

# Director of Social Services' Annual Report

April 2022 – March 2023



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## Introduction

Welsh Government requires all local authorities to publish a report about the key achievements and challenges in Children’s and Adults Social Services in the previous year (please see relevant legislation at the end of this report). It is published on the Council’s website and is aimed at interested parties such as elected members, residents, voluntary/community sector organisations, statutory partners such as the NHS, regulators such as Care Inspectorate Wales and Welsh ministers.

This report provides an overview of how well the services achieved the intended outcomes as set out in 2021/22 report, as well as identifying new developments and aspirations for 2023/24 and beyond. Detailed information about performance is available on our website, please see the link at the end of this report.

### Demographics

The % of population in Powys over the age of age of 64 is higher than in the rest of Wales, which provides a rich tapestry of experience, but also creates challenges to the employment and care sector.

#### **Age groups in Powys in % (ONS, 2021 mid-year estimates)**

	Powys	Wales	UK
0-15	16	18	19
16-64	57	61	62
65 and over	28	21	19

Powys County Council’s Social Services Department includes Children’s Services and Adults’ Services. Both are supported by an internal Commissioning team, as well as Corporate Finance, Human Resources, and other support services.

## Director's Summary of Performance

The 2022/23 financial year has been a time of significant pressure and challenge across the health and social care sector nationally. The post-covid increase in demand and complexity seems to have become the new normal; further exacerbated by widespread recruitment and retention issues, high inflation, strikes in the health sector and a very difficult winter period particularly in respect of hospital discharges.

These national challenges and concerns have been mirrored in Powys. As a result of such challenges, Adult Social Care and the Commissioning and Partnership service has spent a significant proportion of the year under business continuity measures. This has allowed staff and resources to be redeployed to support critical activities.

The last 12 months has seen turnover of senior staff within Social Services. I wish the previous postholders the best of luck with their new roles and warmly welcome their successors.

Our performance for 2022/23 has undoubtedly been impacted by the pressures and challenges as outlined above, however, there are encouraging signs of improvement. We have continued to work with families to keep children and young people safe at the heart of their families and communities. We have reduced the number of children on the Child Protection Register. We have developed a range of accommodation options for young people leaving the care of the local authority. The Grow our Own scheme has seen people qualifying and moving into permanent roles within Powys.

Despite significant challenges in the domiciliary care market, our workforce has worked tirelessly to do all they can to keep people at home, safe, whilst our commissioning team have been working with the market to reset and recruit. This continues to be an ongoing challenge. We have continued to embrace technology across both services to mitigate and manage risk.

Despite the many challenges, we finish the 2022/23 financial year optimistic and confident about the improvement progress being made across the services. I am overwhelmed by the continued dedication and commitment of our excellent staff who work tirelessly to support our most vulnerable adults and children in Powys. Thank you to all our Social Services staff.



Nina Davies, Director of Social Services and Housing

# How Are People Shaping Our Services?

## Children's Services

Mid 2022, the council hired a new Children's Services participation officer, whose role includes supporting us to share decisions with young people; with an emphasis on children looked after and care leavers. Here are some examples of the work to date:

- Purchased the Mind of My Own app, which offers those young people who engage with social services the chance to share their voice, wishes and feelings in their own words, whenever and wherever they are most comfortable:  
<https://mindofmyown.org.uk/one-app/>
- Co-produced children looked after policies and documents with young experts.
- Supported care-experienced children and young people to meet with Welsh Government ministers, facilitated by Voices from Care Cymru, to develop a declaration committing to the radical reform of care services in Wales: <https://www.gov.wales/children-and-young-people-lead-radical-reform-of-care-services-in-wales>
- Young people were part of the interview panels for the head of service role.
- The Powys Junior Safeguarding Board has met throughout the year with the regional safeguarding board and helped to produce a video on 'The Do's and Don'ts of Caring', a powerful animation that will be shown across Wales with the backing of Rocio Cifuentes, the Children's Commissioner:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AS4mo4dq9sI>
- We are supporting Ysgol Calon Cymru's Wellbeing Ambassador groups with their goal of encouraging every high school in Powys to create their own wellbeing group. These groups will also feed the voices of their peers into Powys County Council's strategies and policies, the Start Well Partnership and national voice opportunities.

