the family. The Children with Additional Needs Service Team works with any family where the learning, physical or neuro-developmental needs of a child within the family is impacting on family life. The Parenting Support Team works with parents and children to develop early language and communication skills through play as well as supporting families to develop their parenting skills to manage their children's needs in a productive and positive way.
- 4.57 The Resilient Families Service has worked hard to promote a presence in the newly established Community Hubs, holding fortnightly drop-in sessions for families to provide information advice and assistance. This is in place at Ferndale Hub and is in the pipeline for Mountain Ash Hub. In Penrhiwceiber, the community partnership is looking to set up a talking café which the Service will visit to offer advice and information to parents.
- 4.58 The Resilient Families Service has also established links with schools. The service aims to have a presence at local job centres so that families can access support when attending their benefit appointments. In the aftermath of Storm Dennis, the Resilient Families service was proactive in liaising with local groups to ensure families were able to access support locally and linked in with church and community groups to target efforts.
- 4.59 Our Youth Engagement and Participation Service workers continue to be based in secondary schools and community venues to provide accessible information, advice and assistance to children and young people. Further development of the services' website wicid.tv and its

social media platforms has supported a comprehensive online information advice and assistance offer which has proved instrumental in enabling the service to continue to provide essential support to children and young people during the coronavirus pandemic.

4.60 There were 915 families whose action plan closed, of these:

- 663 families completed support and completed a follow up resilience assessment.
- 632 families reported that resilience had improved (69%).

4.61 There were 526 families affected by disability whose action plan closed, of these:

- 395 families affected by disability completed support and completed a follow up resilience assessment
- 371 families affected by disability reported that resilience had improved (71%)

Case Study – Resilient Families Service

A self-referral was received from a mother of three young children. The referral was made following two incidents of domestic violence. Both parents work. The father had been using cannabis for several years. The mother blamed the use of cannabis on his mood swings and the domestic violence. The father said he used cannabis as a way of coping with everyday pressures. Their main pressure was affording childcare for two of their children. Both parents expressed concern and regret for their daughter who has witnessed the incidents of domestic violence. She was also being bullied at school. The service undertook weekly support sessions with her to explore her feelings and emotions around what she had witnessed. There was also a referral to 'Comets and Rockets' for further support. A meeting with the school head and wellbeing officer was conducted to discuss the bullying and a plan was put in place. A referral was sent to 'Safer Merthyr' for both parents to have support around domestic violence. Another referral went to 'Barod' for the father to have support to address cannabis use. Both parents received twice weekly sessions at home to explore triggers to arguments, how they feel they can resolve them and what they can do to avoid violent situations. The parents were also given information on flying start settings. The twins were accepted and therefore removed from private childcare to flying start. This was hugely beneficial to them and a huge relief. They said the pressure they were feeling had gone. The family were extremely happy and grateful with the support given and were very keen to engage with partner agencies.

4.62 Given the voluntary nature of the service, there is always the prospect of families refusing to engage with the support on offer. In 2019-20, our intervention completion rate was 85% (an increase on the 72% reported for 2018/19) suggesting most families opt to actively engage.

More engagement with Children Looked After

4.63 We continue to work with children looked after to strengthen their participation in the way services are delivered and developed. Our work is guided by feedback from our "Bright Spots" survey and our group of young people, the "Blue Print Forum", which continues to meet regularly and is an important means of capturing young people's views. They continue to be members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

4.64 The National Advocacy Framework means all children and young people have access to advocacy and have an 'active offer. This is important, it reflects the importance of working with children and young people to ensure they are informed of when and why decisions are made about their care⁴. The Framework ensures all children and young people who become looked after or whose names are on the Child Protection Register are visited by an independent advocate.

Case Study – Advocacy Support

A young person (G) was referred for advocacy support after being removed from her home and placed into foster care due to allegations made against her father. An “Active Offer” visit was arranged at a time and place convenient to G. The advocate explained the role of an Independent Professional Advocate as well as other types of advocacy. G asked for further support and an Issue Based referral was opened. As a result, G is now using the support of her advocate to express her feelings on what is going on around her. She now feels she has a valid opinion and can affect how decisions are made for her, and is now more vocal and more confident in sharing her wishes and feelings.

- 4.65 During the year, the advocacy service received 195 new referrals, 101 of these related to active offers and 94 were in respect of issues-based advocacy. This compares with 303 new referrals in 2018-19. Of the 94 referrals for issue based advocacy, 61 were for support at meetings & 17 were for support in relation to issues with children’s placements.
- 4.66 We are required to conduct a review meeting within 28 days of a child becoming looked after or after having an unplanned change of placement, and further reviews after 3 and 6 months. There are also requirements for children who receive a series of short breaks. Family plans, which are prepared by our Integrated Family Support Service are held three times per year.
- 4.67 For the full year, 1,821 reviews were due of which 1,683 were held on time. Our overall compliance rate was 92%. The reasons for reviews outside the required period vary but include delays to enable the Review to consider key developments in Care Planning (e.g. an imminent Court Hearing) and the unavailability of key people on the date originally set.
- 4.68 Our Independent Review Officer is responsible for monitoring the child/young person's plan and to consult with the child at any time that there is a significant change to it. Our staff must notify any significant change to the child's plan, or of any failure to implement decisions arising from a Review. The Officer can raise concerns within the Council and can escalate concerns where appropriate.

Case Study – Independent Reviewing Officer “Drift in Care Planning”

In a review in December 2018, it was agreed a parenting assessment should be updated with a view to taking the matter back before the Court to discharge a Care Order. By June 2019, the assessment had still not been updated because the social worker had been on sick leave and her team had not been able to re-allocate the work. The Officer discussed the matter with the Team Manager who confirmed the case had now been reallocated and together, they agreed a realistic timescale not only for the completion of the assessment but for the paperwork to be filed with the court. The Officer followed this up to ensure that the timescales were adhered to. The Officer also brought to the attention of the Team Manager statutory visits had not been undertaken as they should have, and as a result, the Team Manager immediately addressed the issue

- 4.69 During the year we developed guidance for Social Workers, Foster Carers, Residential and Contact Centre Workers in supporting Life Journey Work. It includes how to complete direct work sessions with children and young people, with suggestions for activities, sample tool kits and life journey letters. An electronic Life Journey FlipBook store is being developed to support the collation of key Life Journey Work documents. A three-month pilot project to test the support, with a cohort of approximately 30 children looked after started in November 2019. Feedback received from all who participated in the pilot was overwhelmingly positive:

Some minor improvements were identified for the implementation of Life Journey Work across Children's Services.

4.70 We have continued to promote the Children Looked After Friendly School Quality Mark which is achieved by evidencing a high standard of practice for pupils who are children looked after. The Quality Mark Framework was launched in October 2018 and since then, the following has been achieved:

- 2017/18 Academic Year- 6 schools achieved the Quality Mark in RCT (1 Gold & 5 Platinum)
- 2018/19 Academic Year- 8 schools achieved the Quality Mark in RCT (4 Gold & 4 Platinum)
- 2019/20 Academic Year- currently waiting to assess 10 schools for the Quality Mark in RCT

Commissioning effective integrated early intervention and prevention services.

4.71 The Care Inspectorate Wales identified our strengths and those of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board on prevention and early intervention as:

- Staff from across health and social care services reflected a compassionate and shared vision to support people in the community.
- Health and social care strategic managers promoted a shared approach to prevention.
- Joint health and social care services, different disciplines and the third sector complement and work effectively together.

