

Director of Social Services

Annual Report 2017/18

Changing Lives



This Annual Report can be made available in Welsh and other languages and formats upon request.

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INTRODUCTION

Changing Lives

This is our first Social Services Annual Report prepared under the new requirements of both the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection for Social Care (Wales) Act 2015.

This report is written for the stakeholders of Torfaen. It is a formal account of our improvement journey by the Statutory Director of Social Services and has been developed through an ongoing assessment of progress throughout 2017/18.

This report is only an overview of our performance; much more detail is included in the Heads of Service self-evaluation reports. We have regional comparable data as we have worked with neighbouring authorities during 2017/18 to produce the new SS&WB Act performance measures.

The report, and all the evidence supporting it, will be used by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to inform their review and inspection activity in Torfaen over the next year. We continue to work alongside them and with our provider partners to seek continuous improvement in all aspects of our work. It is also designed to offer our broad range of partners and other stakeholders including service users, families, carers, Council Members, the general public and Welsh Government an insight into how we are developing and shaping our services to meet the well-being outcomes for the people living in Torfaen.

Keith Rutherford
Chief Officer Social Care & Housing
(Statutory Director of Social Services)

DIRECTORS SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

2017/18 saw wide spread media coverage of the pressures being faced by Social Care, Local Authorities, Health and the care sector as a whole. In Torfaen we continued to work regionally to develop ways in which we can support our providers to run sustainable, quality services and recruit and retain their staff.

Our staff continue to adapt to the biggest change in legislation affecting social care for decades, the implementation of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 plus the Regulation and Inspection Social Care (Wales) Act. The Acts have necessitated a material change in Social Care practice after many years of relative stability in legislation.

Torfaen Social Services has demonstrated its commitment to transforming and modernising the way in which we commission and provide services. We have hosted the Gwent Transformation Team since its inception and work strategically with our neighbouring Councils to strengthen our approaches to service development to improve the overall experience for people who access our support.

Throughout 2017/18 we continued to embed the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 ensuring that the principles of strengths based assessment and positive risk taking underpin our ways of working. We have continued to actively promote peoples independence by providing up to date information, advice and assistance that helps support clients and carers as well as any practical support needed.

In adult services we have developed 'patch based teams' who work in the community with clients and carers in a far more flexible way. The approach was borne out of the need to think more creatively and to manage demand more effectively. This approach has shown demonstrable results particularly in relation to improved outcomes and experiences for service users and carers. This way of working has evidenced a reduction in delayed transfers of care (DToc). In terms of staff involved we have seen a positive impact on staff morale as they work more closely with the community. Whilst still early in stages initial feedback from users, carers, other professionals and partners is very positive.

The last year has seen another increase in demand in the Children and Families Service. The work with children and young people remains diverse but in many areas appears to be coming more demanding with tighter timescales and greater pressure generally on performance. We have continued to develop closer links with Education, Health and Adult Service colleagues to ensure that young people with eligible needs are supported through transition into adulthood. Throughout 2017/18 we continued to have a high number of 'Looked After' children in Torfaen. We have seen an increase in very young children and sibling groups becoming looked after as a result of abuse and neglect and a subsequent increase in care proceedings to ensure permanent plans are in place for these children. We are confident those in our care need to be there, to ensure they are safeguarded from neglect or harm, as the vast majority of our cases presented to court are agreed by family judges.

We continued to work with children with complex, high needs who require specialist services from experienced providers. These complex care packages continued to substantially impact on the social care budget and we worked and continue to work to maximise efficiencies in this area. 2017/18 saw the creation of a multi-agency working party working together to design bespoke packages of care and housing options for young people with complex needs.

As a result of the serious financial situation facing the public sector in Wales, Torfaen Council, along with other organisations had to find significant savings to deliver our corporate responsibility for a balanced budget during 2017/18. The Council, recognising the vital role we play in protecting vulnerable people, was able to provide relative protection to frontline social care and education budgets, in line with Welsh Government guidance and corporate plan priorities. This still left a requirement for significant savings across social care and housing whilst we are facing unprecedented demand for our services.

A major area of budget pressure was the impact of the National Living Wage. We continue to work with providers to help offset those costs. This is a national issue and like other public services we are still working with Welsh Government and providers to better understand and mitigate the financial consequences, as we want to ensure all front line staff, which provide care to our most vulnerable residents, are paid appropriately. This continues to have a direct impact on the sustainability of some care provider organisations, who are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit staff, train and retain that expertise.

Key Highlights

Rate of delayed transfers of care (DToC) for social care reasons per 1,000 of the population aged 75 or over. Performance in previous years has been variable and I am extremely pleased that the target was achieved for 2017/18. There has been a considerable focus and drive within adult services to reduce the delays.

It was disappointing that the delays were not reduced further, this was due to some particular issues on the availability of domiciliary care due to the difficulty in recruitment for the whole sector.

The number of days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant has also remained a constant performance measure. Our performance has seen a steady improvement over the last few years. The performance is closely monitored and individual cases scrutinised on a regular basis.

We acknowledge that we cannot continuously improve in all areas, particularly whilst resources are reduced and demand is increasing. We focus our improvement activity on those areas where risk to safety or independence is most likely to be compromised. Further details are provided throughout the report.

Our front line staff and managers are dedicated to providing accurate information and advice, and flexible care and support, through direct provision and in partnership with independent and third sector providers. Torfaen are part of the

Welsh Government's DEWIS system, a computerised system which aims to capture information on all services in Wales to enable citizens to make informed choices particularly in relation to lower level preventative services that are available in the community which may enable people to remain independent for longer.

Despite the very real financial and capacity pressures, teams have continued to maintain and improve the support we give to our most vulnerable citizens. Our priorities for next year are to continue to safeguard and provide support to the most vulnerable members of our community. The Senior Management Team is committed to ensuring that on-going budget pressures do not place either our service users or staff at risk. The challenge will be to continue to manage demand, to do more with less and we will explore further opportunities for collaboration where that adds value to citizens and improves service efficiency. During the year the Regional Partnership Board, has overseen the implementation of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and 2017/8 saw the process of embedding new procedures and practices, as well as the development of new service models.

Collaboration has been driven by placing duties on Local Government, Local Health Boards and other public bodies and provider agencies to work together to improve the wellbeing of people, by better aligning everyone's skills and resources across the region. We have made positive steps both locally and regionally by the development of a Care Closer to Home Strategy that informed our direction in 2017/18.

We continue to have a very productive partnership with our independent and third sector partners. This will help us ensure their voices inform future service improvement.

Our role is to help citizens help themselves, maximising their own capabilities and resources; by providing sufficient information, advice and sign posting so that they are empowered to control their own lives and maintain their independence. We will not retract from our safeguarding role to protect the most vulnerable from harm, but we will be relying on families, communities and other stakeholders to play their role in providing support.

During 2017/18 Adult Services collaborated with a local provider to test out the principles of outcome based commissioning in a small geographical area. Providing the right level of service at the right time will ensure statutory resources can be directed to those at the lower level preventative end and those at the highest levels of risk. We are keen to learn from the experience to see if we can develop this further.