The council also has the Junior Start Well Board, a group of young people in Powys, between the ages of 11 and 17, who meet regularly to talk about issues facing children and young people. Its members listen to friends and peers, as well as bringing any personal experiences to us, so we can build a picture of what it is like for a young person growing up in Powys.

The group meets directly with services, to tell them what young people have said. Sometimes this means telling services what is working well, or perhaps what isn't and needs to change.

Examples of work undertaken by our Junior Start Well Board:

- Survey to all young people after covid asking them about access to emotional health services in Powys – the results of this were presented to the Start Well Board, which is responsible for decision making around children and families. This survey influenced decisions such as returning school nurses to schools after covid.
- Met with the Children's Commissioner for Wales to talk about children's rights.
- Met with all Powys Regional Partnership Board leads to discuss the implementation of the NYTH NEST Framework and the priorities for young people.
- Met with Lynne Neagle, Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Senedd to talk about young people's experiences of mental health services.
- Developed plans to offer an emotional health wellbeing assembly from a national mental health charity to all secondary schools in Powys.
- Setting up a youth café model in response to the emotional health and wellbeing survey findings. Starting in Newtown, this will address the need for safe spaces for young people to meet and socialise outside of school and college.
- Setting up an older group of 18 – 25 year olds to make sure that their voices and experiences are also represented.

The Bright Spots survey highlighted that many of our children looked after, and care leavers, do not know who their workers are. The staffing challenges are directly impacting upon our children. We would like to reach a point of a stable workforce within the 0-14 and 14+ Throughcare Teams so long-term relational social work practice can embed. The Grow Our Own project will go some way to alleviating the pressures, but it will take some time for newly qualified social workers to become familiar with the role and grow in experience.

We have also used staff surveys:

- To review our newly implemented pod system, which sees families allocated a team, or 'pod', of support staff, rather than just one social worker or one social worker and one support worker, to

gather feedback from those involved in its trial between August and September 2022.

- As part of our Business and Programme Service Wellbeing Check In, in April 2022.
- To ask about Staff Recruitment and Retention in February 2023, which was sent separately to both Children's Service staff and Adult Services staff.
- To review risks to our service, which closed in March 2023.

The Head of Childrens Services invites all foster carers to a quarterly meeting, where they can talk directly about their experiences and of their wishes for the service moving forward.

## **Adult Services and Commissioning**

A survey was co-produced with Kaleidoscope Powys (substance misuse service), Cyfle Cymru (employability service), and a community of local artists and residents whose lives have been adversely affected by substance use and poor mental health. This looked at styles of intervention, goals and aspirations, and issues affecting their recovery journeys. The learning from this is being used to design services and to build a strong recovery community. The Anew project is an example of this. It uses the creative arts as an engagement opportunity to build skills, create connections, build confidence, and reduce isolation among people whose lives have been adversely affected by substance use. Work on this is being filmed and the stories recorded are going to be used to continue to help design services in the future.

Powys Older People's Forum now includes more residents, which will aid consultation and the sharing of information. An age friendly network action plan is being developed and the Portfolio Holder is the champion for this.

Work has begun on a citizens' charter for the Physical Disability and Learning Disability Forum and grant funding has been applied for. Both of these forums will be examples of co-production.

People from these forums have been involved in shaping and designing a range of services including the Adult Services web page and the commissioning of disability supported living services.

Results Based Accountability report cards have been co-designed with Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) and implemented for mental health services. This has reduced the burden on services to provide separate but similar information and enables PTHB and the council to have a consistent

understanding of quality and gather intelligence that informs on-going commissioning.

Extra care re-commissioning of Llys Glan yr Afon, in Newtown, has used a flexible model already implemented in learning disability supported accommodation services, whereby the care and support is responsive to changing need. This approach focuses on commissioning outcomes instead of hours delivered and is more person centred. Early anecdotal information suggests this delivers better outcomes for the person, as well as a more efficient use of funds. More detailed analysis is planned along with gathering user feedback.