4.72 Our priorities for improvement were:

- Ensure there is clarity in health and social care collaborative planning of preventative services (for example in the development of primary care hubs and community hubs)
- Improve engagement with people and communities including third sector partners to help prevent escalation of need.

4.73 Our Early Intervention and Prevention Commissioning Team is responsible for commissioning services through a new Children & Communities Grant, which was previously seven grants, and has ensured our service providers were aware of the changes and revised guidance.

4.74 We said we would further improve early intervention and prevention support informed by Vulnerability Profiling data. We piloted and implemented an early years vulnerability profiling and appraisal model. The model is primarily informed by the information gathered on the Resilient Families Service Assessment which is used to identify families that would benefit from the completion of a specific early years/childcare appraisal and potentially receive support. We can fully utilise the information already gathered from families and inform the type and level of support required to improve their participation and engagement in childcare activities, and to improve their resilience levels.

4.75 We are working with our partners to develop regional plans which will focus on the coordinated development of services, such as Community Hubs, which will help us to achieve our goals for early intervention and prevention. We are also playing a full part in the regional effort to improve community and third sector engagement to maximise the chances of reducing escalating need.

Ensuring an offer of Direct Payments

4.76 Direct payments give people an opportunity to have more choice, control and independence in managing their own care and support needs. Our role is to promote Direct Payments to help people to take up the option of managing their own arrangements. It doesn't work for everyone, but we have seen a steady growth in the number of people using this option over the last few years.

4.77 In 2019-20, we reviewed our approach to Direct Payments and identified where changes were needed to our policy, particularly the wider use of management accounts and improvements to staff guidance and training. We held a service user event in July. We have also worked with Dewis Community Interest Limited, our Direct Payments Support Service, to improve the way Direct Payment Personal Assistant jobs are advertised to address recruitment issues being experienced.

4.78 The table below shows the progress we have made in supporting the uptake of Direct Payments over the past four years:

Table 7: Take-up of Direct Payments, RCT, 2016-17 to 2019-20

(number)

Children's Services		Adult Services	
2016-17	127	2016-17	339
2017-18	134	2017-18	358
2018-19	154	2018-19	373
2019.20	172	2019.20	402

Source: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

4.79 The table shows a further small increase in the take up of direct payments for adults was achieved during the year. The number of direct payments for children was 172 which is a 12% increase compared to 2018/19

4.80 Our performance this year is summarised in the table below.

Table 8: Key local performance indicator - Percentage of clients choosing own providers through Direct Payments, RCT and Wales, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
Percentage of clients choosing their own service providers through Direct Payments	16.70%	16.82%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

4.81 Our performance this year compares with 16.07% in 2018-18 against a target of 15.5% and a performance of 14.67 in 2017-18. We remain committed to further improvement in our performance.

Remodelling Early Years

4.82 The restructure of the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service in April 2019 began the remodelling of Early Years in RCT. Extending the age range to 0-7 year olds, early years services are now delivered as part of the Resilient Families Service to ensure families in RCT receive the right support at the right time. This now means that the specialist parenting and early language support that was previously only available to families in Flying Start areas, is now available to all families who require it in RCT as part of a comprehensive package of family support. In March 2020, as part of the Regional Early Years Co-construction Project, Welsh Government approved our proposal to change the way in which we deliver Flying Start services in RCT by making enhanced Health Visiting services available to all families

who need them. This will further our aim to remove the inequalities in service provision linked to geographical postcodes and enable us to deliver targeted, enhanced and specialist early years support to those children and families in RCT who need it most.

What are our priorities for next year and why?

- Review the delivery of integrated services for children, young people and families delivered by the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service
- Improve access to information advice and assistance provision for children, young people and families within local communities
- Implement the new universal needs-based Early Years delivery model in RCT
- Develop a model of support for Kinship Carers

(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?

4.83 We said in 2019-20 we would:

- Continue to develop new models of care to achieve better outcomes for young people transitioning into adulthood by focusing on preparing them for living as independently as possible.
- Undertake more work to implement arrangements for ongoing service user and carer engagement across Adult Services and to agree a strategy for annual delivery.

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

Delayed transfers of care

4.84 We have continued to work closely with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to reduce the number of delays in people being discharged from hospital. It remains one of our priorities.

Table 9: Key national performance indicators – Rate of delayed transfers of care, where social care reasons for delay, RCT, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
Rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons for people aged 75+ per 1,000 population aged 75 or over (Measure 19)	2.8%	4.5%	
Rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons for people aged 18+ per 1,000 population aged 75 or over (Measure 19)	4.4%	8.3%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

- 4.85 There were 165 delayed cases for people aged 18 and over, of which 90 were for people aged 75 and over. The figures are higher than the corresponding number of cases in 2018-19 of 99 and 67 respectively and in 2017-18 (63 and 36 respectively).
- 4.86 The rate of delayed transfers of care where social care was the reason for the delay was higher in 2019-20 compared to the previous year. The rate of delayed transfers for social care reasons for people aged 18 and over was 8.3% compared to our target of 4.4%. For persons aged 75 and over, the rate was 4.5% against a target of 2.8 %.
- 4.87 The reasons for a patient in hospital becoming a case of Delayed Transfer of Care are varied and complex. However, they can be summarised under the following broad headings:
- Community Care – reasons related to social care assessment and care arrangements including housing, adaptations and equipment, and domiciliary care
 - Health - relating to assessment and care arrangements, including mental health
 - Care Home – including care home placement choice and selection availability
 - Other – such as for example adult protection, mental capacity, disagreements, legal and financial related issues.
- 4.88 The main reasons for the delays experienced in 2019-20, are high demand for home care, less capacity across dementia care homes, and a high demand for assessments.
- 4.89 Many people have been supported to live at home and very often their physical and mental wellbeing can be enhanced living in their own environment close to family, friends and community networks. We are continuing to support and work with care providers to build capacity and resilience of the domiciliary care market. Where there is a lack of capacity in the independent sector, we provide support through our Support @Home Service as a short-term measure.
- 4.90 There is reducing capacity across dementia care homes, particularly nursing care capacity i.e. those people with the most complex needs, which is adding pressure onto residential placements which require transfer to nursing. To reduce this risk, we have developed in partnership with Health the Specialist Dementia Team to support people with dementia and behaviours that challenge, and it provides training and support plans for staff. Capacity of the Team has been increased to meet an increase in demand for the services provided.
- 4.91 Demand for assessments continues to be high. We prioritise hospital discharges and have used additional funding to increase social work support to both reduce the number of admissions to hospital and create some additional capacity to respond to hospital patients. This helps reduce length of stay in hospitals and minimise delays in discharge.
- 4.92 We have also experienced more cases which have required referral to the Court of Protection to confirm ongoing care arrangements, particularly for placement into a care home when the person is firmly stating they want to return home. Inevitably, while we act according to the law, taking legal advice where necessary, this can cause delays for some patients.
- 4.93 Adult Services' StayWell@Home Service, the Support@Home service and the Brokerage Team are all helping to minimise delays in arranging community care packages of support. Adult Services have looked to extend the Broker Service to cover residential care placements and pilot arrangements within selected teams to review effectiveness. As a result, we have developed a new bed booking system. Its implementation has been delayed to enable Bridgend to be part of the regional approach. With the support of all three

local authorities and the Health Board, work is progressing albeit at a slower pace due to the impact of Covid.

