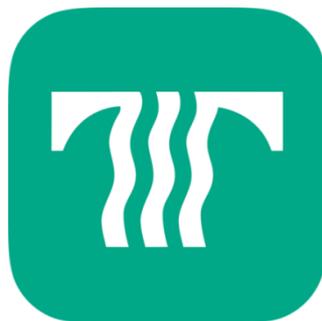


Changing Lives



Director of Social Services Annual Report 2018/19



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1. INTRODUCTION

‘Changing Lives’

This is our second 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.

Our report is written for the stakeholders of Torfaen. It is a formal account of our improvement journey by our Statutory Director of Social Services and has been developed through an ongoing assessment of progress throughout 2018/19.

Our report is only an overview of our performance; much more detail is included in our Service Planning documents. We have regional comparable data as we have worked with neighbouring authorities during 2018/19 to produce SS&WB Act performance measures.

Our 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 our well-being outcomes for the people living in Torfaen.



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

2. DIRECTORS SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

2018/19 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 Social Services has demonstrated 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 2018/19 we continued to work under the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 ensuring that the principles of strengths based assessment, the “What matters conversation” 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 continued to develop ‘patch based teams’ who work in the community with clients and carers in a far more flexible way, with teams now being accommodated within their patches. Our approach was initially borne out of the need to think more creatively and to manage demand more effectively. Our approach has shown demonstrable results particularly in relation to improved outcomes and experiences for service users and carers. This way of working has contributed to 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. Initial feedback from users, carers, other professionals and partners is very positive and therefore a process has begun to further strengthen patch based working in partnership with communities.

The last year has seen another increase in demand in our Children and Families Service. The work we do with children and young people remains diverse but in many areas appears to be becoming more demanding with tighter timescales and greater pressure generally on performance. We have continued to develop closer links with Education, Health, Adult Service colleagues and Housing to ensure that young people with eligible needs are supported through transition into adulthood. Throughout 2018/19 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 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. We have worked and continue to work to maximise efficiencies in this area. In 2018/19 we continued the success of

the multi-agency working party, which comes 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, we, along with other organisations had to find significant savings to deliver our corporate responsibility for a balanced budget during 2018/19. 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 increases in April 2018. 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

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. We 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.

In 2019/20

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. Our Senior Management Team is committed to ensuring that on-going budget pressures do not place either our service users or staff at risk. Our challenge will be to continue to manage demand, to do more with less and we will explore further opportunities for collaboration where it adds value to citizens and improves service efficiency.

During the year the Regional Partnership Board, has overseen the implementation and the embedding of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and 2018/19 saw the process of adopting new procedures and practices, regional

commissioning documents, virtual pooled fund for older people's residential care 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.

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 2018/19 our Adult Services continued the collaboration with a local provider to test out the principles of outcome based commissioning in a small geographical area for part of the year. This pilot was then evaluated, evidencing that 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. In 2019/20 we will be trialling and preparing to roll out this way of working on a larger scale.

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 2019

3. HOW ARE PEOPLE SHAPING OUR SERVICES?

We recognise that we still have a way to go before the support and services we offer are individually shaped by the people who access them. However during 2018/19 we continued to improve the mechanisms we use to engage with users, carers and families and providers. We actively seek and use citizen feedback to improve the support we provide to inform improvement. Consultation and engagement with all service users is undertaken through our assessment, care planning and transition planning processes alongside focussed engagement on service development.

In 2018/19 in adult services we helped to promote peoples' independence and self-resilience by working with them, with support from the wellbeing teams to identify alternative ways of delivering support. We have engaged with people to understand what matters to them and collaboratively find solutions that draw upon their personal strengths and resources and those of their families and the community. It has been important to hear the views and feedback from citizen's not yet accessing services, engagement at local community events has proved beneficial in capturing their views.

We have worked in collaboration with users and carers to develop and review care and support plans to identify opportunities for change from traditional models of care to encourage independence and social inclusion.

Our exciting work in Adult Service's day opportunities has continued where tailor made support has been 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. 2018/19 saw us build on this work in order to better shape and deliver support for people with a learning or physical disability, delivering daily activities and interventions that have had a positive impact on people's lives. New examples include sensory communication resources, cooking skills for life and personalised interventions for people with complex needs. We adopted a new approach last year in our review of dementia day support holding 'couch conversations' with users and carers to gain their views. The experience and outcomes were positive for the staff as well as the 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 our 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.

In respect of Adult Carers, funding from the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) was utilised to employ a dedicated Carers Support Worker (CSW) in August 2018. The CSW helped to assist and support families in times of crisis and experiencing difficulties. The CSW helps carers to continue caring and prevent the need for statutory intervention thus remaining independent in their own homes specifically considering the wellbeing of carers and their families. Since the appointment, 49 carers have received 1 to 1 support and assistance.