This has been another challenging but successful year. Hopefully, what you read in this report matches your views and experience of social care in Torfaen and helps us all to understand how we can continue to improve services that support and safeguard children and young people, citizens, carers and their families, during times of vulnerability in their lives.



Keith Rutherford
Chief Officer Social Care and Housing

June 2018

HOW ARE PEOPLE SHAPING OUR SERVICES?

We recognise that we still have a way to go before all social care services are individually shaped by the people who use them. However during 2017/18 we continued to improve the mechanisms we use to engage with service users, carers and families and service providers. Consultation and engagement with all service users is undertaken through our assessment, care planning and transition planning processes.

In 2017/18 in adult services we helped to promote peoples independence and self-resilience by working with them, with support from their care managers to identify alternative ways of delivering support and reviewed their existing care packages to identify opportunities for change from traditional models of care to encourage independence and social inclusion.

One of the measures of the North Torfaen Wellbeing pilot was to capture ‘what difference have we made?’ through client stories and experiences. We will use this feedback during 2017/18 to shape our next steps on the integration journey.

The exciting work in adult services day opportunities has continued where tailor made support has being developed with individuals to be provided directly by Council staff. This has happened through positive engagement with education and leisure colleagues and will provide better quality services and more choice for clients.

The team modelled new ways of working by starting with a scoping meeting involving all team members. This approach to coproduction continued throughout the work. All were involved on an equal basis in the design, delivery, reporting and forming recommendations. All strategic decisions were made at team meetings. Decision-making was led by the people who are experts by experience. The experts by experience decided the final content and recommendations. Other people such as carers, parents, providers and professionals from across Gwent were also involved in this exciting work. 2018/19 will see us build on this work in order to better commission services for people with a learning or physical disability.

Building and sharing on our expertise we have been delighted to second an experienced member of staff to the “Better Future Lives” project since October. The purpose of the project is to develop new and alternative models by working alongside people with learning disabilities as co-developers and deciders and is an excellent example the agenda and priorities being set by users and carers.

Meeting the needs of our customers in Children and Families service is largely focused through meeting the statutory duties which legislation places upon us through the Children Act 1989. The Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 has made changes to how we will engage with our customers going forward.

In Children & Family Services there is an emphasis on families being able to help themselves or receive support to do so. Practitioners have faced change in work

processes and embraced engagement with families in achieving outcomes that meet their children's needs. Consultation and engagement is generally undertaken through assessment, care planning and pathway planning duties. This invites the views of children, young people and families to be considered alongside the professional views. When need is collated through the data which informs our performance indicators, we are able to recognise the demand and use this to inform business planning.

For Carers Week 2017, Torfaen Young Carers Service held a Family Fun evening at The Log Cabin, Penygarn. In Total 33, young carers attended, some by themselves and others with members of their family. As well as a variety of workshops, when people arrived every young carer was given a questionnaire to complete. In total 17 questionnaires were completed.

100% of young carers rated the impact of the support and services that Torfaen Young Carer's Service had had either a significant positive or positive impact on their role as carer.

Young carers identified the following as the strengths of the young carer's service:

Lots of activities

Get to interact with people I wouldn't necessarily talk to, enjoy the groups and activities outside the groups

Having fun

Everything

Young Carers June 2017

The national survey for adult services was also distributed for the second time during the year. The results formed a mixed picture of how we are doing

- 93.5% of people felt they were treated with dignity and respect
- 83% were happy with the care and support they received
- 74.7% felt they had the right information and advice when they needed it

As in previous years we have undertaken a survey of carers to receive their feedback on services and support received from social care and the information they provided will help shape services going forward.

The annual questionnaire to carers highlighted that:

- 82.8% of carers felt they had been involved in all decisions about how the care and support was provided for the person they care for.
- 83.3% of carers felt they were treated with dignity and respect
- 55.6% of carers feel supported to continue in their caring role.

Clearly additional work is needed to improve user experience however as all returns are anonymous it is difficult to identify specific area.

Our Family Focus Service undertakes feedback on the service with each family with the parents and the children (dependent on their age and understanding).

Torfaen Young Persons Support Service (TYPSS) in collaboration with the Youth Service, developed a DVD called "21 Words" which is feedback from young people leaving care after being Looked After. This DVD is used to train staff and to help newly Looked after Children. TYPSS hosts an annual Care Leavers Conference. Young people receiving support from TYPSS are invited to complete a 60 second Survey which can relate to various topics ranging from new legislation to complaints. All Care Leavers are offered an Exit Interview to ensure that their voices, views and opinions are being heard.

TYPSS facilitated 3 young people to attend a national consultation event that was hosted by the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the Communication and Engagement Group (a sub group of the South East Wales Safeguarding Board (SEWSCB) undertook a regional consultation event called "Voices of Young People".

We recognised that some people are unable to give their opinions on services or their thoughts on how services can improve. We commission specialist advocacy services for adults and children to ensure that people who find it difficult are still able to have their voices heard.

Our Commissioning Unit continued to work across the region and were key members in the Commissioning Task & Finish group, introduced as part of the Social Services & Wellbeing Act (2014) Wales, and a senior manager in Social Care is chairing this working group. Their first task was to draw together and present the Gwent Wide Commissioning Position statement in relation to Older People's residential care provision to the Regional Partnership Board. For the first time a clear picture of the number of beds, providers and type of care across the region were drawn together. The Gwent wide population needs assessment has been published and this will be used to help us to plan for and develop services to meet the needs of our diverse population.

2018/19

The Commissioning Unit will continue to be an essential member of The Gwent Health Social Care and Wellbeing Partnership – Commissioning Task & Finish Group and will utilise the Population Needs Assessment (PNA) which is central to promoting Wellbeing, supporting people at the earliest opportunity to maintain their independence and to help people to better help themselves, to inform the Regional Market Position statement due for publication in the summer of 2018. Torfaen's Commissioning Unit are leading on this vital piece of work.

The Regional Partnership Board have developed an Area Plan following the PNA and this is a statutory duty required under the Social Services and Wellbeing

Act. The Area Plan was published 1st April 2018 and sets out how the priorities identified in the PNA will be achieved through themed action plans. The Area Plan will also set out key actions to develop a regional commissioning framework and a pooled budget approach for Care Homes.

The high level actions to be progressed through the Joint Area Plan will see us work towards multi-agency place based models for people with mental health needs, that will include wider partners such as Housing Associations, employment support and community programmes. It will also see us align with 5 local Public Service plans under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and explore joint action planning for wider detriments to health.

Our work continues to be directed through our strategic partnerships e.g. Children and Young People, Gwent Adult Safeguarding Partnership, Mental Health and Learning Disability Partnership and the Carers Strategic Board.

PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELLBEING OF THOSE WE HELP

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

Since the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act came in we have been promoting people's wellbeing by asking them "What matters to you". We have been actively encouraging service users – adults and children and carers – to shape and control the services they want to receive. We want service users to feel empowered to achieve their own wellbeing outcomes based on what really matters to them.

Torfaen Community Connectors have continued to befriend people within the Torfaen community to help them to identify exactly what things are important to them and then they work with people to put plans in place to bring about those changes. Preventative services are key to maintaining independence and Adult Services have continued to support and resource a number of initiatives. We have promoted "good neighbour" type support to vulnerable people, via the Community Connectors. It is positive to note that they have continued to grow their networks and forging strong links with other organisations.