- 4.94 Working with our partners we have also supported improved access to social care on weekends, expanded the use of technology to support people living in their own homes, and brought health and social care closer together to co-ordinate the care for people with complex needs.
- 4.95 Our Stay Well @Home Rapid Response service has been expanded to enable community-based health, well-being, pre-hospital and social care professionals to access a same-day service of practical support to help people to live at home. It will be accessible from 8.30am to 8pm daily. The service will help people who do not need to go to hospital but need extra support to manage at home.

Table 10: Key measures, StayWell@Home service, 2016-17 and 2019-20

Measure	2016-17 Baseline / Benchmark	2019-20 Actual
Percentage of persons aged 61+ turned around at the hospital front door	39.1%	40.19%
Percentage of persons aged 61+ with zero length of stay in hospital	13.5%	15.03%
Percentage of persons aged 61+ staying 5+ days	52.0%	47.36%
Average length of stay for persons aged 61+ staying 5+ days	16.8 days	15.9 days

- 4.96 The table shows success in reducing the number of the people admitted to hospital as a result of our community-based support. While there has been an increase in the number of people attending hospital, a higher proportion did not need to be admitted off the assessment wards due to the support which could be made available in their own home. There has also been a slight reduction in the length of stay, so people have been going home earlier.
- 4.97 As highlighted earlier in the report, we have also enhanced our Assistive Technology Lifeline. Since January, we are providing a 24-hour mobile rapid response service, 365 days a year, to people using one of our lifeline pendants or wrist bands. The service will respond to people who have fallen or are unwell when they press their pendent. It will ensure individuals have the right equipment to support them to remain living as independently as possible in their own homes.
- 4.98 Additional funding of £1.3 million from the Welsh Government to manage winter pressures was used to facilitate hospital discharge and prevent admission and provide additional, for interim placements, and for intermediate care and reablement capacity. We also used it to increase domiciliary care capacity, to increase our capacity for social work assessment at the hospital interface, and to increase community occupational therapist capacity.

Reablement

- 4.99 Reablement helps people to remain living in their home safely and independently by providing intermediate care and rehabilitation services, specialist equipment and aids and, if necessary, adaptations to the home. It is available to anyone aged 18 and over and is free of charge up to six weeks. If support is needed longer, charges are made in accordance with our policy on charging for non-residential social services⁵.

4.100 In 2019-20, our Reablement Service helped 1,058 people, which is an increase of 11% on last year's figure of 955. The table below highlights our performance against key national indicators.

Table 11: Key national performance indicators - Support after reablement, RCT, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
Percentage of adults who completed a period of reablement & have a reduced package of care & support 6 months later (Measure 20a)	85.4%	86.67%	
Percentage of adults who completed a period of reablement and have no package of care and support 6 months later (Measure 20b)	73.5%	81.0%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

4.101 After help from our teams, the proportion of adults who, six months after we had provided reablement assistance, were able to live with a reduced package of care and support was 86.67%. This was higher than our target of 85.4%, and higher than our 2018-19 performance of 85.43%.

4.102 The proportion of people who, six months after receiving our Reablement service, required no care or support at all was 81%. This was higher than our target of 73.5% and also a further improvement on last year's figure of 73.47%.

Residential care homes

4.103 The average age of adults entering residential care in Rhondda Cynon Taf during the year was 85 years 11 months. We narrowly missed our target of 86 years 6 months. Performance this year was also slightly lower than the 2018-19 figures of 86 years and 9 months.

Table 12: Key national and local performance indicators – Residential care homes, RCT, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
The average length of time adults (aged 65 or over) are supported in residential care homes (Measure 21)	959.35 days	983 days	
Average age of adults entering residential care homes (Measure 22)	86.5 years	85.85 years	
Number of people admitted to residential or nursing care (Corporate Indicator)	400	385	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

4.104 In all, 385 people were admitted to residential or nursing care, which is less than the previous year and better than our target this year of 400 people and our 2018-19 performance of 420. This shows our work to help people to stay in their own homes is working. On average, people aged 65 and over are being supported for 983 days which is more than our target of 959 days. It was also higher than the previous year's figure of 959.

4.105 We have made significant progress of developing new models of accommodation for our older residents. Residential care is summarised later in this report. Day care is reported below.

Community based services

4.106 We have also worked hard to develop a new delivery model for our day care services for older people. Our proposals mean we can provide specialist provision for those with more complex care and support needs. It means we can upskill our staff to concentrate on providing this specialist service in a way that it is currently more difficult to do because of the range of complex and non-complex needs.

4.107 Our proposed new model of service includes specialist dementia day care, day care services, community hubs, and our universal services offer.

4.108 The proposed new service model offers flexibility and is geared toward achieving the outcomes people want.

Transition to adulthood

4.109 The Principles & Approach to Transition “Preparing young people to succeed in adulthood” were launched in September 2019 on behalf of the Safeguarding Board and contains seven principles:

- Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person-centred way
- Support should be co-ordinated across all services
- Planning should start early and continue up to age 25
- All young people should get the support they need
- Young people, parents and carers must have access to the information they need
- Families and carers need support
- A continued focus on transitions

4.110 Work has begun between Children’s services and Adult services to embed these principles and to consider options to support young people approaching adulthood. A redesign of service delivery will be considered to ensure young people are supported in the right way at the right time.

4.111 The Council also remains committed to helping care leavers by providing financial support up to the date of their 25th birthday. We have used our powers to scrap the council tax bills of any care leaver for whom the Council had corporate parenting responsibility. This has provided a period of financial support to help them adjust to living independently and managing their own household bills and finances for the first time, in many instances. On 1 April 2019, the Welsh Government introduced a new law to exempt all care leavers under 25 years old from paying Council Tax

What are our priorities for next year and why?

- In continuing to support children into adult hood we will focus on reducing the figures for year 11, 12, and 13 school leavers not in education, employment or training by reviewing the joint working arrangements between the Youth Engagement and Participation Service, schools, education data team, careers wales colleagues and training providers.

- The implementation of a new model of Community Mental Health Services

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

What did we plan to do last year?

4.112 During 2019-20, we said we would:

- Implement the Quality Assurance Framework.
- Strengthen the participation of children and young people in services delivery by continuing to promote engagement with Children Looked After and partner agencies to ensure coproduction and that the voice of the children and young people are heard.
- Develop the pioneer Foster Carer Programme to mentor foster carers who have children with challenging behaviour placed with them.

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

Child protection

4.113 At 31 March 2020, 464 children in the area were on the Child Protection Register. This compares to 498 a year earlier and 502 in March 2018. Children who were on the Register for reasons of neglect increased slightly to 154 from 150 in March 2019. Those on the Register because of emotional abuse decreased from 263 to 232 over the same period.

Table 13: Key national performance indicator – Children Looked After, RCT, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
Percentage of re-registrations of children on a Local Authority Child Protection register	6.72%	10.05%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

- 4.114 The percentage of re-registration of children on our Child Protection Register was 10.05 %. This was higher than the 6.72% recorded the previous year. The figure, the lower the better, was behind our target of 6.72%.
- 4.115 During the year, 7 children become looked after on more than one occasion (4 in 2018-19). Repeat admissions for children who became looked after on more than one occasion equates to 3.9 % of all admissions, compared to 2.4% in 2018-19.
- 4.116 Our Miskin Service helps young people who may be vulnerable, looked after, or at risk of becoming looked after by reducing the inappropriate admission of young people into care and supporting those in care where there is a risk of placement breakdown. It also helps young people who are accommodated in an emergency to return home. In 2019-20, the service received 586 referrals. Of these, 572 (98%) were accepted for intervention. In 397 cases, intensive interventions were made. Of these, 219 were children who were referred because they were at risk of being admitted into our care as a local authority. At the end of the intervention, 95% remained at home and 5% (10 children) became looked after.