We continue work closely with carer groups and organisations including Age Connects, Carers Trust and the Torfaen Carers Centre. This collaboration work resulted in;

- New carers induction course reinstated March 2019
- Quarterly Carers Newsletter started
- Weekly Carers Bowling Club & Cinema trips
- Carers MiFi pilot project trialled
- 67 Carers attended a pantomime and 46 Carers attended a Christmas lunch that we organised and part funded.

Carer's breaks and respite provided by Carers Trust via Torfaen Carers Centre. Included: 25 Carers enjoyed a 4 night break in North Wales with a specialised company who have expertise in providing breaks for people with caring needs.

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:

- 88% of carers felt they had been involved in all decisions about how the care and support was provided for the person they care for.
- 87% of carers felt they were treated with dignity and respect
- 65% 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 areas.

Looking forward to 2019/20, work has already begun to plan the following trips and sessions:

- 4 upcoming trips organised for June, August, September and December.
- Introducing and trialling Tango Therapy
- Starting up a 'Carers choir'.

In respect of Young Carers (Aged 5 to 16) & Young Adult Carers (Aged 16 to 25) a lot of activity has been ongoing throughout 2018/19.

For Carers Week 2018, Torfaen Young Carers Service held a Family Fun evening at The Log Cabin, Penygarn. 28, young carers attended, some by themselves and others with members of their family.

As well as a variety of workshops and activities, every young carer was given a questionnaire to complete. 23 questionnaires were completed. A summary of the feedback received is set out below.

Q: Overall how would you rate the support you have received from Torfaen Young Carers Service?

A: *13 said excellent, 7 said very good, 2 said good and 1 said average*

Q: How would you rate the impact of the support and services that Torfaen Young Carers Service have provided, on your caring role?

A: *13 answered significant positive impact, 10 answered positive impact and 0 answered little to no impact and negative impact.*

Q: Do you feel supported to continue your caring role?

A: All 23 answered yes

Q: What are the strengths of the Young Carers Service? What do we do well?

A: *"Helps me care for my mummy"*

"To care for the children that care"

"Helping with school"

"Meeting up with other young carers"

"Provides good help"

"I like how you make it fun while we are learning"

In June 2018, Torfaen Young Carers Service took 25 young carers aged 11 to 16 to a Young Carers Festival at Fairthorne Manor in Southampton. The Festival was organised by the YMCA and the Children Society. The Festival provides young carers with the opportunity to have fun, relax, socialise and have their voices heard about issues that affect them. Approximately, 1800 young carers attended from throughout the UK. A film produced by the organisers about this year's festival can be found on Youtube.

As part of the Youth Service programme of activities young carers took part in a number of activities, events and day trips. These included:

- 5 attending go-carting
- 14 attending an escape room
- 5 attending cooking sessions
- 6 attended gorge walking
- 8 attending water day and
- 18 attending Drayton Manor

The national survey for adult services was also distributed for the second time during the year. The results helped us form a picture on how we are doing

- 92% of people felt they were treated with dignity and respect
- 84% were happy with the care and support they received
- 78% 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.

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

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

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. In 2018/19 we worked with neighboring local authorities to develop a regional advocacy contract.

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. Following on from the successful publication of the Gwent Position Statement the Commissioning Task & Finish Group, led by our officers, we collated more detailed information and produced the Gwent Market Position Statement. This in turn will be used as a starting point for the Regional Commissioning Strategy to be developed in 2019/20.

The Regional Partnership Board developed an Area Plan following the PNA, 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 also sets out key actions to develop a regional commissioning framework and a pooled budget approach for Care Homes. Throughout the year the Commissioning Unit have been key in developing a Regional Contract and specification due for implementation in April 2019, linked to this will be Regional Contract Monitoring framework to be introduced

in 2019/20. We have engaged with other local authority partners, health and our providers to ensure that these key documents are fit for purpose.

The high level actions detailed in the Area Plan has seen us work towards multi-agency place based models for people with mental health needs, that 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 of health.

2019/20

Our Commissioning Unit will continue to be an essential member of The Gwent Health Social Care and Wellbeing Partnership – Commissioning Task and 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 Commissioning Strategy due for publication in 2019.

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.

Adult Services will be extending the review of day opportunities in 2019/20 and has been able to access additional resources to work with users and carers to establish 'what does a good day look like'. Community engagement and co-production will be key to achieving successful and sustainable change. With the support of external advocacy we will engage with people using services, people who may use services in the future, unpaid carers and families, the community, and professionals. This will involve asking over 100 people open questions about what matters most to them in their lives, what makes a good life now, or what they dream of, why, and how they would most like that to be enabled. We recognise that some people with limited communication will need an advocate trained in Talking mats or other communication tools to facilitate this.

4. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELLBEING OF THOSE WE HELP

A. 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. Adult Services has been a pilot for "Collaborative Conversations" training and subsequent roll out. We want service users to feel empowered to achieve their own wellbeing outcomes based on what really matters to them.