During 2017/18 the Community Connectors have responded to 326 referrals with the following outcomes

- ❖ 61 of referrals were stopped from entering or re-entering social services
- ❖ 69% of individuals had a positive outcome
- ❖ 44% required information and advice only
- ❖ 26% received information, advice and assistance

- ❖ 7 referrals were referred to social services

For the individuals who received information, advice and assistance

- ❖ 99% **reported** having improved their wellbeing
- ❖ 95% have improved their independence
- ❖ 99% have built/improved confidence

Torfaen remains committed to keeping the service user at the centre of all our planning, commissioning and service delivery. In 2017/18 we continued to further develop outcome-focused care plans and contracts, rather than concentrating efforts on monitoring tasks and processes. This is not always easy and we do not have the ability to meet all public expectations or all service user choices. We have to be realistic about what can be achieved within the resources available as we have a duty to balance our budget. Our philosophy has continued to be 'Home First' and resources are channelled at services that enable people to live within the own homes/communities independently for as long as possible.

We are working hard to develop and build on new ways of working and new service models to better meet people's needs in a more efficient way. During 2017/18 we have been working hard to increase reablement services and talking to residential care home managers about diversifying their service to adopt a more flexible approach to temporary admissions for respite and reablement.

In residential care settings we have worked with the Care Home Ask and Talk service (C.H.A.a.T) throughout 2017/18. The volunteers – who are all retired health professionals - spend time every month talking to residents in residential and nursing care asking people what makes a 'good day' for them. By us working with home managers and owners and using some of the feedback from C.H.A.a.T we have been able to seek improvements to the quality of life for people living in residential settings.

The Demand and Early Intervention Strategy has fully embedded a preventative agenda within the authority. This has seen Family First projects strengthened with social work support and a partnership approach to resource early intervention at referral stage. More families are receiving support to assist them with their parenting and at an earlier stage in their children's lives.

As reported in previous years the uptake of Direct Payments continues to be disappointing. Alongside the raised eligibility criteria, feedback from clients has highlighted the bureaucracy associated with self-managing Direct Payments has acted as a deterrent for a number of people impacting on the numbers.

"The staff have been instrumental in helping me to achieve my personal wellbeing outcome – which is to stay in my home and keep living with my son in the community".

SERVICE USER 2017

2018/19

During 2018/19 we will adopt a joint approach to advocacy provision with Third Sector partners especially in promotion of independent advocacy.

We will continue to support and develop DEWIS in Torfaen so it becomes the 'go to' place for people who want information, guidance and advice on services that are available to them in order for them to make more informed choices.

Working with people and partners to protect and promote peoples physical and mental health and wellbeing.

In Torfaen 2017/18 saw the continuation by Torfaen Mind of community drop in 'mindfulness' sessions. These were developed to enable people with low mental health to pop in to attend informal sessions aimed at improving mood and helping people to feel more relaxed.

A senior manager from Torfaen Adult Services has also led a piece of work across Gwent over the last 12 months as chair of Gwent Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat Delivery Group. The group (amongst a list of other tasks) are tackling the challenges that the implementation of Policing and Crime Act 2017 brought.

Working with colleagues in the Police, Health Board and others professionals, significant work has been undertaken to improve the training and knowledge of the police for the benefit of citizens experiencing a mental health crisis. There is an exciting new model being developed across Gwent 'Whole Person, Whole System' that is redesigning Acute and Mental Health Crisis Model.

In 2017/18 we saw the embedding of a place based approach 'Care Closer to Home' which included consistent delivery of community connectors across the region to promote independence, positive risk taking and social inclusion.

The Community Connectors are an enthusiastic motivated team working with individuals, groups and organisations in the Torfaen Community. Their role is primarily to work with people to improve their confidence, networks and enable them to be able to access activities, groups, venues of interest and to avoid social isolation and loneliness which has a direct impact on people's wellbeing. They are able to support and help facilitate new emerging groups and activities until natural connectors in the community are confident to continue running the groups and activities for themselves.

The impact of the community connectors cannot be underestimated they have continued to befriend people within the Torfaen community to help them to protect and promote their physical and mental wellbeing.

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of support that has been offered to my son by ... from the team at Community Connectors .He has met my

son and myself on numerous occasions and after establishing the area that my son was interested in volunteering set about finding a suitable placement. This was not a particularly rewarding task as many were sadly put off by the term Autistic Spectrum Disorder, even though we had arranged for suitably trained people to accompany my son. managed after many attempts to connect with Usk Rural Life Museum and my son has been volunteering for an hour or so each week since September.

Many thanks to ... for the support and effort he put in to establishing a placement where my son was welcomed and valued. Also for follow up telephone calls to see how it was all progressing and anything else that he could do to put my son in touch with members of the community who could include him in his transition into adult life beyond college.

Parent 2018

We have also developed Dementia Friendly Communities' and are developing joint commissioning processes for domiciliary care services linking in with CSSIW's report 'Above and Beyond' and the 'Care and Support at Home' plan being developed by Social Care Wales. The aim of this work is to provide practical support to enable people to live fuller lives within their own communities.

We have used the Dementia Friends awareness sessions as the main vehicle to raise awareness of dementia across Torfaen. We have also trained a number of 'Dementia Champions' through Alzheimer's Society Dementia Champion training, and encouraged each partner to identify staff to become champions.

We are building on good foundations in Torfaen and from April 2015 to September 2016

Training Awareness & Dementia Friends sessions	Target 15/16	Actual 15/16	Target 16/17	Actual Q1 & Q2	TOTAL
Dementia Friends	500	815	1000	764	1579
Dementia Friends sessions	-	95		51	146
Dementia Champions	8	26	10	11	22

The implementation group has undertaken a mapping and gapping exercise to identify and target partner organisations to receive Dementia Friends awareness sessions. A number of different organisations have supported DFC and received Dementia Friends awareness and identified champions to train staff. Organisations and businesses that are supporting a DFC are

- Elected Members
- Local Authority staff including Social Services, Business Development & Adult Education

- Melin Housing & Bron Afon Association staff
- Big Pit and Pontypool museums
- Torfaen Business Forum with over 20 individual businesses
- Torfaen Voluntary Association (TVA)
- Gwent Police and Office of Police Crime Commissioner
- Pontypool Indoor Market
- ABUHB staff across a number of medical settings including GPs
- 50 Plus Forums across the borough
- Age Connect
- Greenmeadow Community Farm
- Torfaen Library Service
- Henllys Town Council

Case Study – Torfaen Library Service an awareness session for new staff has been delivered, all contracted staff are now Dementia Friends. A further session is planned for supply staff. Information resources are readily available from us and through firm links with the local Alzheimer’s Society, support can be accessed. Monthly Shared Reading sessions continue at local Memory Café

The implementation group has also developed and agreed a DFC accreditation ‘check list’ so that organisations can adopt the DFC logo. To date organisations and businesses that are working towards adoption of the logo are:

- Melin Housing Association <http://www.melinhomes.co.uk/news/melin-recognised-for-dementia-awareness>
- Gwent Police and Office of Police Crime Commissioner <http://www.gwent.pcc.police.uk/news/story/article/dementia-friendly-recognition-for-police-and-opcc/>
- Torfaen Voluntary Association (TVA)
- Pontypool Museum
- Age Connects Torfaen
- Artie Craftie Blaenavon <http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/News/2015/December/21-Blaenavon-business-become-Dementia-Friendly.aspx>
- Greenmeadow Community Farm <http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/News/2016/March/04-Farm-signs-up-to-dementia-friendly-scheme.aspx>
- Torfaen Frailty ABUHB
- Torfaen Library Service <http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/Libraries/Health-and-Wellbeing/Dementia-Friendly/Dementia-Friendly.aspx>

http://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/14397498.Torfaen_s_library_service_set_to_become_dementia_friendly/

We have created a new web resource in conjunction with local GPs and health colleagues - 'Dementia Roadmap' <http://wales.dementiaroadmap.info/> - and 149 people have accessed the website since its launch. The website was developed using Neighbourhood Care Networks funding. We have also developed DFC information to include on partner's websites, setting out support and further information for people living with dementia and their carers. We have also encouraged Dementia champions to use social media – Facebook, Twitter etc. – to raise awareness.

The Council recognises the invaluable role undertaken by children, young people and adults, who provide informal care for others. In the last Census over 12,000 people in Torfaen indicated that they provide daily some type of informal care for members of their own family or for other people. Carers often only present to statutory services when caring for another person becomes overwhelming for them. They often report that they feel unable to enjoy their own lives due to their caring commitments and Torfaen is fully committed to helping to support this section of our community.

In 2017 Torfaen Young Carer's celebrated Carers Rights Day 2017. The aim of the day is to help carers in their local community know their rights and find out how to get the help and support they are entitled to.

An event by Torfaen Young Carers Service, at the event a number of young carers gave speeches and there was an opportunity for other young carers and their families to express how having a young carers assessment and support has helped them.

There are no words I could say that could express how much the Young Carers Service has helped me in my darkest days. I have made friends, been given hope. Thank you for everything....

Young Carer 2017

The Young Carers Service has massively helped with my confidence I used to be terrified of leaving my house, but now I take public transport to and from college.... Through the resources of the Young Carers Service, I was able to complete my bronze Duke of Edinburgh, got accepted at college...

Part of a speech by a 17 year old young carer

It was inspiring to hear about young carers experiences and how they have managed to use these to improve their lives and futures.

Mayor of Torfaen 2017

During 2017/18 the we provided intensive support from our Commissioning and care management teams to the Torfaen Carers Centre by completing external

grant applications and we helped in developing a “Chill Out” room for young carers. Torfaen provided resources from the commissioning team to support the Carer’s Centre and share skills to ensure that the centre had a more sustainable future. We worked with partners to obtain funding contributions towards the following carers groups and activities:

- Arts & Crafts
- Media
- MH Carers Group
- Art Therapy
- Early onset dementia
- Carers Therapy sessions
- Carers Picture Share Book Sets
- Young Carers & Adult Carers Gardening Projects x2
- Young Carers residential weekend
- Young Carers recognition and awards ceremony
- Carers groups meals x3
- Carers Theatre Trips x2
- Young Carers D of E sponsorship
- Carers events or meetings (including Carers Week & Carers Rights Day) x6

We continued to work with local housing associations, Bron Afon and Melin Homes to identify new/hidden carers and highlight carer’s issues regionally. We are part of the Gwent Programme Board Working Group which consists of the other 4 Gwent LA’s and all the LHB Carers Leads who are working hard to improve the health and wellbeing of Welsh carers.

Every year we carry out an annual survey of carers in order to gain their feedback on the services and support they receive. In 2017/18, 82.8% felt they had been involved in all decisions about how the care and support was provided for the person they cared for however only 55.2% were happy with the support they received.

2018/19

Going forward in 2018/19 we will see the continuation of a place based approach to support people in the community. Through the patch based teams and Community Connectors we will promote independence, positive risk taking and social inclusion.

We will also continue to support the development of Dementia Friendly Communities’ and the further development of joint commissioning processes for domiciliary care services linking in with CSSIW’s report ‘Above and Beyond’ and the ‘Care and Support at Home’ plan being developed by Social Care Wales. The aim of this work is to provide practical support to enable people to live fuller lives within their own communities.

We recognise that we still have significant work to do to improve on the support carer’s receive and this forms part of our work programme going forward for 2018/19.

In 2018/19 an ICF funded Carer's Support Worker will be working in the carer's centre. We are determined to work with partners to develop a thriving, self-sufficient carer's centre that is well used and develops into a valuable resource for all carers in Torfaen. They will continue to receive support, advice and guidance from the care management and commissioning teams.

In 2018/19 we will recruit a dedicated Carer's Support Officer to help develop more support and advice mechanisms.

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

Arrangements for safeguarding across the region are led by the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB), Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GWASB) and Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Board (VAWDSV), which has a range of sub-groups that deliver safeguarding in its practical form. The sub-groups promote greater collaboration, increase effectiveness, and share practice learning. Torfaen's Director of Social Services, Keith Rutherford, chairs GWASB.

Torfaen's Local Safeguarding Network improves the quality of inter-agency safeguarding arrangements and practice at a local level, promoting a direct link between the Boards and its sub-groups and front-line practice across the region. The group promotes a culture of multi-agency learning and increased accountability with local authority areas supported by the Board's Business Unit.

Safeguarding children and adults is one of our corporate priorities. It is not something that we do in isolation but share responsibility with other service areas and with our external partners. The Director chairs the corporate safeguarding leads group (CSLG) which oversees an annual action plan, monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We have an effective Corporate Parenting Panel, led by Elected Members.

The Corporate Safeguarding Leads Group has continued to develop safeguarding arrangements throughout the Council over (this period). The corporate safeguarding policy has been refreshed, and most recently a corporate communications strategy has been agreed to further raise awareness of safeguarding expectations and where to go for help.

A safeguarding awareness e-learning module is now in place and a clear requirement has been set, that all employees will be required to complete Safeguarding Awareness Raising E-Learning, along with the Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) E-learning within the first two months of employment. While there are lots of training opportunities both within the Council and through the Boards which many staff are required to access in their roles and / or choose to access to enhance their knowledge of safeguarding matters, the CSLG has also mandated that in future Safeguarding refresher training is a requirement for all staff, to be completed every 2 -3 years.

The Internal Audit review of Safeguarding Arrangements in the Council, reported on in September 2016, concluded that substantial assurance can be provided to

management. While this provides a positive snapshot, the CSLG recognises that improvement to the safeguarding environment is a continuous process and will continue to oversee and develop safeguarding knowledge, understanding, systems and practice throughout the organisation.

Adult Services Safeguarding policies and practice were scrutinised by CSSIW in 2017 as part of their national inspection programme. It was pleasing to note that the inspectors felt:

Overall we felt there were effective interagency arrangements in place to ensure good planning and delivery of services.