4.117 The service also supports learning and development with our Cultural Services providing arts and music projects and with the Tai Education Centre providing outdoor activities. The aim is to get young people re-engaged with education through these activities and achieve recognised qualifications.

Supporting Children Looked After

4.118 Over the course of the year, 179 children became looked after, an increase of 9% on the previous year (164 in 2018-19). A total of 840 children and young people were looked after during the year. This compares to 837 in 2018-19; 845 in 2017-18 and 884 in 2016-17.

4.119 The total number of children being looked after at 31 March 2020 was 717, which is an increase on the corresponding figure of 674 at 31 March 2019.

Table 14: Key national performance indicators – Children Looked After, RCT, 2019-20

	Our target	Our performance	Actual vs Target
Percentage of children looked after who were seen by a registered dentist within 3 months of becoming looked after	81%	54.8%	
Percentage of children looked after registered with a GP within 10 days of start of their placement	98%	80.7%	
Percentage of looked after children who have experienced 1 or more changes in school during a period or periods of being looked after which were not due to transitional arrangements	12%	11.8%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

4.120 We aim for all children looked after to see a dentist within three months. We achieved this for just over half the children (54.8%) of children compared with our target of 81%. This is a fall compared to our 2018-19 performance of 79.2% but remains slightly higher than performance in 2017-18 of 53.8%.

4.121 We were able to ensure 4 out of 5 children (80.7%) were registered with a GP within 10 days of the start of the placement against our target of 98%. It is also less than the 2018-19 performance of 89.3%.

4.122 Our target for the percentage of looked after children experiencing changes in school which were not due to transitional arrangements was 12%. Our performance was 11.8%. Although marginally less than our target, the lower the figure the better. It is a further improvement on last year and the year before of 12.8% and 14.4% respectively.

Quality assurance framework

4.123 We have implemented a Quality Assurance Framework across Children Services. Each service area has developed a quality assurance plan. Quarterly Performance meetings established. Performance reports have been developed incorporating an agreed data set.

Fostering

4.124 Recruiting and retaining foster carers is a challenge and there are several reasons why foster carers discontinue their role, including retirement, ill health or because they move to an independent fostering agency. There is a significant financial impact in having to use

independent foster agencies. There can also be a risk of instability for the child, who may have to move out of their local area, change schools, friendship groups and support networks. The lack of local authority foster carers can lead to a lack of suitable placements for children who may have a range of complex needs, resulting in poor placement matching and instability.

- 4.125 We participated in the National Fostering Framework to enhance our recruitment service, which has been developed with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. We are now more responsive and positive in following up initial enquiries about becoming a foster carer. A dedicated recruitment telephone line has been established in addition to a new regional fostering website and live web-chat function to help potential applicants.
- 4.126 We know in 2019-20, the conversion rate from initial enquiry about fostering to the pre-assessment initial visit screening has increased from 16.4% to 30.1% compared to the previous year. The conversion rate from initial enquiry to proceeding into full assessment has increased from 11.6% to 16.3% over the same period.
- 4.127 We also launched a new training and support package in November 2019. It became operational in April 2020. It provides a development route for foster carers to increase their skills and knowledge. Our Fostering Wellbeing Programme has developed the role of Pioneer Foster Carers to offer peer support and advice to approved foster carers and to assist with the skills to foster training for prospective foster carers. We have rolled out a therapeutic training programme for all foster cares called “Confidence in Care “.

Adoption

- 4.128 During the year, 27 children were adopted. This is lower than the 45 children adopted *in 2018-19 and 31 in 2017-18.*

Safeguarding

- 4.129 During the year, the Adult Safeguarding Team received 4378 suspected adult-at-risk reports. This is 6.8 % less than the number received the previous year, which was 4699. The reports resulted in further action in approximately 12.9% of cases compared to 9% of reports resulting in further action in 2018/19.

Table 15: Key national performance indicator – Adult protection enquiries, RCT, 2019-20

	RCT CBC Target	RCT CBC Actual	Actual vs Target
% of adult protection enquiries completed within 7 days (Measure 18)	93.6%	84.7%	

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

- 4.130 Just over 4 out of 5 adult protection enquiries 84.7%% were completed within 7 days against our target of 93.6%%. This year’s performance is less than that in 2018-19 (93.57%).
- 4.131 The Cwm Taf Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub for Children’s Services received a total of 18,506 contacts during the year, of which 10% (1833) had child protection concerns. This compares to the 2018-19 figures that were 10,606 and 17.8% respectively.
- 4.132 Of the contacts made, 1397 (76%) proceeded to investigation. This compares to the 2018/19 figures when 451 (77%) proceeded to investigation.

4.133 The following safeguarding audits were undertaken during the year:

- Individual case audits for adults and children
- Management of Safeguarding Cases involving Domestic Abuse (x2)
- Audit of domestic abuse cases not proceeding to Section 126 enquiries
- Management of Repeat Safeguarding Reports
- Quality of Terms of Reference for non-criminal investigations
- Management of Safeguarding Cases where the alleged perpetrator is a professional
- Section 135 audit completed by Children's and Adult Services identified areas of good compliance and gaps / areas for development. It informed a development day for the Safeguarding Board, which agreed several thematic audits would be combined and covered by an overarching Domestic Abuse audit:

4.134 Audits and training activities are important. They help to enhance the knowledge, skills and values of our staff. Where joint activities are undertaken with other organisations, it strengthens joint working to ensure the effective operation of the multi-agency initiatives such as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

What are our priorities for next year?

- To implement the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Work Plan
- Continue to work towards reducing the number of children looked after, reducing numbers as per Welsh Government's reduction initiative
- Work with providers to develop a placement sufficiency in line with our placement Commissioning Strategy
- Promote engagement with children looked after and partner agencies to ensure co-production and that the voice of children and young people is heard
- The implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards

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

What did we plan to do last year?

4.135 In 2019-20, we said we would:

- Develop new community-based models of service with a focus on prevention, independence, choice and wellbeing, including day services; respite, carers, direct payments, telecare, StayWell@Home and home care.
- Review the changes made to the single point of contact for service provision to realign with the development of the Community Zones/Neighbourhood networks.