Torfaen Community Connectors continue to work with people who are lonely, socially isolated, and lacking in confidence or who may have lost touch with their networks and/or community. Community Connectors work with people to identify 'what matters' to them with regard to becoming more socially active. They organise with the person a bespoke plan to meet their wellbeing outcomes and enable them to access community activities, groups and events either with others or alone. Preventative services are key to promoting independence and resilient communities. Adult services have continued to support and resource a number of initiatives, promoting "good neighbour" type support to vulnerable people. The Community Connectors continue to grow their networks and forge strong links with other organisations in the community, including a collaborative venture with ABUHB known as Care Navigation. This project is being launched on 7th May 2019 and aims to signpost people to other services.

The Building Resilient Communities Team became part of the Housing, Communities and Commissioning division in 2018/19. The Social Prescribers have become an integral part of the wider Building Resilient Communities team through an increased physical presence amongst the various teams. A noted increase in referrals to the wider provision has enabled a quicker response to individuals and mitigated the perceived need to visit the GP for non-clinical interventions (i.e. financial inclusion, housing and benefit advice and support).

During 2018/19 the Social Prescribers worked with over 500 residents in order to provide appropriate interventions or make onwards referrals, >95% of respondents said that the service had been valuable.

"M was referred due to her raised anxiety and her increasing instances of low mood, with the GP hopeful that non-clinical interventions could be found for her condition that would work for her. M advised that part of her anxiety was catastrophising, and she would often not leave the house because she was sure that she would 'drop dead in the street'. Because of her fear of leaving the house, we chatted about coping mechanisms she could use for herself to manage her anxiety when she was at home. This included breathing techniques and mindfulness, and she was keen to try these. She advised that she felt so much better just having the opportunity to talk to someone about her condition and the thoughts that she was experiencing, and was keen to try some of the techniques discussed." Social Prescriber.

We understand that it is not always easy for individuals to communicate what matters to them. During 2018/19 we have adopted a regional approach to advocacy provision with Third Sector partners especially in promotion of independent advocacy. This has increased the range of advocacy services available to Torfaen citizens.

We remain committed to keeping the users and carers at the centre of all our planning, commissioning, services and support offer. In 2018/19 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 user and carer 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 their own homes/communities independently for as long as possible.

We are working hard to develop and build on new ways of working and new support models to better meet people's needs in a more effective and efficient way. Adult Services Teams have built stronger links with communities by moving into area based accommodation and becoming more accessible to the public. We have expanded our knowledge of the cultural and physical needs in each community and the local resources available as well as strengthening our relationships with professionals, people and communities in the area.

During 2018/19 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. We have started to develop, design and identify our Bed Based Strategy in preparation for 2019/20 in order to ensure we can best provide a variety of support options for individuals.

In residential care settings we have worked with the Care Home Ask and Talk service (C.H.A.a.T) throughout 2018/19. 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. The service successfully transferred into Children & Family Services improving the support to families to assist them with their parenting and at an earlier stage in their children's lives. Stronger relationships between teams has avoided delays in providing appropriate support and a smoother flow of information between key partners.

The Family Focus service have developed to provide therapeutic intensive strength based interventions to support families, providing support and maintenance prior to and within the Court Care Planning process to ensure families can be maintained and children are supported appropriately in the right place. The introduction of the Rapid Response team in November 2017 has meant that in 2018/19 families and children have benefited from intensive intervention programme aimed at preventing children coming into care or placement breakdown. The evaluation of Rapid Response following twelve months of operation has evidenced the positive impact of the team, with a strong evidence base for continuation into main stream children & Family services.

As reported in previous years the uptake of Direct Payments continues to be disappointing. 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.

We have continued 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. A dedicated regional resource has assisted in this.

*'There is no doubt that you listened carefully to our mother's wishes and, in coordination with medical practitioners, developed a clear understanding of all her needs. The integrated health and domiciliary care package you subsequently put in place was instrumental in allowing **** to return to her much-loved home'...*

Service User Family 2018

2019/20

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 about services that are available to them in order for them to make more informed choices.

We will continue to work in collaboration with people and carers to develop and review care and support plans. We will be creative and scope new opportunities.

We will continue to inform and empower people to make positive choices to find their own solutions within their communities to reduce reliance on statutory services.

We will raise awareness and recognise the value of both formal and informal support networks, so people and partners can achieve common goals and improved outcomes.

Access to appropriate information and advice is key to supporting people to be as independent as possible. In 2019/20 the service will look at how people access the front door and explore how we can improve their experience. Adult services will also work alongside commissioners and providers to better understand the community and design domiciliary and community support options that are citizen focussed, flexible and more responsive.

In 2019/20 data will be gathered to investigate whether the social prescriber programme is reducing the time impact on GPs in dealing with non-medical issues.

In 2019/20 we plan to bring the Direct Payment support service in-house. We will be looking to develop our service offering.

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

Regional partnership work on the Gwent Mental Health 'Whole Person, Whole System Crisis and Acute Care Model' has continued throughout 2018/19 with the components of the model being developed. A community of practice has been established to bring partners and stakeholders together to ensure that what matters to citizen's in Gwent is reflected in the design of a new model, and service users and carers voice is central.