We use feedback from complaints to inform social care policies and procedures (e.g., Complaints Policy and Procedure). Furthermore, customer feedback is used to make service changes and to support improved customer care (e.g. Customer Care Charter). Feedback is also used to sustain good performance by reiterating good customer practices with our workforce.



# Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Powys Residents

## Quality Standard 1 - Working with people to define and co-produce personal wellbeing outcomes that people wish to achieve.

### Children's Services

#### What we said we would do

1. Continue to achieve our goals in the Grow Our Own Social Workers project.
2. Open the Early Help Hub in the north of Powys.

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

1. In 2022-23 we had eight members of staff from Children's Services do the first module of the Social Work Degree, and five do the second module; there were 29 student placements between both services and five students for Children's Services qualified as social workers. In 2023 there will be seven more students who qualify, in 2024 nine students and in 2025 there will be 11 students who qualify.

We held four 'Ever Considered Being a Social Worker' webinars in 2022-2023, around the Degree in Social Work application process.

We facilitate fortnightly support groups for students throughout the duration of their placements – February to July each year.

In January 2023 there were 12 Newly Qualified Social Workers in their first year of practice. We currently have 39 practice educators within Powys.

2. Work to refurbish the Oldford Infants School site in Welshpool to create an integrated family centre in the area is now complete. The Welshpool Integrated Family Centre opened on 10 October 2022 and is a 'one-stop-shop' providing services and support to children, young people, and their families. The centre provides activities such as parent and toddler groups, baby massage, information and advice, Incredible Years Parenting Training programmes, health advice, family support, and counselling.

The refurbishment of the building, situated in the heart of a Flying Start catchment area, was funded by Welsh Government Flying Start capital funding.

The Flying Start team, which includes health visitors and speech and language professionals, has moved from the Maesydre Offices in Welshpool to the site. They have been joined by Powys County Council's Children's Early Help Team and Youth Services.

The council's Adult Services staff, along with colleagues from agencies such as Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre, will also share the office space within the building.

Flying Start childcare and Foundation Phase provision is now available to families at the site.

View the video of the official opening of Welshpool Integrated Family Centre on the council's YouTube channel:

<https://youtu.be/814ueGhbDts>

## What do we plan to do in 2023-24

1. Further develop multi-agency family centres in the south of the county.
2. Review the way children and families access information and support (Front Door).
3. Continue to implement our child exploitation strategy.
4. Review our integrated Disability Service early help.
5. Develop a plan for providing pre-birth support which aligns with our regional partners.

## Adult Services and Commissioning

### What we said we would do

1. Through our quality assurance, compliments, complaints, and supervision processes, consider how we include feedback from people to support service developments and learning.
2. Increase the take up of the Care and Support Finder tool which connects people with care and support needs with personal assistants and community micro-enterprises providing care services:  
<https://caresupportfinder.org/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pageId=5357>
3. Move most people who receive direct payments onto the Virtual Wallet money management system and make this the preferred option for doing this in Powys: <https://www.myvirtualwallet.co.uk/powys>
4. Review our provision for people opting for direct payments to ensure they have choice and control over their care and support. Review will begin in the summer of 2022 and will result in new provision being put in place by March 2023.

5. Finalise the specification and implement the delivery of carers assessments by our commissioned carers support organisation.
6. Work with Aberystwyth University, looking at the use of digital solutions by older people, modelled on the AskSARA resource.
7. Work with the Disabled Living Foundation to review the use of AskSARA (an on-line self-help guide providing expert advice and information on products and equipment for older and disabled people) and continue to promote the resource in Powys.

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

1. We continue to learn from complaints, comments and compliments received from people and their families or advocates. Following complaint resolution, our managers share learning at an individual worker level as well as with their team and undertake quarterly updates within the Operational Management Team meetings. We recognise that we need to expand our learning across the service area as a whole and have recently implemented an action log to support us in evidencing our learning from compliments and complaints.

The council has adopted and published a new Social Services Customer Care Charter and Standards (bottom of website page): <https://en.powys.gov.uk/socialcare> The document sets out how we are committed to providing a consistently excellent standard of service by putting our residents at the centre of everything we do and explains how we will play our part and what we expect from those who are receiving our help.