Feedback from partners suggests good professional interface based on mature and long standing relationships. Where there are differences of opinion these are worked through professionally with joint investigations undertaken and action plans being signed off collectively.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), highlighted nationally through the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 – 2013), has continued to have high priority within the service. This led us all to examine how we recognise and support children and young people who are at risk or affected by CSE, and indeed colleagues in Education put in place measures to ensure awareness and knowledge of CSE is on their safeguarding agenda. We know that here in Torfaen there are children and young people who have been groomed and drawn into this abuse. We do not ignore it, working closely with other agencies to ensure that we promote a strong challenge to those people who will exploit the vulnerable. A programme of awareness training has been rolled out to the broader community and significant numbers have now been trained to recognise the signs of CSE. This remains a key priority for the SEWSCB.

Children and Adults at risk continue to be supported through safeguarding measures. This is reflected in the numbers of cases where protection needs are identified and appropriate action taken for example, this Local Authority recently applied for and successfully obtained an Adult Protection Support Order (APSO) which was the first use of this new order in Wales. Since the introduction of the Social Services & Well Being Act (2014) there has been an increase in the number of adult protection referrals. The numbers on the Child protection register have currently stabilised but remain high.

Torfaen is committed to responding to the needs of those who are most at risk in the most effective way possible. To this end there has been significant transformation in the way that Adult services is delivered. The Early intervention and prevention agenda is informing the way Children's services transformation is delivered. Family Focus Team continue to deliver intensive support to children and families now bolstered by the Rapid Response team which is a team dedicated to responding to families in crisis to prevent breakdown. This includes foster families.

MIST is a therapeutic intervention service that works with Looked after Children aged 10-21 years who are trying to overcome significant adversity in their early

years. MIST aims to help young people develop greater emotional well-being and control over their behaviours so that they can engage in meaningful relationships, participate positively in the community, take advantage of opportunities in education and learning and live appropriately in ordinary independent living. There has been positive recognition of this model across the region which resulted in it being expanded into a neighbouring borough.

MIST offers an alternative to residential or out of county care by providing intensive wraparound care through Therapeutic Foster Placements, kinship care and supporting local mainstream foster placements in the young people's local community. MIST provides a very intensive service, which is necessary for only a small number of young people in our borough who have complex needs. In recognition of the critical need for this service and as part of the transformation of children's services agenda, the Local Authority has invested in the service by employing two additional staff and a created a dedicated role within the Family Placement team to recruit MIST foster carers.

The Local Authority has fully implemented the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS). A quality system is critical to performance compliance which ensures standards of practice are maintained

2018/19

The Corporate Safeguarding Leads Group will continue to develop and implement its work plan which will be responsive to child and adult protection themes and in identifying and addressing areas for improvement in safeguarding across the organisation. A service area self- assessment / audit is currently underway which will inform the work plan going forward.

There continues to be challenges around the Looked after Children population which reflects the trend nationally. Cases are presented to Vulnerable Children's Panel (VCP) and Complex Case panel which are chaired by members of the senior management team. These panels monitor and endorse all plans for children and young people that are in and on the edge of care in order to ensure consistency in approach. There will continued emphasis on the promotion of Early Intervention and Prevention agenda.

A new Group Manager's post will be created during 2018/19. The new post holder will concentrate on service transformation and will lead on developing bespoke services for young people aged 16 -18.

CSE (child sexual exploitation) remains a local and regional priority, collaborative work between agencies has seen a reduction in the number active sexual exploitation concerns. Gwent Police and Torfaen Safeguarding Team have collaborated in the implementation of the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation forum (MASE) for Torfaen. The purpose of this forum is to identify strategic issues and any barriers to case management. A new national centre of excellence for CSE has been developed with regional hubs sharing learning and good practice.

Torfaen have committed staff to working in collaboration with this regional hub to develop a consistent approach across the Gwent region to the issue of CSE.

Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

Promoting and supporting people to do the things that matter most to them and helping them to achieve their personal outcomes is a vital part of our role.

The work carried out in Day opportunities during 2017/18 has enabled service users to have tailor made support provided directly by council staff. This has been achieved through positive engagement with Education and Leisure colleagues and going forward service users will benefit from greater choices and better quality services that achieve their desired outcomes.

In the autumn term 2017- 90 pupils were recorded by schools as receiving EOTAS provision as part of their education plan. 43.3% of these are in year 11 and 71.1% in key stage 4. 76.6% of the pupils were on their schools ALN register and 14.4% were in receipt of free school meals.

The % of Year 11 NEETS compares well to the rest of Wales. Many children and young people progress well through their participation in a good range of wider learning opportunities.

During 2018/19 the responsibility for Community Services will transfer to the Head of Housing, Commissioning and Service Transformation within Social Care and Housing. This will be a great opportunity to join up services and provide more work, leisure and community opportunities for service users and carers.

Learning outcomes for the majority of vulnerable groups have shown improvement at KS2 and KS3. Effective partnership working has secured positive results for many vulnerable children and young people.

Children and young people in Torfaen have access to a wide range of good quality opportunities to help them develop safe, healthy behaviours and attitudes that have a positive effect on their overall wellbeing. The LA and its partners provide a good range of mechanisms to engage children and young people in decision making and a few partners have well established participatory practice that has been nationally recognised.

Yes I can go to college and go bowling, to the cinema and do shopping.
Carer – Carers Survey 2017/18

When my support worker offered help to me with Community Connectors I must admit I was a little apprehensive.

In the past twelve months or more information have become withdrawn, and, due to a lung disease, am not able to travel far on foot so meeting people wouldn't be on my agenda. In fact I could go days without conversing with anyone. I accepted the invitation from one of your team, to attend a local cafe. Something I would

never do alone. It was a little scary I must admit but just has this way of making you feel relaxed.

We returned there on three occasions I was always a little nervous but felt at ease when he arrived, I would always wait outside.

He encouraged me to venture a little further and now I make my way to the cafe, which is a fair distance from where I live, and we have lunch and talk just about anything. I thoroughly enjoy my meetings with him he has helped me achieve a lot in a short space of time.

He listens intensely and always gives a valid opinion.

I have a long way to go, of this I am aware, but I feel I have achieved a lot in this time spent with him.

He is a credit to Community Connectors.

Service User 2017

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

The Early Intervention and Prevention strategy, has embedded a preventative focus within the authority. This has seen Family First projects strengthened with professional social work support and a partnership approach to resource early intervention at referral stage. The Family Focus Team has also been strengthened with additional staff to support the work of Family First. This means more families, who may become at risk of needing statutory intervention, are receiving support to assist them with their parenting and at an earlier stage in their children's lives.

45% of all care leavers are in education, training or employment at 12 months after leaving care. In total we have 24 young people in this category, 13 are currently NEETS. Of these 1 is detained in prison and 1 is a young mum

30% of all care leavers are in education, training or employment at 24 months after leaving care in total we have 10 young people in this category, 7 are currently NEETS. Of these 1 is detained in prison which prevents him from working.

The Key themes that came from the work Better Future Lives in Gwent carried out were:

- Friends are important
- Opportunities to develop a sexual relationship are important
- Natural support is better than paid support, but any support is better than none
- It is important to feel safe, know how to stay safe and take risks responsibly
- Work and day services are part of social life, not just about work
- Barriers are lack of flexible support, lack of independence around travelling and lack of information

We will use this feedback to shape services and support for people with a disability in the future – starting with a review of our Market Position Statement in 2018/19.