The Gwent Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat Delivery group lead by a senior manager from Torfaen has continued to oversee the regional implementation plan and to work on creative solutions to challenges in our systems. The conveyance pilot has provided an alternative solution to an emergency response ambulance to ensure people experiencing a mental health crisis are provided with appropriate transport to convey them to a health based place of safety in a timely and dignified manner. Partners are looking to move from a pilot to an established service in 2019/20.

The region is getting ready to implement the Liberty Protection safeguards which will replace the Deprivation of Liberty safeguards, designed to provide safeguards for our most vulnerable citizens. We have a renewed focus on understanding the Mental Capacity Act, as this will be essential in order to apply the new legislation.

In 2018/19 we enhanced our place based approach 'Care Closer to Home' which included consistent delivery of support in localities to promote independence, positive risk taking and social inclusion. The Community Resource Team has established some local clinics to avoid people travelling to the regional district general hospitals. We recognise there is still more work to do and the Torfaen Integrated Partnership Group are committed to progressing this work over the next few years.

We also saw the launch of 'Home First' in 2018/19, a partnership across the 5 regional local authorities and the health board to provide rapid assessment and discharge support to people attending A&E and short stay units in the local district general hospitals. Operating 7 days a week, the project is unique in pooling resources and offering rapid assessment regardless of borough of origin.

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 a person'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.

They have also been working to reduce isolation through intergenerational work.

“During my time with you, you have been wonderful throughout and with your help I have made the local paper, my story is well known in the area and I have formed new links with the children of Griffithstown. It has been a real pleasure knowing you.” C

“We were extremely lucky to have C come in and talk to us about his war experience. I have never seen the children so engrossed in a talk and they showed the greatest respect by listening and asking appropriate questions” Mrs C Y6 Teacher

“C was referred to the community Connectors in October as he was socially isolated, during the “what matters conversation” the community connector had with C he stated he wanted to reconnect his link with Griffithstown Primary school” Community Connector

Two of the Torfaen Community Connectors were instrumental in organising the Connect Wales 2019 conference in Llandrindod Wells. Bringing together social prescribers, Community Connectors, Local Area Coordinators and other community referral schemes from across Wales. The Conference was supported and attended by the Deputy Minister Julie Morgan.



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.

The inclusion of the Building Resilient Communities (BRC) teams within the service area has added an additional resource to be able to assist people and communities to become more resilient and help themselves. During 2018/19 over 100 people have been supported through the in house counsellor. In addition over 80 families have received interventions that make them feel more confident around supporting their children, in reducing the impact of Adverse Childhood Experience's (ACE's) and in supporting issues around school attendance and attainment. An adult resilience officer has worked with residents to reduce impact of historical ACE's and has helped over 100 people to become less isolated by aiding them to become involved with community activity.

In outcomes terms, over 1100 residents have been supported by Building Resilient Communities projects with >85% having one or more positive outcome.

Increases in referrals into the Family First Team were effectively managed, with early intervention and support being delivered to children and families. We have established stronger relationships between teams which has avoided delays in providing appropriate support and smoother flow of information between key partners.

An ACE's framework has been developed in response to presenting needs from engagement with the most vulnerable adults and families.

Significant work has been undertaken over the last few years to establish Dementia Friendly Communities (DFC). It is heartening to see how the dementia awareness training provided to staff, elected members, organisations and local businesses has created communities that are more knowledgeable and welcoming to people with dementia. We are building on good foundations in Torfaen with extensive training and awareness raising delivered from April 2015 to April 2019:

Training Awareness &	Actual 15/16	Actual 16/17	Actual 17/18	Actual 18/19	TOTAL
Dementia Friends	815 (Target 500)	764 (Target 1000)	1193 (Target 1000)	2252 (Target 1000)	5024
Dementia Friends sessions	95	51	92	138	376
Dementia Champions	26	11	24	8	69

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 across Torfaen include public services, local banks, supermarkets and schools. The links with schools has led to the development

of a regional 'Intergenerational Strategy' with the Health Board, and helps reduce the wider issue of loneliness. We have also developed a partnership with a local secondary school – St Alban's RC School – to explore links to the Welsh Baccalaureate and how the volunteering element of the qualification can be achieved through intergenerational activity. An example of the work with schools, also involved Greenmeadow Primary school developing a link to a local care home <https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/News/2018/November/Dementia-Friendly-School-entertains-residents-at-Ty-Gwyn-Care-Home.aspx>

Case Study – Nationwide Building Society, Pontypool all staff at Nationwide, Pontypool have received the Dementia Friends awareness and this will be rolled out to further sites across South East Wales. The local manager has also recognised the risk of financial abuse for people living with dementia and will be developing further training for staff <https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/News/2019/January/17-Pontypool-Nationwide-Building-Society-awarded-Dementia-Friends-status.aspx>

We have created a web resource in conjunction with local GPs and health colleagues - 'Dementia Roadmap' <http://wales.dementiaroadmap.info/>. 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.