In collaboration with ICT, we have developed a bespoke complaints database which will support us to actively track, manage and monitor complaints.

We continue to complete our quality-of-care review reports under the requirements of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 and Adult Placement Regulations (Shared Lives); outcomes from people using the services and staff have been positive following analysis of the questionnaires circulated.

We are aware of communication issues in terms of understanding what reablement is when people are discharged from hospital. However, we are part of the EAGER (Engagement with Reablement) research project which will seek to inform and provide recommendations on the issues identified: <https://www.york.ac.uk/spru/projects/the-eager-project/>

We had an inspection in January 2023 during which positive feedback was provided to Care Inspectorate Wales by people who use the service.

Our auditing programme has been suspended since the invoking of business continuity at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and has not resumed. As part of the quality audits, we would previously have gathered feedback from people on their experience. We have however undertaken some ad hoc audits for the purpose of inspection with mostly positive feedback. Where a concern was raised during feedback, this was addressed with immediate effect.

2. The take-up of this support finder tool has not been as high as anticipated. As part of the work, we are undertaking on direct payments, we will review the use of this support tool in terms of the design and fitness for purpose for people in receipt of direct payments and seeking to employ a personal assistant. The tool can also be used by personal assistants and micro-enterprises providing care services to advertise their availability.
3. The past year has been very challenging in terms of direct payments, with provider workforce issues leading to poor performance and many people waiting to be paid. The detrimental impact of this has not been underestimated and as such officers have worked to ensure people are paid for the valuable work they provide, and more focused remedial action has been undertaken to make improvements as a priority. On a phased approach and when appropriate, we have continued to transition existing direct payment recipients onto the Virtual Wallet money management system; we have also made this our preferred way for new recipients of direct payments to manage their funding allocation. At the time of writing the report 222 direct payment recipients were using the Virtual Wallet.
4. Following a review into the support provision for direct payments recipients, which included a detailed options appraisal, a decision has been taken to provide a split service. This means that information and advice will in future be provided by a team within the council and the payroll service by several approved external providers, meaning that individuals can choose their own payroll provider. Whilst, there will be a delay in this new provision being put into place until April 2024, individuals will see no change to their current provision of service.
5. In October 2022, following training, our commissioned carer support organisation, Credu, began some carers assessments on behalf of Adult Services with the aim of maximising the support to carers as soon as possible and to reduce the backlogs outstanding. As of 31 March 2023, Credu had completed 24 carers assessments.

6. Unfortunately, the university was unable to recruit a student to do this piece of work and the proposed grant funding was re-directed to support other Powys Regional Partnership Board project work.
7. Whilst we continued to promote the use of the AskSARA service throughout the year, the Regional Integrated Funding for it ended on 31 March 2023.

We will explore the creation of a new self-service product, with the new community equipment service provider, to replace AskSARA.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. By April 2024, to provide people with choice and control over their care and support, we will transform the way in which direct payments are managed and develop a framework for direct payments payroll.
2. Following recruitment of more citizen representatives to the Older People's Forum, we will move to a co-productive model whereby people will have the opportunity to co-design and co-deliver services, e.g., services delivered in collaboration with communities.
3. Explore the creation of a new self-service product with the new community equipment service provider which will be an on-line self-help guide, providing expert advice and information on products and equipment for older and disabled people.

## **Quality Standard 2 - Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being**

### **Children's Services**

#### **What we said we would do**

1. Further embed the Trauma Informed Approach across the service.
2. Fully implement the Short Breaks Project.
3. Implement the Bright Spots action plan and improve care experienced young people's well-being.

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

1. Following the Covid-19 pandemic we prioritised responding to staff members' needs for trauma informed support to ensure they could continue to support families. We began working with our newly qualified social workers to provide decompression sessions each month to support them in their first year in practice. These have been welcomed by the

staff and their managers as they provide another safe forum for discussing experiences and practice issues.