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

Community Hubs

- 4.136 In May 2019, after a public consultation, Cabinet approved the closure of three community day centres in Gelli, Maerdy and Williamstown because of low usage, the increasing costs and the potential significant capital investment required to retain them. Alternative provision has been explored for users in the communities concerned through third sector organisations or where appropriate, by the developing Community Hubs.
- 4.137 We continue to make solid progress on Community Hubs, which encourage and support people to learn, develop and participate in society. They provide a range of services in one or more closely located buildings in priority neighbourhoods. Bringing services together provides a better service and create economies of scale for staffing and building costs, which makes them more sustainable. The Hubs use the neighbourhood network of third sector providers to enhance the range of support services
- 4.138 The Hubs support individuals and families to access help as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating and they make an important contribution to improving health and well-being. They offer a single point of contact to access good quality information, advice and assistance, a platform for community volunteering, and flexible community space for people to meet, share interest and socialise, thereby tackling loneliness and social isolation. They help parents and families improve their relationships and parenting skills, support vulnerable people, who need signposting to other services, and opportunities for people to learn and develop skills in support of employment.
- 4.139 Two new Community Hubs have been opened – Canolfan Pennar in Mountain Ash and Yr Hwb in Ferndale. They include a range of community services, including a library, access to employment support, community rooms. There is a community cafe at Canolfan Pennar and childcare provision at Yr Hwb.
- 4.140 Both have been embraced by their local communities. Canolfan Pennar had 119,666 visitors during the 2019/20 period. In Ferndale, visitors to the library have increased by approximately [47%] since moving into the shared space of the Hwb, rising from 5,427 visitors between Oct-December 2018 to 7,982 visitors in the same period of 2019.
- 4.141 In Ferndale, the Fern Partnership sought external funding to support the development alongside a funding contribution from the Council. Its “Little Ferns” nursery has registered 79 children since opening. Feedback continues to be positive with reference to developing children’s independence skills. From September 2019, the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service have started offering support for anxiety, low mood, self-harm (no suicide ideation) via GP referrals and will have an ongoing presence in the Hwb. A series of adult learning classes and information sessions have also started.
- 4.142 Canolfan Pennar in Mountain Ash has seen the co-location of Council services – the library service, One4All and employment programmes - alongside a privately run café at the former Council Day Centre. In the first few months, the library saw visits almost double from 14,600 between June and September 2018 to 26,600 in the same period in 2019. The Cwm Taf University Health Board is considering opportunities links with the proposed primary care hub it is developing.
- 4.143 Canolfan Pennar has also found itself the focus of some attention in terms of a replicable model for other Local Authorities, and Community developments most recently in December the Leader of Swansea City Council and colleagues visited the site.

- 4.144 Work has commenced on Porth Plaza and the Hub at Lllys Cadwyn in Pontypridd, with Leisure Services, One4all Services & Library Services all operating out of the same building, was due to be opened in March 2020. However this had to be delayed due to the impact of Covid 19. The hub has now opened but the only service currently operational is the Libraries 'Order & Collect' service. A Hub is also being developed in Treorchy and with Age Connect Morgannwg in Aberdare.
- 4.145 The achievements for the two hubs currently open are very encouraging. We will be monitoring their operation and evaluating the impact of all our hubs and neighbourhood networks,

Community-based support

- 4.146 We have three Community Co-ordinators operating in the Cynon, Taff Ely, and Rhondda parts of the County. The posts are funded by the Welsh Government's Integrated Care Fund. Another co-ordinator works with primary care practices across the whole area. The coordinators engage with people in communities and provide information, advice and signpost to local community groups, activities, and services, building strong local networks. As such, they complement our development of Community Hubs. The Co-ordinators are also a dedicated resource to the Social Care Services Single Point of Access (SPA). Co-ordinators have an excellent knowledge of what is available in the local community & during 2019/20 they received a total of 736 referrals into the service & made 338 referrals out to community organisations & 4,174 signposts to community support.
- 4.147 The development of Phase 2 of our StayWell@Home service was mentioned earlier in the report in respect of progress made on integrating services. The opportunity to enhance this community-based service was made possible by funding from the Welsh Government. This new model builds on the success of Phase 1, which set up multidisciplinary teams in the hospitals in our area to help avoid unnecessary admission after assessment at Accident and Emergency departments.
- 4.148 Phase 2 provides rapid assessment and response services to individuals with care and support needs in the community to enable them to safely remain living at home and became operational in January 2020. Access to services was increased from 5 to 7 days a week with extended opening hours to 8.00p.m. This provides community professionals such as GP's, District Nurse, and the Welsh Ambulance Service with access to responsive preventative and rehabilitative services 365 days a year. It helps avoid unnecessary conveyancing or admissions to hospitals. There is a single point of access. All interventions are be subject to a two-week review to ensure outcomes for the individual are being achieved and any onward referrals made. The new model is working well since implementation. It is helping community health professionals to ensure that individuals get the right care at the right time and in the right place for them.

Working with other Council services

- 4.149 Our social services teams work closely with the Council's other departments. Our Arts Services delivered a range of services and support during the year which was taken up by young people. The Hot Jam Rock and Pop Summer School was delivered in August 2019 for young musicians aged 11 – 18 years. Forty four young people participated in this event, compared to twenty-five young people who participated in 2018/19. Many reported experiencing improved emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as showing positive changes to lifestyle behaviour. One of the young people was referred by their Social Worker, who said

“The sessions were very professional and despite a torrid time in her personal life, she absolutely loved it. It really helped boost her confidence and has given her a wider perspective of life and the future.”

- 4.150 Weekly arts and crafts sessions were provided weekly for young people accessing the Miskin Project in Glynconel. The sessions used arts to improve their confidence and self-esteem. 35 young people have participated during 2019-20 with many experiencing improved emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as showing positive changes to lifestyle behaviours.
- 4.151 Fifty one young people participated in the Young Promoters Network, which creates opportunities for aspiring young promoters, photographers and music artists aged 14-25 years old. It helps them to develop their skills and knowledge of careers within the music industry by providing supported real experiences in performance, photography and event promotion.

What are our priorities for next year and why?

- Present options for the remodelling of learning disability day services
- Further build a presence of the Resilient Families Service and the Children and Young People Service within the Community Hubs to raise awareness of services on offer and deliver support activities within localities

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

What did we plan to do last year?

4.152 In 2019-20, we said we would:

- Continue to work to reduce the need for Statutory Services by ensuring that children, young people and families have coordinated integrated family support earlier.

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

Helping children, young people and families

4.153 Our Community Well-being and Resilience service play an important role in helping children, young people and families. It is responsible for:

- Children & Young People
- Resilient Families Service
- Programme Flexibilities Service
- Early Intervention & Prevention Commissioning Team
- Service Planning & Transformation Team.

4.154 We managed a major transition from seven individual grant programmes to a single Communities & Children Grant. Our Early Intervention and Prevention Commissioning Team links with and supports the work being undertaken in the Community Zones/Hubs, Communities & Children Grant and Early Years Co-construction work with Welsh Government.

- 4.155 Over and above our Resilient Families Service, we have several Families First projects which provide support to parents or for young people. In 2019-20, a total of 7,260 people accessed the services. Families First worked with 6,528 participants who had an identified need. This was a 53% increase on the 4,243 in 2018-19. Of these, 3,762 (58%) achieved a successful outcome against one of the 14 national performance measures. This is lower than the 69% recorded the previous year. The reason for the reduction is due to a number of factors related to service delivery improvements including streamlining the number of commissioned projects; developing joint Families First and Flying Start delivery arrangements; and agreement with WG to focus on key priority performance measures to reflect the new ways of working in implementing the Resilient Families Programme. During the year, 3,113 children were registered to receive a Flying Start service (3,353 in 2018-19) including enhanced health visiting, childcare and parenting support as a result of residing in Flying Start postcode areas.
- 4.156 The Principles & Approach to Transition 'Preparing Young people to Succeed in Adulthood' were launched in September 2019 on behalf of the Safeguarding Board. Work has commenced between Adult & Children's Services in RCT to embed the principles of this approach & to consider options to support young people approaching adulthood. A redesign of service delivery will be considered during 2020/21 to ensure that young people are supported in the right way at the right time.