During 2018/19 we were delighted to appoint a new carer support worker in adult services. With a wealth of experience and knowledge behind her, the officer has facilitated dozens of social activities and outing for carers and their loved ones as well as provided individual advice, information and emotional support to individuals where needed.

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.

2019/20

Going forward in 2019/20 we will see the continuation of a place based approach to community support aided by a newly appointed Integrated Wellbeing Coordinator.

This Torfaen resource will add pace to the programme and enable the partnerships to develop a strategic plan by the end of 2019/20. Alongside the wellbeing coordinator we will be expanding our thinking and agreeing a way forward to embrace the work of 'Compassionate Communities'. Both work strands will link together the jig saw of community resources to ensure less duplication and start the thinking about how we fill the gaps.

The Regional Partnership Board will be key in steering the long term strategy that takes into account local need and delivery.

There are 4 major change activities within adult services planned for 2019/20 which will touch on - coproduction, protection and promotion of wellbeing, safeguarding, learning, promoting positive relationships and economic wellbeing. It is difficult to separate when looking at a whole systems approach.

The four areas for consideration are

- Domiciliary care models
- Short & long term accommodation solutions
- Day opportunities
- Access to information, advice and assistance at our front door.

A fifth area falls into the unknown as the bids develop in response to Government's GovTech Catalyst Challenge Fund, "How might we use data and digital technology to deliver better adult social care?"

All activities will follow some key principles of

- Citizen engagement & coproduction
- Promotion and enablement of independence and self-resilience
- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Involvement (voice and control)
- Being connected to others and our communities
- Strong Evidence and measuring Impact
- Long term Thinking and sustainability
- Partnership
- Prevention and Proportionality

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 CIW'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.

Building Resilient Communities will continue to deliver evidence based sessions to families and individuals to enhance their resilience and prevent escalation to statutory service level.

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 2019/20.

C. 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 Chief Officer Social Care and Housing, 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 Chief Officer 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 service area self-assessment / audit has been completed which will inform the work plan going forward.

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 both the Safeguarding Awareness Raising E-Learning, and the Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) E-learning modules 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.

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. 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.

We remain 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 support is delivered. The early intervention and prevention agenda is informing the way we do business. Our Family Focus Team continue to deliver intensive support to children and families bolstered by the Rapid Response team. Our Rapid Response Team prevented placement breakdowns in family situations including those already in the looked after system, thus averting an escalation of provision and avoiding cost. A new out of hour's service was established providing phone and direct support at times of crisis outside of normal working hours. Family feedback about this new service has been positive. Our Families First service has now come under the governance of Social Care & Housing. This arrangement is aimed at achieving greater service alignment.

A new Group Manager's post has been created during 2018/19. The role has concentrated on Transformation and Prevention/Early Intervention.

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, we have 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.

2019/20

Our Corporate Safeguarding Leads Group will continue to develop and implement a 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.

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 an Early Intervention and Prevention agenda.

CSE (child sexual exploitation) remains a local and regional priority, collaborative work between agencies ensures that those at risk are identified in a timely manner. Gwent Police and Torfaen Safeguarding Team have collaborated in the implementation of the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation forum (MASE) for Torfaen and this model has now been rolled out across the region. 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.

The region is getting ready to implement the Liberty Protection safeguards which will replace the Deprivation of Liberty safeguards which are designed to provide safeguards for our most vulnerable citizens. We are having a renewed focus on understanding the Mental Capacity Act, as this will be essential in order to apply the new legislation.

D. 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.

As previously mentioned, in 2018/19 work has continued in day opportunities which has enabled service users to have tailor made support provided directly by our 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.

'My Mates' was rolled out to Torfaen last year. My Mates is a friendship scheme to help people with disabilities establish friendships and closer personal relationships. Social interaction is a key element of the group and there are many ways for the members to talk to their friends, from attending various events and activities, to social gatherings or through the Facebook group that is used to provide a safe way to chat and support.

The inclusion of the Communities division within Housing, Commissioning & Service Transformation division in 2018/19 has created opportunities to join up services and provide more work, leisure and community opportunities for service users and carers.

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. With our partners we provide a good range of mechanisms to engage children and young people in decision making and a few partners now have well established participatory practice that has been nationally recognised.

*J....., J....., you are the best
Community Support is surely the rest
That proves that women pass the test
I know you don't think I jest
With your presence I have the Zest
To go and get strong so I may pass the test
I'm calmer, I must confess
And I know I've been a pest
I can give nothing less
Than my determined best
You do well to boost my hopes
And I need encouragement
To cope with my situation
And my ultimate salvation
By MM*

*A poem written by a service user about their
community connector 2018*

E. 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.

54% 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 Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETS).

43% of all care leavers are in education, training or employment at 24 months after leaving care in total we have 16 young people in this category, 7 are currently NEETS.