Our psychologist has been supporting more teams on a regular basis through reflective group supervision and is now finding that he is able to step back from this as staff are returning to offices and gaining this much needed support in more natural contexts, with face-to-face contact with their peers. We are now progressing staff well-being through other ways to ensure that all have an opportunity to participate and promote team resilience and dynamics.

The trauma recovery model training was held in January 2023, and this was attended by many teams within children's services. We are now looking at how we can fully embed our initial work and findings into a model of care for our service. We have contacts in areas that have successfully developed such initiatives to learn from their experiences and what parts of their models could fit Powys.

The use of the NYTH/NEST (Nurturing, Empowering, Safe and Trusted) approach is an example of how we are looking at trauma informed models through the Powys Regional Partnership's Start Well board. This is ensuring that projects such as the edge of care and therapeutic attachment teams are keeping the principles of trauma informed practice at the heart of the support provided to families.

2. Refurbishment of the Camlas respite facility in Brecon has been completed to separate it from the children's residential home next door. A new kitchen and flooring have also been installed.

Work to develop a draft specification for service delivery has been undertaken and analysis work to understand the current needs for a short break provision in south Powys. Next steps are to work with stakeholders to further develop the specifications and to invite bids to deliver the service.

3. The Bright Spots action plan has been created and discussed at Children's Leadership Team meetings and at our Corporate Parenting Development Day. Actions within it have also been assigned to individual staff members.

This working group will meet every fortnight to give updates on actions and the plan will be reviewed frequently and updated, and feedback on its progress will be provided to children and young people.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. The setting up of a Therapeutic Attachment Team. This team is being built in collaboration with Powys Teaching Health Board, so that young people can access interventions where the criteria for a CAMHS

service is not met. This is a new initiative through the Start Well Board.

2. To further develop multi-agency family centres in the south of the county.

## **Adult Services and Commissioning**

### **What we said we would do**

1. Increase the number of community micro-enterprises and widen their scope beyond domiciliary care. This will involve continuing with the development work with the Community Catalysts and consideration of use of micro-enterprises for sitting services.
2. Explore the modernisation of domiciliary care brokerage, linked to the Vanguard approach and creation of a new dashboard that allows data scrutiny and a proactive approach to be taken.
3. Increase the number of staff in the reablement team to provide for the increased demand on the services.
4. Secure planning permission for the Brecon extra care scheme. Progress plans for the Machynlleth and Builth Wells extra care schemes.
5. Work with Aberystwyth University, looking at the use of digital solutions by older people, modelled on the AskSARA resource.
6. Work with domiciliary care providers to deliver a project, using electric vehicles to reduce our carbon footprint.
7. The Regional Partnership Board will continue to support citizens and carers to get involved with the work of the partnership.

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

1. As of 31 March 2023, there were 67 micro-enterprises in operation providing care services in Powys. However, Community Catalysts took the decision to stop supporting new community micro-enterprises in Powys when the Regional Integrated Funding stream came to an end on 31 March 2023.

Community Catalysts will continue to provide some minimal support to existing micro-enterprises for a period of three months and we will review how we continue to develop the micro-enterprise approach during 2023-24 to expand this across communities in Powys.

2. Work has begun on the modernisation of all data held by our brokerage team, with specific attention being paid to the domiciliary care element of the service. A new 'live' dashboard has been developed and is being

tested; this will allow more intense scrutiny of data on a countywide and locality basis.

The dashboard will enable the service to understand geographical problems and prioritise cases more easily. Further work has been planned to develop other aspects of the brokerage process, this work will be completed to make the whole brokering process as efficient and seamless as possible whilst providing managers with detailed oversight.

3. Recruitment and retention of the social care workforce (internal and external) has remained extremely challenging and whilst funding was secured to increase the number of staff, within the Reablement /Domiciliary Care Service in the north of the county, we have continued throughout the year to experience high vacancy levels despite rolling job adverts. We are continuing to explore options, including overseas recruitment.

We have amended and consulted on a merged job description within the Reablement and Domiciliary Care service and continue to advertise for reablement care and support workers. We have worked with colleagues to make the application process easier through an 'Apply Now' button and have also attended recruitment events and promoted roles on social media.