2018/19

We will work with partners to develop multi-agency place based models which include wider partners such as housing associations, employment support and community programmes for people with poor mental health.

We will appoint a dedicated carers support worker for Torfaen

For Carers we will help coordinate consistent community based services such as community connectors/social prescribers to identify and support carers as part of the work under the Joint Area Plan.

We will support the review and realignment of third sector commissioning principles to support befriending for carers requiring support.

We will work towards consistent commissioning across Social Care and Health to ensure equitable, region wide and effective models of carer support including flexible respite.

Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic wellbeing, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that is meeting their needs

Somerton House development opened in August 2017 and we work with partners to help facilitate support for people to enjoy a meaningful social life within their community. Somerton House in Cwmbran provides 4 adapted flats for people with a disability (under 65); a 4 bedded autism/high needs unit (with sleep in room), 4 flats for people with a learning disability, and 4 older people/generic social care flats.

In April 2018, the Supporting People launched its 'Gateway' Service which promotes greater co-ordination of housing related support provision and provides a single point of contact for vulnerable people in need of support.

Responding to demand, the Supporting People are piloting immediate access housing related support services for vulnerable people who are at risk of homelessness as well as people whose mental health is making it difficult to cope with day to day living.

In relation to older people our Commissioning Unit rolled out the new way they monitor residential care home contracts to concentrate on the quality of life for the people that live there. They now focus their monitoring visits to ensure that residents are:

- Treated with dignity and respect
- Still feel part of a community
- Are involved in decisions about their own care and home life
- Are able to make decisions about their own health
- Enjoy living in the home
- Have confidence in the staff caring for them

This new way of carrying out contract compliance visits is in line with the recommendations published in the Older Persons Commissioner Review of Residential and Nursing Care in Wales. The change in approach has been welcomed by service providers and commissioning staff alike who both describe the process as far more meaningful for them and indeed the residents.

Adult Services Community Services (Personal Care Team) were also subject to CSSIW inspection visit on the 30th November 2017. It was heartening to read some of the comments made by the Inspector and service users about our staff.

Overall we found that people are supported by staff who are familiar to them and who are trained and competent. People mostly expressed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of care they received.

They will do anything for me, I only have to ask.

They are great, respectful and professional.

Thanks to the manager and her wonderful team of carers. I am very grateful for the care I have received these last few months. It would have been very difficult for me without you.

Services Users 2017/18

Could I send sincere thanks to your team for the care given to our father? From care given at home rapid response to emergency care. The ladies were the best we could have expected. That allowed dad to stay at home with palliative care. Care and equipment was put in place quickly and efficiently. The care also included me as the main carer which I am very grateful making my job easier.

Services Users Family 2017/18

Everyone we spoke with confirmed that support workers were kind and gentle towards them. It was clear that good relationships had been established.

The Supporting People Programme provides housing related support services to enable vulnerable people to live independently. In 2017/18, the programme supported approximately 5471 people (pending verification), helping them to feel safer, manage their money, manage their accommodation and manage their physical and mental health. Housing related support can include help with activities such as claiming benefits, finding and managing suitable accommodation, accessing a range of services and emotional support. Support can be delivered in

the person's own home or in supported accommodation such as hostels, refuges or group homes.

All young people leaving care have a named social worker to support them and a personal advisor to support their individual circumstances. The 16+ team, as part of Torfaen Young Person's Support Service (TYPSS), provides most of the support to young people leaving care undertaking the statutory social work duties and is compliant with the requirement laid down in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

11.39% of our care leavers experienced homelessness during 2017/18. We had 9 young people out of a total of 61 that experienced homelessness during the year.

It is important for people working in health and social care to recognise that many people can only communicate their care needs effectively through the medium of Welsh or other first language.

In 2017/18 the 'Follow on Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social services and Social Care 2016-19' has been adopted and resulting actions have updated our 'More than Just Words' action plan and we will continue with a focus on understanding the Welsh language requirements of service users placed in residential and nursing care.

The low number, 9.8%, of Welsh language speakers in the Borough means provision of services through the medium of Welsh will always present us with a challenge, but we continue to positively recognise the importance of service delivery in the medium of Welsh for some service users and have therefore carried out surveys with staff, provider workforces and Carers to assist us in 'actively offering' social care services in Welsh throughout the Borough. In addition, attendance at the regional 'Mwy Na Geiriau' group is enabling us to share learning and best practice with colleagues from other Local Authorities and the Local Health Board.

Many service users are very vulnerable, so placing a responsibility on them to ask for services through the medium of English is unfair, if it is not their first/natural language. It is the responsibility of service providers to meet these language needs.

There are four good reasons for getting this right:

- improving the quality of care
- maintaining professional standards
- meeting the language need of users
- comply with legal and statutory requirements

The adult population of Torfaen is predominantly English speaking with only 9.8% Welsh speakers. However, more Children and Young People are attending Welsh schools and using Welsh as their language of choice. Therefore, increasing the ability of the workforce to speak Welsh in key service areas and ensuring language awareness amongst all staff is essential.

96.6% of Adults in the Adult Services 2017/18 survey stated that they were able to communicate in their preferred language.

83.6% of Adults in the Adult Services Survey 2017/18 felt they lived in a home that best supports their wellbeing

2018/19

During 2018/19 we will work with partners to improve the wellbeing of the citizens of Torfaen. We realise that we have more to do in this area and our work programme for 2017/18 reflects that. Our Third Sector partners have a major role to play to encourage and facilitate opportunities for people who may find it difficult to socialise with others.

In the spring of 2019 Ysgol Panteg a £2.4m scheme delivering 9 units of supported and shared accommodation and will be one of the first jointly commissioned care packages with health and social care in Torfaen and is due for completion. The commissioning unit and Housing Strategy team have been essential members of the project team, making this happen.

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO

Our workforce and how we support their professional roles

Our staff are our greatest asset; a skilled and a motivated workforce are essential to safeguard and support vulnerable people, promote independence and enhance service delivery. Ensuring that front line practitioners and managers are supported and well trained is crucial to the success of the service. Our workforce has remained very stable, our retention of staff is excellent and we work hard to promote a positive working culture, although we recognise that demand on all teams is becoming a bigger challenge, as resources reduce and demands continue to increase.

During 2017/18 our new Adult Services community based teams have further developed their roles within this new way of working. We have supported and encouraged all staff to ensure that they are comfortable with the changes and that have provided additional peer support if needed.

In 2017/18 we supported a further 2 new social trainees to undertake their degree course.

Human Resource functions are delivered centrally and based corporately within the Resources Division; broadly this delivers consistency across the whole Council at both a strategic and operational level. The Workforce Development Team remains part of Social Care and Housing services.

We highly value staff, both internal and sector wide and we endeavour to support teams and individuals to carry out their roles to the best of their ability. We

promote effective performance management at all levels, to support staff to contribute positively to achieve the best outcomes for service users.