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. My Mates as mentioned previously was developed in response
- 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 support are part of social life,
- 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.

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.

Adult and Family resilience officers from the Communities Team have noted an increase in presentations where participants have legacy issues with, and current experience of Domestic Violence as a presenting ACE in families. In order to ameliorate the impact of this, both officers have been trained to deliver the Freedom programme and have been able to deliver sessions. This provides additional capacity in partnership with Cyfannol Women's aid locally.

2019/20

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 encourage and promote community groups and friendships

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 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.

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

During 2018 / 2019, our Supporting People team launched and rolled out its 'Gateway' Service across the majority of Supporting People Funded services. The Gateway 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, since April 2018 our Supporting People Team have expanded 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. This has enabled vulnerable people to access services when most needed and reduced waiting times for access to housing related support services.

- Our Housing Related Support Drop In service, provided by Pobl, is available 9am-4pm Monday to Friday across different locations in the borough. Between 01/04/2018 – 31/03/19 the service received 648 presentations.
- Our Mental Health and Housing Surgeries, provided by Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent MIND, are available 9am-3.30pm Monday to Friday in both Pontypool and Cwmbran. Between 01/04/2018 – 31/03/19 the service received 434 presentations.

During November 2018 the Supporting People Team initiated an assertive outreach pilot aimed at supporting individuals who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough in Torfaen. Adopting a multiagency approach the project has supported 38 people including 16 verified rough sleepers to access appropriate services and explore accommodation options.

Feedback from user carers and citizen has reinforced the message that people want independence in their own home whatever their circumstances. Feedback from user carers and citizen has reinforced the message that people want independence in their own home whatever their circumstances. 'Home First' has become a mantra in adult social care to ensure that all community support options have been explored before considering long term placements. Of course, there will always be a need and a place for residential and nursing care placements offering a safe and friendly environment to people with complex needs before considering long term placements.

The Commissioning Unit rolled out the new way to 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.

The Supporting People Programme provides housing related support services to enable vulnerable people to live independently. The programme supported 5,457 people, 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.

14.2% of our care leavers experienced homelessness during 2018/19. We had 12 young people out of a total of 84 care leavers that experienced homelessness during the year.

In 2019 a £2.4m scheme 'Ysgol Panteg' is due for completion, 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. The commissioning unit and Housing Strategy team have been essential members of the project team, making this happen.

Working with a range of partners (housing strategy, housing association and a provider), a young person with complex needs has successfully moved into bespoke accommodation with appropriate support services to deliver better outcomes for the young person.

The Financial Inclusion project within Communities has provided support to over 640 people in 2018/19 with a key focus on financial resilience and reducing the impact of crisis situations. 643 supported with budgeting and managing finances/ financial resilience/ maximise income and access grants, 214 individuals and families supported via the Welsh Church Fund with emergency cash and essential household items. The impact of support from WCF means that clients are better able to pay rent and reduce risk of homelessness and pay priority bills.

5 people supported with applications to the Vicars Relief Fund for rent arrears to prevent being made homeless. Positive feedback from those supported has been welcome...

“My wife and I had a meeting with KS yesterday at the power station. We would just like to thank him and acknowledge how great he is at his job. After meeting with him, we were excited about battling our finances and have cut our debts and feeling reenergised. I look forward to working with him.”
Service User.

Associated projects to Building Resilient Communities, Communities for Work and CfW+ have helped over 160 people find work.

A 16+ Housing Access scheme has been piloted in 2018/19 improving links between Commissioning and Children & Family services. New improved ways of working have been introduced and better outcomes for young people have been achieved. An access panel has been formed with representatives from CFS, RSL's, POBL Group (support provider), Housing Strategy, Supporting People team and the Commissioning Unit. Not only should this model provide a more personalised approach to support that focusses on long term independence but it will also present significant savings to the local authority when compared to the alternatives.

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 2018/19 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 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.

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 we 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

2019/20

During 2019/20 we will work with partners to improve the wellbeing of the citizens of Torfaen.

The 16+ Pilot Project will be expanded, utilising local private rental sector provision as well as an additional 4 bedded RSL property to meet the specific needs of our 16+ cohort providing better outcomes and accommodation for the young people in our care.

We realise that we have more to do in this area and our work programme for 2018/19 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.

6. HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO

A. 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 2018/19 our Adult Services community based teams have further developed their roles within the 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 2018/19 we supported a new social work trainee 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. In 2018/19 the Workforce Development Team transferred to the Resources Directorate and are no-longer part of Social Care and Housing services, although close links have been maintained.

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.

The Gwent Regional Partnership Team has established a Career College Consortium with further education providers, (including Coleg Gwent and Torfaen training) that is taking forward a holistic approach to health and social care recruitment, training and qualification. This consortium approach includes local authority representation, independent provider representation (linking into the RPB) and representation from ABUHB colleagues. This has ensured that there has been an inclusive, co-productive approach to this work programme from the outset. A joint work programme has been developed that includes developing the provider/student relationship through suitable work placements, experiential learning and qualification support.