What are our priorities for next year?

- To further build a presence of all Community Well-being and Resilience services within the Community Hubs to raise awareness of service on offer for and deliver support to activities within localities.
- Review commissioning activities considering the further developments around the Children and Communities Grant and funding flexibilities/alignment.
- Secure ministerial approval for the Early Years transformation proposals and the implementation of a universal needs-based approach for Early Years services across RCT.

(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 say we would do?

4.157 We said in 2019-20 we would:

- We will review our model of residential care and the housing needs of our children looked after aged 16 and over.
- Deliver new accommodation models to improve outcomes for individuals who need support to live independently (This will include actions in relation to extra care/supported living).

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

Developing new accommodation models for adults

- 4.158 We have made considerable progress on developing new models of accommodation for older people, to meet rising demand and people's expectations. The Cwm Taf Joint Commissioning Statement for Older People's Services (2015-2025) helped identify what people needed. The development of Extra Care housing was identified as being important. It can offer older people care and support to enhance their health, wellbeing and independence and avoid over reliance on traditional residential care homes.
- 4.159 We commissioned an extensive, independent, consultation with residential and day service staff, care home residents and their families and day centre users on the future delivery model. The aim was to gather as many views as possible from stakeholders to inform the Council's decisions. The consultation ended at the beginning of April 2019.
- 4.160 The consultation informed our proposals, which were:
- To retain a level of provision of residential care homes focused on providing complex care and respite. The level of provision would be based on the market share and need required in each of the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf geographical areas; and
 - A phased decommissioning of the Council's day services as part of a planned programme of transformation in line with a proposed new service model
- 4.161 Seven residential care homes would be retained, and four homes would be decommissioned. After the proposals had been formed, we embarked on a further 12-week consultation. This ended in December 2019. The key results were⁶:
- 47% of respondents agreed with the Council's preferred option to retain a level of provision of residential care homes which are focused on providing complex care and respite. Slightly more than a third (35%) disagreed and the remainder were unsure.
 - For the proposal to phase the decommissioning of the Council's day services as part of a planned programme of transformation, 53% disagreed with our proposal, while 48% of people opted for no change.
- 4.162 One common theme to emerge from the consultation was the quality of the care and support provided by the Council. The contribution and commitment of staff was highly regarded. There were concerns about care being transferred to the private market, and some respondents considered Council run care homes to be better than private care homes. The financial implications for individuals moving into a private care home were also a worry for some i.e. more expensive potentially and uncertainty about fee levels.
- 4.163 The higher standards of environment and facilities provided by new Extra Care accommodation and its operation, including living conditions, care provided and funding, and costs were welcomed.
- 4.164 Understandably, while the need to improve care for the future was recognised, no one wanted their care home or day centre to be de-commissioned. Reassurance was sought about any de-commissioning the process that would be followed to determine any future decision. It was recognised that more people with dementia would in the future need care and support both in the community and in residential care.
- 4.165 The location of care was of critical importance. Residents and centre users wanted to continue to live in their chosen community. Staff too saw the importance of location in relation to care options, support services, transportation, resident/service user wellbeing, travel to work etc.

Extra Care Housing

- 4.166 Our first Extra Care housing (40 apartments) in Ty Heulog, Talbot Green has been joined by our second (again with 40 apartments) on the site of the former Maesyffynnon Care Home in Aberaman, which opened in May 2020. We know we need to do more, so, further progress has been made on the development of a 60-apartment facility in Pontypridd which is due to open in 2021. In 2022, we expect to have a development in Porth providing 60 apartments followed by another in Treorchy providing 60 apartments in 2023. A development in Mountain Ash will provide 40 apartments by 2025.
- 4.167 Our drive to increase Extra Care is key to shifting the balance away from institutional residential care. This will allow some of our existing Council-owned care homes to be replaced thus addressing the surplus capacity in homes which is projected by 2025.

Learning disabilities

- 4.168 In 2018-29 we stated our intention to increase our “Shared Lives” provision, which offers both short and long-term support to all people with an assessed need across adult services. The relaunch of the Ategi Shared Lives scheme took place in June 2019. Since then, recruitment and information events have been held to support and recruit additional carers. In the year, there were 14 applications to become carers. Eleven progressed to a full assessment, 9 of which were approved. Three long term placements/ arrangements are now in place and 6 short-term (respite) placements. Encouragingly, the Scheme continues to receive enquires and Ategi is undertaking active recruitment events.
- 4.169 Engagement workshops were held in July 2019 to identify the priorities of individuals with a learning disability and their families. Progress on finalising the strategy has been delayed due to the extensive work undertaken on changes to adult residential care and day care centres. However, we held two consultation events to showcase the new development at the Penllew Court (Aberdare) supported housing scheme. The refurbishment was completed, and individuals will start to move in from January 2020. Nine people had moved into the scheme by the end of March 2020 from either the community, supported living schemes or specialist placements. Plans are currently in place to support an additional eight people to move into the scheme. Good progress was also being made with our Partners Trivallis on the Crown Avenue (Treorchy) supported housing scheme. However this has unfortunately been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with required works having to be put on hold as the building is not listed as an emergency facility. The estimated completion date is now October 2020.
- 4.170 We have worked with the Innovate Trust to use the learning obtained from the “new technology” pilots we ran last year to agree a roll out across their learning disability support living schemes and implement. The plan is being implemented and learning is being shared with other Supported Living Providers to develop day opportunities across their commissioned provision.

Accommodation and placements for Children Looked After

- 4.171 In May 2019, we developed a new placement commissioning strategy⁷ to guide our work in finding placements for children looked after. The three-year strategy outlines the following priorities:
- Recruit more foster carers able to meet the more complex needs
 - Provide more in-house residential placements within the local area to meet need.

- Provide better support packages to carers to encourage them to apply for Special Guardianship Orders rather than be kinship foster carers.
- Provide a range of accommodation for 16+ and care leavers.
- Improve our commissioning processes for external placements, including integrated commissioning with key partners.
- Develop a reunification model to return young people safely to their family members.

4.172 Shaping the external market has been highlighted as a priority. This is in line with the Welsh Government's aim to reduce the number of children looked after who are placed outside a local authority's own area. While there is sometimes a need for some placements to be out of county, these specialist placements should be based on specific needs of the child/young person.

4.173 We have developed several ways of helping children and young people and their families, and we are continuing to develop innovative new ways to provide support, including:

- RCT Integrated Family Support Framework
- RCT Resilient Families programme- Miskin Service
- Early Years and Family Support Service - Reflect Project
- Information Advice and Assistance Team

4.174 We will ensure children are looked after in placements that meets their needs. Our approach is to:

- Shape our internal services to maximise quality and value for money.
- Work in collaboration with public sector partners across the regional footprint where this offers identifiable benefits.
- Increase placement choice to ensure the right child for the right place
- Co-produce outcomes focused services multiple partners who may be co-operatives, charities or commercial partners.

The approach set out in the strategy is shaping our internal placement services, our partnership working with stakeholders and a range of public and private sector partners, and our Market Position Statement which was published **on the** RCT website in November 2019. A stakeholder event will be held in Autumn 2020 delays due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

What are our priorities for next year?

- Further improve capacity and performance of independent sector domiciliary care providers to put in place sustainable local solutions
- Work with providers to develop placement sufficiency in line with our Placement Commissioning Strategy/ Market Position Statement
- Implement the Trauma Recovery Model in internal residential and foster care services

5. How we do what we do

What did we say we would do?