Funding for training and development is limited and we anticipate that in the next financial year, due to the SCWDP grant requirements and other WG funding cuts which impact the wider sector, the training budget will be increasingly constrained. However, we do recognise that workforce development remains essential in retaining the skills lost over the recent and coming years, and to ensure effective succession planning. To this end we are encouraging staff to participate in different ways of acquiring new skills and development opportunities.

During 2016/17, we continued to build on our collaborative working arrangements with Newport; sharing staff resources which enables us to 1) meet and maintain the Care Council for Wales's qualification requirements, and 2) deliver an efficient and effective programme of Social Work qualifying and post qualifying training. The Director of Social Services chairs the Gwent Workforce Group.

We continue to proactively develop collaborative arrangements with other neighbouring authorities, to ensure that Torfaen remains able to optimise opportunities for learning and development, as resources reduce. During 2016/17, we worked on a regional basis with other local authority workforce development teams and health partners to deliver a programme of organisational development and core training, designed to support the implementation of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. Over the next financial year we will continue to work regionally to maximise resources and minimise duplication and deliver national priorities for workforce development.

As part of the Social Work Qualifying and Post Qualifying Programme, Torfaen offered 5 members of staff access to the social work traineeship and provided a total of 31 placements for social work students on the degree programme. We anticipate that in the next financial/ academic year we will be able to offer a consistent number of traineeships. However, there has been a recent decline in university applications, which we expect to see reflected in placement requirements in the year ahead. Therefore, we estimate that in 2017/18 we will provide 27 social work placements, which we will ensure, continue to be positive, relevant and inspiring.

We have invested in training and support to managers in areas such as sickness absence, managing grievance, discipline and personal performance. This is contributing to improved attendance and performance. In 2016/7 we invested in tools and training to help managers develop resilience to equip them to respond to, and manage, the changes and pressures that they and their teams will be challenged with over the coming year. We will continue to provide this support as we embed the cultural and practice changes required under the new legislation.

Our Adult Services Staff Handbook captures our policies, procedures and guidance which have proved invaluable for new starters and also for existing staff to ensure we have the appropriate governance in place. Improvement is also driven by the Practitioner Forum which looks at best practice examples from across the world to improve outcomes that are client centred and not process driven.

Our approach is to provide challenge and support, to fully utilise the skills, expertise and capacity of our teams. We are seeing evidence in improved service performance and in sickness rates, despite the pressure on teams.

Recruitment to the domiciliary care service both internally and externally remains a challenge and is a priority for future work across the region.

67.7% of Social Care & Housing staff that responded to the staff survey felt that their training and development needs have been supported over the last 12 months.

2018/19

During 2018/19 our Adult Services community based teams will further develop their roles within this new way of working. It will be important for us to ensure that they are comfortable with the changes and that we provide additional peer support if needed.

The Transformation Team will be working with the region in 2018/19 to develop a Social Care Academy. The Academy will promote care excellence and provide training and development opportunities for care apprentices as well as helping with recruitment and retention and work experience opportunities.

During the next twelve months we will support a further 2 new social work trainees to undertake their degree course.

We will use the results from the Employee Survey 2018/19 to look at further ways in which we can support our front line staff building on the training that was delivered last year.

Our financial resources and how we plan for the future

2017/18 has been another extremely challenging year for Social Care and Housing with a need to save £1.641m, as agreed by Council in February 2017, against a backcloth of increasing demands. We have received recognition from the Council that social care plays a vital role in protecting those who are most vulnerable and have been given protection for our frontline budget, relative to some other service areas, in line with the Corporate Plan priorities. We have received significant corporate and political support to make difficult policy and service choices. We anticipate further policy choices will be needed in the years ahead, and the decisions will be extremely difficult.

The 2017/18 Social Care & Housing Budget was set as follows:

Service & Housing Service Area 2017/18	
	£
Children's & Family Services	14,448,992
Adult Services	23,960,412
Commissioning & Service Transformation	959,621
Service Strategy & Regulation	195,822
Housing	825,726
Total	40,390,573

In 2017/18 the savings identified for the Adult Services Service Area were focused on providing sustainable services for the future achieved through divisional redesign improving the use of team accommodation and redesigning the front end preventative services and ensuring that services meet assessed eligible needs and improve signposting to self-provision.

The 2017/18 savings for Children & Family Services focused on working with partners to ensure packages of care are funded appropriately, are of good quality and achieve the best outcomes for children and their families.

Torfaen operate a rigorous budget monitoring process. With regular reporting to budget holders, where pressures are identified other mitigating alternatives are considered and, where a strategic approach to commissioning services is required, the focus of the Commissioning Unit is flexible enough to react to hotspots in service provision.

The Children & Family Services budget was under significant pressure from increased legal charges in respect of assessments, solicitors, counsels and increased court costs.

The placement budgets within Children & Family Services incurred material overspends. The main pressure areas were the increased demand particularly external placements budget including the expenditure in respect of on high cost placements including residential placements and secure accommodation and supported living. This was due to an increase in demand for such placements coupled with an increase in need and complexity of the children and therefore an increase in the cost of individual placements. Increases in demand for Parent and Child placements linked to the legal process, as well as Kinship and Special Guardianship Order placements.

The Adult Services redesign has embedded in 2017/18 this has resulted in a shift in the spend profile. A reduction in commissioned services were achieved. We secured additional corporate resource to offset the challenge of National Living Wage in order to enable us to help mitigate the impact on our providers who have all experienced a rise in employer costs following the introduction of the National Living Wage. This is a national problem and discussions continue across the sector to better understand and mitigate the impacts.

During 2017/18 the five Councils and the Health Board began working towards a regional approach to commissioning residential care provision for people aged 65 or over, with an intention to pool resources from 2018 in line with the Social Services & Wellbeing Act.

We recognise that the current economic climate is putting individuals, partners, providers and the public sector under significant pressure. We are focusing our energy on working with partners and service users to ensure that we deliver quality services at appropriate and sustainable cost. Difficult choices have to be made but this is done within a risk assessment framework, ensuring that we keep vulnerable children and adults safe. We see the role of Torfaen Voluntary Alliance and other partners, being essential in supporting organisations to attract new funds and deliver efficiencies across the third sector. The Third Sector has a significant role in providing preventative support and early intervention to manage demand on statutory services and we hope our regional citizen and provider forums will help us shape future service models that are efficient and effective in responding to individual needs.

Of the total social care budget, around 90% is spent on externally contracted services, we have externalised most direct provision and have developed expertise in commissioning functions. In-house provision is minimal with a small specialist domiciliary care service and a number of day opportunities for people with high needs. We recognise evidence based commissioning is essential to the stability of a vibrant social care market, so that citizens are able to make choices about the way their care and support needs are met.

2018/19

- We will focus on the areas that are material budget pressures. E.g. the commissioning of placements in Children & Family Services.
- Update and adopt a fit for purpose regional fee model for over 65 Residential & Nursing Care
- Support and develop the intervention / prevention services in Torfaen.
- Regional work on pooled budgets as required under Part 9 SSWBA
- Regional work to address the recruitment and retention issues in the domiciliary care market.
- Support Adult Services to design and deliver alternative models of care.