The SCWWDP funding for training and development has continued at a consistent level for Torfaen. In 2018/19 the SCWWDP became a regional funding programme, however it retained local delivery. The Greater Gwent Workforce Development (GGWD) Board, a subsidiary of the Regional Partnership Board provides governance to the SCWWDP programme. The Chief Officer for Social Services chairs the GGWD Board.

Workforce development remains essential in developing and retaining skills, supporting effective succession planning, and meeting registration requirements. To this end we are encouraging staff to participate in different ways of acquiring new skills and development opportunities.

During 2018/19, we continued to build on our collaborative working arrangements with Newport; sharing staff resources which enables us to 1) meet and maintain the Social Care Wales's qualification requirements, and 2) deliver an efficient and effective programme of Social Work qualifying and post qualifying training.

In line with the regional SCWWDP programme, 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 2018/19 we were able to offer 2,552 places to the social care workforce across 201 events.

During 2018/19, we also worked with other local authority workforce development teams and the Greater Gwent Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Partnership to support the workforce to prepare for the new registration requirements for Domiciliary Care (in relation to the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act), and the new qualification framework for social care workers. In particular, we have developed and started to deliver a programme to support the requirements of the All Wales Induction Framework (AWIF). We also collaborated with Torfaen's Employability team to maximise AWIF resources and opportunities for the sector.

Over the next financial year we will continue to work regionally and collaboratively with other partners, to maximise collaborative working opportunities and resources where possible, to minimise duplication and deliver national priorities for workforce development.

As part of the Social Work Qualifying and Post Qualifying Programme, Torfaen offered 4 members of staff access to the social work traineeship and provided a total of 27 positive, relevant and inspiring placements for social work students on the degree programme. We anticipate that in the next financial/ academic year we will be able to increase our traineeship offer for our staff. However, there continues to be a decline in university applications, which we have seen reflected in a reduction in placement requirements as estimated for this year. We anticipate similar numbers again for 2019/20.

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. We have 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% of Social Care & Housing staff that responded to the 2018 staff survey felt that their training and development needs have been supported over the last 12 months.

2019/20

During 2018/19 our Adult Services will work with community Services Team, third sector and the Workforce Development Team to ensure the requirements of the Regulation & Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA) are met, with regard to having a registered workforce.

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

We will use the results from the Employee Survey 2019/20 to look at further ways in which we can support our front line staff, building on the training that was delivered last year.

B. Our financial resources and how we plan for the future

2018/19 has been another extremely challenging year for Social Care and Housing, with a need to save £2.314m, as agreed by Council in February 2018, against a backcloth of increasing demands. It is recognised that social care plays a vital role in protecting those who are most vulnerable, therefore in line with the Corporate Plan priorities we have been given protection for our frontline budget, relative to some other service areas. 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 2018/19 Social Care & Housing Budget was:

	£
Children's & Family Services	16,180,535
Adult Services	25,518,474
Commissioning & Service Transformation	985,175
Service Strategy & Regulation	17,531
Housing	751,570
Community Regeneration	613,974
Community Farm	213,026
Total	44,340,285

In 2018/19 the savings identified for Adult Services were focused on providing sustainable services for the future, achieved through divisional redesign, improving the use of team accommodation, redesigning the front end preventative services and ensuring that services meet assessed eligible needs and improve signposting to self-provision.

The 2018/19 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 and Family Services incurred material overspends. The main pressure areas were the increased demand, particularly the external placements budget including the expenditure in respect of on high cost placements including residential, 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. We received further 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 was further embedded in 2018/19 this has resulted in a shift in the spend profile. A reduction in commissioned services were achieved.

During 2018/19 the five Councils and the Health Board continued to work towards a regional approach to commissioning residential care provision for people aged 65 or over, and took the lead in the management of the virtual pool of resources in 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 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 84% 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.

2019/20

- We will focus on the areas that are material budget pressures. E.g. the commissioning of placements in Children and Family Services.
- Update and adopt a fit for purpose regional fee model for over 65 Residential and 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.

C. 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 2019/20 saw us continue to build on this by participating in the development of regional approaches to strategic commissioning including the development of a regional care home contract, contract specification, contract monitoring, fee methodology, and the development of a regional S194 agreement.

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.

Our 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 now working across the borough in adult services.

We collaborate with other local authorities, the local health board, other partners as well as our service providers to ensure that service standards are secured at the best possible cost. At the same time we recognise 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 2018/19 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 with 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 require agreement from a number of partners, this takes time and often requires 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 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 2018/19 the number of Stage 1 complaints received has decreased from 12 to 2. There have been 2 Stage 2 investigations.