5.1 In 2019-20 we said we would

- Develop of an overarching workforce development strategy for Adult Services.
- Deliver agreed budget efficiencies and manage services within resources available in the medium-term, including action to reduce sickness absence and improve business processes.
- Embed quality assurance and performance management culture at all levels of adult services (This will include actions on management information and performance indicators).
- Maximise adult social care income and debt recovery to build on improvements in level of debt achieved in 2018-19.
- Manage the market to ensuring we have the local workforce and safe and the sustainable localised care and services that we need.

(a) Our workforce and how we support their professional roles

5.2 Our workforce is our most important asset without whom high-quality services could not be delivered. We continue to need an adequate workforce of well-trained, experienced staff with the right skills and approach needed to work with citizens and effectively in partnership with other organisations.

5.3 The Council's five-year Workforce Plan⁸ is the framework for our approach. It has five aims:

- Developing a flexible and agile workforce that shares organisational knowledge
- Recruiting and retaining the best talent to create a diverse workforce
- Leadership and management development
- Enabling a high performing, engaged and committed workforce
- Supporting the health and well-being of our workforce to maximise attendance

5.4 Adult Services continues to undergo significant organisational and cultural change and the impact on our workforce is significant. One of the consequences of this has been the need to recruit to new and vacant posts and to embed new staff into existing busy teams. This is now proving even more challenging due to the Covid outbreak. We have redeployed staff to manage the situation and, over and above the practical difficulty of selection and interviewing during the lockdown, many people are less inclined to seek new jobs when there is uncertainty about the future.

5.5 We have created several new Social Worker and Care and Support Practitioners posts, including over-establishment cover to meet demand. Teams have not yet experienced the intended benefit of these posts as it is hard to recruit, meaning that individual caseloads are higher than we would prefer. These issues have led to a reliance on agency staff. We are using the extra Care and Support Practitioners posts to meet the assessment demand and address waiting lifts backlogs.

5.6 We commissioned an independent review which confirmed the recruitment and retention challenges. Consequently, a review of pay was considered necessary and arrangements with interim market supplements paid pending completion of a full and thorough review of

social pay and grades. The review was due to be completed by April 2020 but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It should now be complete by autumn 2020.

- 5.7 Across in-house direct services, we have also increased the number of casual, temporary, and permanent staff. The Support @Home Service is one area where we have been actively recruiting additional staff to meet demand, using social media to advertise vacancies, which has helped to increase the number of applicants. Where appropriate arrangements are being put in place to ensure in-house domiciliary staff are supported to complete their registration with Social Care Wales. This experience and learning is being shared with our externally commissioned domiciliary care providers.
- 5.8 In addition, we have continued to support our social care workforce through the Regional Social Care Workforce Development Partnership to ensure regular and appropriate training is available for staff at all levels e.g.
- Training, development, and qualification of social care managers: including Step Up to Management; Middle Manager Development Programme; Team Manager development programme; and those requiring registration as managers
 - Ongoing development of approaches to outcome-focused care and support practice for both Social Work qualifying training and post-qualifying training in Wales
 - Development of skills in relation to social care, and a revised induction framework
- 5.9 Further action undertaken to strengthen the management and support of the workforce, includes:
- New Supervision Policy; peer-group and active learning group arrangements across Assessment Teams
 - Regular engagement with staff by operational and senior managers to improve communications and to allow concerns, developments, suggestions and ideas to be discussed. This happens in different ways in different service areas.
 - Improved and wider use of agile working arrangements, which has been generally appreciated by staff and is seen to be a positive development
 - Regular one-to-one sessions take place across adult services and, where applicable, in line with regulatory requirements.
 - Managers' ongoing participation on corporate development programmes
 - Use of the graduate and apprenticeship programmes, with most participants progressing to permanent roles.
- 5.10 In Children's Services our Senior Managers have undertaken the Transform and Aspire training. Staff have been involved in several task groups to develop systems and processes that provide a more streamlined approach to service.
- 5.11 All staff have undertaken training on matching children looked after with foster carers, adoption processes and procedures and staff continue to be part of several national working groups such as the National Fostering Framework and the Welsh Government Fostering Regulatory Technical Group. The training that falls out of these groups is included in the Annual Training Programme.
- 5.12 Service Director and Heads of Services meet with Team Managers and Senior practitioners on a quarterly bases to ensure strategic support for the development of the workforce which is also supported by our performance Management framework which defines expectations at all levels to include Staff supervision. Supervision is in place at all levels and is considered effective in terms of case management; however, improvement can be made in relation to individual performance. Annual supervision audits are undertaken.

5.13 The annual Children Services Training Programme is developed with staff. In 2019-20, the programme resulted in:

No of Children's Services training sessions offered & booked	No of people attending	% Attendance
4222	3266	77%

We have also taken, and are continuing to take, action specific to our social care workforce internally and through the Cwm Taf Social Care Workforce Development Partnership Annual Work plan. This is a rolling action plan to improve the quality and management of social care services provision and to increase the proportion of staff across the whole care sector with the qualifications, skills and knowledge required for the work they do.

One of the key objectives included in the work plan is to support social work qualifying training and during the year 36 students have been hosted for social work placements across Rhondda Cynon Taf. These students are studying at University of South Wales and Cardiff University. Many of the third year students then apply for social work jobs in RCT and are successful.

We also have 13 staff from RCT currently being sponsored on their social work degree programme. This is an initiative to 'grow our own' social workers and, in part, address the nationwide problem that exists in relation to the recruitment & retention to social work posts.

What are our priorities for next year?

- Develop a recruitment and retention strategy specifically for Children Services to ensure sufficiency of skilled staff
- Development of overarching workforce development strategy for Adult Services
- Reduction of sickness/absence rates

(b) Our financial resources and how we plan

5.14 We continue to face particularly challenging financial circumstances. The demands for social care continue to increase while public finances are very tight and under immense pressure. We are fortunate the Council continues to support and prioritise Adult and Children's Services but within significant cost pressures.

5.15 To manage these ongoing budget pressures, in Adult services we continue to:

- strengthen our prevention activity to reduce and/or contain demand
- increase the number of clients living independently and reduce the cost of care
- improve efficiency and productivity of our operations
- increase service efficiency from commissioned and directly provided services
- right size care packages and/or targeted reviews
- working differently through increased use of technology, agile working, automation and business process efficiencies
- challenge vacancies and, where possible, consider the opportunity to rethink our activity and reshape delivery
- maximise regional grant funding to support new opportunities alongside side existing budget pressures/gaps

- maximise income in Vision Products, increasing long term window contracts and orders
- grow and develop Vision Products business i.e. now servicing specialisation equipment within accommodation and day services from April 2020 instead of buying these services in from outside the Council.

5.16 Quality Assurance Panels continue to oversee commissioning decisions to ensure challenge and consistency in the quality of assessment outcomes and cost- effective care. Monthly meetings take place with members from adult services management teams to provide monitoring oversight. Funding of joint packages of care with Health continue to be robustly challenged. However, Continuing Health Care processes are often long and difficult. Arrangements for learning disability cases are being reviewed with Health to address existing backlogs and to ensure decisions are timelier and people's needs, and outcomes are met by the most appropriate and cost-effective care package.