Our partnership working, political and corporate leadership, governance and Accountability

The Council's Corporate Plan channels its resources to help support the most vulnerable in society. Torfaen is a modern and forward thinking local authority which works collectively with partners to provide efficient and effective services. Torfaen has a long standing track record of partnership working and 2017/18 saw us continue to build on this by leading on the development of regional approaches to strategic commissioning including the development of a regional care home contract.

Officers, Public Service Board (PSB) members and elected members engage well with a wide range of stakeholders and share a common vision and accountability that ensures a high priority is given to education and improving outcomes for children and young people.

The Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 has impacted significantly on how we work with vulnerable people. It was intended to provide the framework to empower local authorities, in partnership with key stakeholders, to address the demands facing social care in Wales. There continues to be a need for changes in community expectations as the public sector strives to manage the changing population needs alongside demand for services, all in a context of shrinking resources. Collaboration has been driven by placing duties on local government, Local Health Boards and other public bodies to work together to improve the wellbeing of people, by better aligning everyone's skills and resources.

In Social Services strategic partnership working has seen us work closely with ABUHB and other stakeholders to reduce delayed transfers of care by improving and expanding multi-agency care and multidisciplinary working. This has been further made possible by the patch based teams that now work across the borough in adult services. In 2018/19 we will be looking at this approach in Children and Families service.

We collaborate with other local authorities, local health board, other partners as well as our service providers to ensure that service standards are secured at the best possible cost, whilst at the same time, recognising that our service providers have their own cost pressures and must comply with changing legislation that inevitably will impact on the viability and sustainability of their businesses.

During 2017/18 we worked with our partners to pool knowledge and resources which led to greater efficiency and more importantly, better outcomes for clients with improved choice and quality. One of the issues clearly vocalised by clients is their frustrations of silo working and duplication between agencies. However, if we are to provide tailored responses to meet unique needs, one size does not fit all, and, for some services, it is appropriate to retain a local focus to respond to local need. Also, integrated service models that require agreement from a number of partners takes time and often require compromise for the greater good.

Our key evaluation system is through inspection by CIW. This is primarily through this report but also through themed inspections. Our Members scrutinise our work and decide (at their visioning sessions) what work they want to focus on. Reports for Scrutiny give us an opportunity to reflect on available data, performance and factors influencing the environment. It means that the service will be challenged and we may need to give clarity to Elected Members. It is this challenge, which comes from a different perspective that is always helpful.

Feedback on Internal Audit reviews across the service during the year has confirmed that safe processes are in place and, where areas for improvement have been highlighted, action plans have been implemented. The external auditors reviewed all major funding received from external grants. All expenditure was

found to be relevant and in line with the terms and conditions set out in each individual grant.

We set high standards but sometimes things do go wrong. Everyone who makes a complaint has a right to be listened to and have their complaint resolved quickly and effectively. When complaints are received, we accept them as an essential part of our performance feedback, believing that it is important to learn lessons by establishing action plans to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

During 2017/18 the number of Stage 1 complaints received has increased from 10 in 2016/17 to 12.

It is worth noting that a further 68 queries for Children and Family Services and 32 for Adult Services were received, these were either referred elsewhere or not accepted as a complaint, but still required a significant amount of officer time.

The majority of complaints were dealt with within statutory deadlines in 2016/17, only one stage was slightly over the statutory deadlines. The one stage 2 complaint was over the 25 working days for conclusion by 13 working days. The complainants were kept informed throughout the investigation of the delay.

This investment in prompt resolution is crucial to competent complaint management and supports the creation of the central team to effectively handle such contacts. It increases customer satisfaction as sufficient resourcing enables an early response to complaints.

The total number of calls (queries and complaints) dealt with in 2017/18 was 113 which is decrease on the 123 received in 2016/17.

Summary of Complaints Received April 2017 – March 2018		
	Stage 1	Stage 2
Children & Family Services	6	0
Adult Services	6	1
Business Support	0	0
Total Number of Complaints	12	1

A total of 12 Stage 1 complaints were received:

- 6 (50%) for Adult Services; and
- 6 (50%) for Children and Family Services.

There was one Stage 2 complaint for Adult Services which was partly upheld in that the Authority did not adequately consult with a family prior to care changes being

implemented. The fact that the changes were made was not upheld as the Authority has a duty of care to both the staff and the service user.

8 complaints went to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, none of which the Ombudsman intends to investigate:

- PSOW unable to investigate 2 cases due to court action being in place.
- PSOW not investigating due to external organisation being responsible for the delays.
- No investigations as contact with Council under complaints process has not been made.
- Two complaints concluded there was sufficient action taken by Council.
- PSOW asked that we investigate concerns regarding a care home.
- No investigation as the Council made a decision it was entitled to make.

The majority of complaints this year were about Quality of Service

Complaints were varied and wide ranging but largely focussed on failure to communicate effectively.

All issues involving staff are addressed with the individuals concerned. Staff attitude continues to be a primary factor in the complaints received; this may be explained by the nature of the role and staff having to give information that is not always well received. It is important to note that there were no discernible trends.

As a result of the complaints and concerns received, several lessons have been learned which have instigated changes in usual practices in order to prevent repeat occurrences and improve services going forward.

- Reminder for teams to communicate outcomes with families, good practice to re-visit for this purpose.
- Communication could be improved to manage the expectations of service users and their families, especially around the “What matters to the service user” conversation and to clarify responsibilities of health and social care
- Raise awareness that the telephones cannot make overseas calls, but the system only gives an engaged tone so that officers are not made aware of this when trying to call. Request must be submitted to SRS.
- Ensure that all contact information is kept up to date, particularly relating to telephone numbers linked for Lifeline users.

We received 19 compliments during the year, 18 for Adult Services and 1 for Children & Family Services. The comments provided praise for care services and the way in which teams and individual staff members had dealt with specific cases.

2018/19

In 2018/19 the Complaints and FOI team will continue to work closely with managers to ensure that the complaints process remains consistent and fair. The Complaints and FOI Manager attends regular briefings with heads of service which helps to highlight any issues and ratify decisions and actions.

Conclusion

2017/18 has once again seen a rise in demand across all parts of the service. We have risen to that challenge whilst still working continuously to improve and modernise our services. Our role in safeguarding vulnerable children and adults continues to be recognised as a political and corporate priority for the Council. This is evident in how we work across service areas to seek innovative ways to provide services whilst budgets continue to be squeezed.

Torfaen Council remains firmly committed to keeping the service user at the heart of everything we do. The success of our way of working is evident in the number of people we support within the diverse community that is Torfaen.

We have continued to embed the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 this year by ensuring that the principles of strengths based assessment and positive risk taking underpins our way of working. We do this to help us to promote adults and children's independence and provide information, advice and assistance that will support both service users and carers whose need levels are not yet high enough that they need to be supported by statutory agencies.

We know the areas where we need to improve and know that we will have to work in partnership in order to do that. We also know that the social care sector is becoming increasingly fragile and that we need to work closely and in partnership with our service providers to help business remain sustainable and become flexible enough to be adapt and fit the future needs of the population.

Finally I hope that my report will prompt some discussion amongst partners, service users and carers and I welcome your views on how you can work with us and help us to identify what matters most to you. We are, as always, keen to engage with and listen to anyone who has an interest in what we do and why.

KEITH RUTHERFORD
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES
2018.