We have worked in collaboration with Workforce Futures (Powys Regional Partnership Board) to develop a joint induction framework for Health and Social Care covering the roles of reablement care and support workers and health care assistants. The first induction programme ran in March 2023 with positive feedback received.

4. In Brecon, a site for potential Extra Care development has been purchased by a housing association.

A public information event, seeking the views of the local community, was held in February 2023 on the proposed extra care development, which would include 68 apartments and a range of communal facilities. It is anticipated that planning will be applied for in the next financial year, and if successful, work on site would begin shortly afterwards. After gaining planning consent, the construction of the extra care facility will take approximately two years.

Following the previous positive discussions with two potential providers in Machynlleth, proposals continue to be developed on extra care in this area. A project board will be set up to take forward this work.



Work on the Builth Wells extra care scheme will be linked to the re-commissioning of the Powys owned residential care homes and work on this will continue into 2023-24.

5. Unfortunately, the university was unable to recruit a student to take forward the digital solutions work, and the proposed grant funding was re-directed to support other Powys Regional Partnership Board project work.
6. In July 2022, the council's Cabinet considered and agreed a proposal to use Welsh Government funding to increase domiciliary support service capacity by funding driving lessons and providing access to electric vehicles for care workers.

By the end of March 2023, two domiciliary care workers had been supported with driving lessons. We have received enquiries from other providers which may lead to additional staff taking up this offer.

There is an 18-month lead time for the order of electric vehicles, so the underspend on this funding will be carried forward to 2023-24.

Staff within our internal Provider Services have also been using electric bikes on their rounds with positive feedback.

During the year, Cabinet approved that part of the funding could be utilised to allow external providers to pay an uplift in mileage rates to carers, due to the increase in fuel prices. This was allowed by Welsh Government within the grant conditions.

7. Powys Regional Partnership Board's (RPB) citizen and carer representatives are equal members, and their involvement not only informs and shapes decisions, but continues to provide a better way to identify and tackle 'what matters' to people. A wide range of user and provider groups have also been involved in the work of the RPB, through commenting on proposed work, helping to recruit key roles, and informing various processes and procedures.

The RPB has now adopted the National Citizen/Carer Member Charter, which sets out key commitments for RPBs to ensure meaningful participation of citizen, carer, third sector and provider members on the boards. The aim is to support the role and contribution of each board member so that they can effectively inform, influence and be involved in the design and delivery of services.

Powys RPB citizen and carer members have helped to shape the charter at a national level, sharing good practice from the region, and developing a local action plan. A wide range of user forums and provider groups –

including the introduction of a Junior Start Well Board to hear views from children and young people - continue to help shape the work of the RPB through their involvement. RPB members want the adoption of the charter to also be an opportunity to review these groups and ensure the continual improvement of citizen voice across the wider partnership groups and arrangements.

Following the publication of the population needs assessment in 2022, we further engaged with citizens and carers to support us in refreshing the Health and Care Strategy which incorporates the Area Plan.

The RPB project manager and the dementia lead nurse in Powys Teaching Health Board have worked to introduce the All-Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards, establishing task groups, including people living with dementia and their careers, to progress it. Linked to this work, the RPB funded a dementia arts programme in Powys and an evaluation has highlighted its therapeutic benefits.

Artist Frances Isaac, who lives near Brecon, leads the group. It met virtually online throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and fortnightly in Crickhowell during the spring and summer of 2022. Frances is also involved in the Dementia Task Group. View a video of her talking about her work on the RPB's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKTfhNsvhe4>

The Dementia Listening campaign was launched in Rhayader in December 2022 to bring residents together to shape how people in Powys with dementia are cared for. Also involved were representatives of Improvement Cymru, Citizens UK, Powys Teaching Health Board, the council, and many voluntary sector organisations. Residents of Rhayader and surrounding areas were encouraged to become active listening volunteers and to give their views via an online or printed questionnaires which were made available across community venues. In January, those involved came together with service providers, community groups and charities to a second event in Rhayader which proved to be successful. Feedback from this engagement campaign will inform the Dementia Standards work across Powys.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Progress the extra care developments across the county.
2. Evaluate the impact of the project to use electric vehicles to reduce our carbon footprint.
3. Develop a Trusted Assessor model with our Powys Teaching Health Board colleagues to support earlier patient flow from hospital.