It is worth noting that a further 94 queries for Children and Family Services and 34 for Adult Services were received. In circumstances where a manager has contacted the service user and resolved the concern by close of play the following day, contacts are not recorded as a complaint. Others will not have been accepted as a complaint as they did not meet the criteria or concurrent action has prevented a complaint being progressed. The support of managers has helped to ensure that contacts are handled quickly and effectively, this has been a large contributory factor to the drop in the number of complaints being recorded.

Both Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within the statutory timeframes. One of the Stage 2 complaints was over the 25 working days for completion by 20 working days, this was owing to an extension being requested by the independent investigator to undertake additional interviews and also due to unforeseen health problems. The complainant was kept informed throughout and an extension was agreed. The importance of agreeing extensions and keeping complainants up to date with the progress on their complaint if timescales are not going to be met is still crucial to the successful resolution of complaints. The other Stage 2 complaint was completed within the required timeframe.

The total number of calls (queries and complaints) dealt with in 2018/19 was 132, an increase on the 113 received in 2017/18.

Summary of Complaints Received April 2018 – March 2019		
	Stage 1	Stage 2
Children & Family Services	1	2
Adult Services	1	0
Business Support	0	0

Total Number of Complaints	2	2
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A total of 2 Stage 1 complaints were received:

- 1 for Adult Services (part upheld)
- 1 for Children & Family Services (not upheld)

There were 2 Stage 2 complaints relating to Children & Family Services. No complaints for Adult Services went to Stage 2.

5 complaints went to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), one of which the Ombudsman decided to investigate

- PSOW investigating one complaint.
- PSOW did not investigate two complaints as satisfied with the actions taken.
- PSOW unable to investigate a complaint that related mainly to Data Protection/GDPR and referred the complainant to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- A complaint originally made directly to the PSOW had been resolved prior to any formal action being required.

Both Stage 1 complaints this year were about Quality of Service.

All issues involving staff are addressed with the individuals concerned by their manager. Communication has been a key issue, as well as the importance of verifying information prior to recording.

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.

- Review case recording policy to ensure effective storage of communication i.e. text messaging.
- Confidentiality statement to be utilised across the relevant divisions.
- Check consistency across teams about information being given to service users.
- One area will write if unable to make contact by telephone to ensure that attempts to contact are noted.
- Individuals to be aware of the amount of notice given for reviews/meetings.
- Team reminded of the importance of verifying the accuracy of information before it is recorded onto the system.

We received 32 compliments for the year, 23 for Adult Services and 9 for Children & Family Services. The comments received have included thanks for empathy, advice, professionalism and support during what is often a very difficult time. Some of the compliments were;

- "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"

- “You have been my life line during all this turmoil...I hope your department heads know how efficient and kind you are. I couldn't have managed without you”
- “I would like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of support that has been offered to my son”
- "Thank you to you and your amazing team, you are all so dedicated and work so hard to give each child the best. Always so pleasant and available to help"
- “Our practitioner...has been brilliant and does an absolute service to the unit. My family would not be a whole one today if it was not for meeting him!”
- “Feels he gets exceptional service from the central team, and very positive about his social worker... The support is great.”
- “She felt she was ‘brilliant and amazing’ and they still have a good relationship with her.”
- “I wanted to say a BIG Thank you for purchasing my Son’s uniform for his First Year At Secondary School...Without your help I would of have to of missed paying some bills which would have left me in more debt...Thank you so much for all your help and taking some of the stress and worry away in more ways than one.”
- “My reason for writing is that I feel it is vital that your staff realise just how much they are appreciated. They not only care with immeasurable kindness and good nature, they also bring a ray of sunshine into our home.”
- “As an agency we work in several boroughs across South Wales and I have personally found Torfaen to be the best area to work with...Many social workers and other professionals I work with appear to have genuine interest and concern in their allocated service users and in my opinion go above and beyond to ensure they are doing everything they can to meet service user needs, improve well-being and support them with remaining in their own home. I also find that the commissioning team are very supportive and open to suggestions and shared working.”
- “Families First has 100% Helped me and my Family...I feel as if I’ve got my Son back. At the beginning when I was offered families first, I was reluctant to engage, but I’m so glad I did!”

2019/20

In 2019/20 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.

6. Conclusion

2018/19 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.

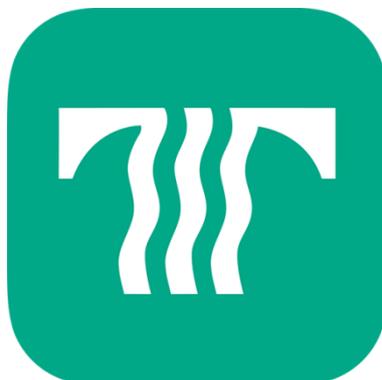
We know the areas where we need to improve and know that we will have to work in partnership in order to do that. We also know that the social care sector is becoming increasingly fragile and that we need to work closely and in partnership with our service providers to help business remain sustainable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

Chief Officer Social Care and Housing (STATUTORY DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES)

JUNE 2019.



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Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

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

Please contact Customer Care on (01495) 762200.

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