5.17 Our Specialist Placements Panel oversees specialist accommodation and community-based decisions and monitors individual case move-on. We have also created additional capacity to form a Complex Care and Supported Living Team to ensure outcomes for people with learning disabilities are being met and the care and support provided offers value for money.

5.18 In Children's Services too we continue to respond to high cost pressures. The service continues to implement robust and manageable budget strategies to ensure timely identification of budget efficiency and such processes include a rigorous scrutiny process via our Group Management Team of which the Head of Finance is a Member.

5.19 The biggest pressure is our Children Looked After budget and work through the Children Looked After Group is constantly being undertaken to look for opportunities to "invest to save"

5.20 In January, the Council announced plans for the budget for 2020-21, which included £200,000 for youth services, an additional £50,000 allocation for youth offending, and a further £12.7m for schools. The Council also proposed an increase of £9.34m for Community and Children's Services from £153,264,000 in 2019-20 to £162,604,000 for 2020-21, which includes social care, to help alleviate the key pressures that we face.

5.21 In addition to consulting with elected members we also did an extensive public consultation which included:

- An online questionnaire
- Three youth events held at Y Pant, Treorchy and Aberdare schools
- Promotion through social media
- Three public 'drop-in' events, at Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash Hub), Pontypridd Town Centre, and Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad
- Older Persons Advisory Group
- Disability Forum Meeting
- Promotion with key stakeholders, including local AMs, MPs, Community & Town Councils, and Trade Unions

(c) Our partnership working, political and corporate leadership, governance, and accountability

5.22 Social Services continues to remain a priority for the Council, receiving strong and proactive support from the Cabinet Members for both Adults and Children's services. Engagement and involvement of elected members is positive, and we have open communication and updates

on national, regional and local matters. The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has also continued to play an important role in supporting the drive towards improved performance in Adult Social Services. The Committee has undertaken scrutiny across a number of areas including Delayed Transfers of Care; Stay Well @Home; EMI Accommodation; Mental Health and Autism.

- 5.23 Our Corporate Plan for 2020 – 2024 was approved in March 2020 and sets out the Council's overall vision for the next four years and contains three specific objectives to which social care services and our partnership working will contribute. Inevitably, our need to manage the Covid-19 outbreak has placed additional demands and priorities on our work.
- 5.24 We continue to make a significant contribution to the work of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board. In April 2019, the board expanded to include Bridgend. The Board is a statutory partnership made up of agencies responsible for safeguarding children and adults at risk. Our work on safeguarding was reported earlier in the report.
- 5.25 In adult services we are accountable for service delivery through our monthly performance reviews and quality assurance checks. We also ensure a high level of governance over the budget and financial management, to ensure that we are sighted for example on high-risk cost and care, and specialist placements.
- 5.26 Our performance against Corporate Plan priorities and National Performance Measurement Framework Performance Indicators is reported quarterly to the Council's Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees. Performance indicator targets are set utilising trend data and national benchmarks, where applicable whilst considering scope and capacity to improve.
- 5.27 All this promotes effective performance management and accountability across Adult Services which is further strengthened through the production of monthly service area and team performance reports and the ongoing development of quality assurance frameworks. In addition, there is regular engagement with staff by operational and senior managers to improve communications and to allow concerns, developments, suggestions and ideas to be discussed. This demonstrates that there is effective leadership and focus on what needs to be done to achieve sustainable change and embed the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and, as a result, Adult Services is in strong position.
- 5.28 In Children's Services we have regular reports as part of our governance and accountability are presented to Corporate Parenting, scrutiny, and cabinet meetings. To ensure the appropriate challenge in relation to priorities i.e. Children Looked After Placement Performance this is an important part of what our elected members engage in. There are also monthly meetings held with the Cabinet Member for Children Services, the Director and individual Heads of Services.
- 5.29 Partnership working to improve services and to achieve efficiencies remains an important part of our work in both Adult and Children's Services. We continue to play a significant part in the Regional Partnership Board and the delivery of the regional plan, which was produced in conjunction with, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, the Cwm Taf University Health Board and Third Sector organisations.
- 5.30 The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub has continued to develop and mature with strong evidence of sound inter-agency safeguarding practice. The work of the Safeguarding Board has delivered opportunities for improvements in practice both within and between agencies.
- 5.31 Partnership working is also a fundamental part of both our Children's and Adult Services. For example:

- We continue to lead the Cwm Taf Reflect Project, which works with young women who have had children removed from their care, and the Regional Advocacy Service.
- We continue to chair the “Together for Mental Health” Partnership Board for Children and Young people and we are working with South Wales Police on the implementation of the Early Action Programme.

5.32 Having established a Regional Commissioning Team, we are committed to helping it become an effective means of developing more integrated services. The team, is helping us to drive the health and social care integration agenda on behalf of the Regional Partnership Board, supporting a programme of activities, which will help to improve the quality and value for money of care services. This teams have provided significant capacity to support our work especially as the role of the Regional Partnership Board has increased.

What are our priorities for next year and why?

- Contribute to more joint learning between health and social care staff as part of a joint evaluation and learning framework for the Welsh Government’s Transformation Fund
- Work with Third sector partners to consider alternative service models, such as social enterprise and user led organisations such as co-operatives

6. Accessing information and key documents

- 6.1 This report has summarised the performance of the Council's Social Services Department in 2019-20. It has also highlighted progress made against the priorities we set for ourselves. The report helps us to be accountable to the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 6.2 The contents are designed to be informative and easy to read. There are many sources of information on the services and support mentioned in this report.

Other sources of information

6.3 For support in the area:

- Adult Social Services Care and Support
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/AdultsandOlderPeople/AdultSocialServicesCareandSupport/AdultSocialServicesCareandSupport.aspx>
- Children and Families
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ChildrenandFamilies/ChildrenandFamilies.aspx>
- You can search "Dewis Cymru" for community-based services to support you and your family <https://www.dewis.wales/>

6.4 Full information on Councillors, Committees and Meetings is available on the Council's website: <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings.aspx>. Meetings of the Cabinet, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee are particularly relevant to this report. Agendas, papers and decision reports can be accessed via the following web pages:

- Cabinet:
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Committees/Cabinet.aspx>
- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Committees/ChildrenandYoungPeopleScrutinyCommittee.aspx>
- Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Committees/HealthandWellbeingScrutinyCommittee.aspx>

References

¹ Reference CIW Inspection of Older Adults Services Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council June 2019

² Cwm Taf Regional Plan 2018-23

³ Cwm Taf Carers Strategy 2016-19 <http://cwmtafmorgannwg.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Cwm-Taf-Carers-Strategy-2016-1.pdf>

⁴ Your Life Your Care (April 2018) A survey of the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-18yrs in Rhondda Cynon Taf

⁵ Charging for Non-Residential Social Services policy

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/AdultsandOlderPeople/Helpoliveathome/RelatedDocuments/ChargingforNonResidentialSocialServices.pdf>

⁶ Practice Solutions Ltd (2019) *The Modernisation of Residential Care and Day Care services for older people Consultation An Analysis of the questionnaire & written responses*

⁷ Rhondda Cynon Taf (2019) Placement Commissioning Strategy 2019-2022.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/CorporateParentingBoard/2019/11/18/Reports/Item6RCTPlacementCommissioningStrategy.pdf>

⁸ Workforce Plan 2017-2022, Rhondda Cynon Taf

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/WorkforcePlan/RelatedDocuments/WorkforcePlan20172022.pdf>