4. Explore how we manage and further develop the micro-enterprise approach across communities in Powys.

## **Quality Standard 3 - Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect, or harm**

### **Children's Services**

#### **What we said we would do**

1. Use the Public Law Outline (PLO) reforms to keep families safely together.
2. Strengthen our Assessment Service to continue to be able to manage the new sustained increased level of demand.

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

1. Our looked after children population continues to be stable indicating that intervention and prevention remains a key component in keeping children safer at home. We are continuing to make progress with the use of different arrangements for families to draw together and build on their network of support.

The service is shifting its focus to working with families before a child requires court intervention, in line with the PLO relaunch, with the aim of keeping them safe in their family setting. A significant factor in being able to progress with this is the stability of workforce that is building within the Care and Support teams.

The service has noted a rise in babies requiring the intervention of the courts, and there is significant work being undertaken around reviewing this and analysing the offer to families during pregnancy (pre-birth). The service is hopeful this will provide consistency and ensure the right intervention is being offered at the earliest opportunity.

2. Both of our Assessment teams have been significantly negatively impacted by a lack of, or unstable staffing, especially around agency staff; moving from council to council attracted by higher rates of pay. This has intermittently had a significant impact on performance and has placed remaining staff under a lot of pressure and stress and the teams have then struggled to get back onto a solid footing. Whilst children and young people have been seen in a timely way and not left at risk of harm, the completion time for assessments has suffered. Now that our staffing has increased and is stable, we have seen a significant improvement.

There has been an increase in child protection (section 47) enquiries, which could be indicative of the increase in severity and complexity of family issues because of the challenges presented over the last few years – Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

In our Assessment teams we are now using wellbeing workers to complement and support the work of qualified social workers. This means that families are provided with early support from them, jointly with the allocated social worker, at the point of referral if this is required. The wellbeing workers have been able to build stronger links with children and young people by spending more time with them than a social worker usually can. This immediate and practical support has had various benefits, from conflict resolution between young people and their parents and carers to short pieces of practical intervention that contribute to the right help at the right time and are preventing referrals for longer term intervention. It also allows the social workers more time to focus on their statutory tasks, which has contributed to improvements in assessment timescales.

Since staffing has stabilised in the assessment teams, we have seen a steady increase in timescales for assessments being met. In February 2023 we achieved 89% of all assessments within timescale and our target is now 90%.

Across assessment teams the morale is generally good, staff feel supported and are supportive of one another, creating a positive working environment and increasing resilience. Of note is that we are starting to attract more permanent staff into our teams. We can support newly qualified social workers and whilst this is welcomed as positive, this is and will continue to be challenging for small teams.

The Assessment teams have consistently ensured that a strength-based approach is being used in the assessments we complete with families. We have been able to create a culture of reflective practice using the signs of safety model, where we have trialled the use of group supervision to map out issues affecting the families we support.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Develop a plan for providing pre-birth support, which aligns with our regional partners.
2. Make sure more child protection (core group) discussions take place within the required timescale and improve the quality of planning and recording.

3. Develop a strategy for supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
4. Develop and deliver a new participation strategy for 2023-26.

## **Adult Services and Commissioning**

### **What we said we would do**

1. In collaboration with our multi-agency partners, complete implementation of the All-Wales Safeguarding procedures and continuously monitor our progress and address any issues as they arise.
2. In collaboration with the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board fully implement the Multi-Agency High Risk Behaviour Policy (including self-neglect/hoarding)
3. Manage the transition from Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards to Liberty Protection Safeguards safely and effectively, following the national launch of the Code of Practice and Welsh regulations. Consultation is expected to begin in early March 2022 and last three months.
4. Strengthen our Assessment Service to continue to be able to manage the new sustained increased level of demand.

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

1. We have fully implemented the All-Wales Safeguarding procedures; to support our social care workforce we commissioned and provided training. This has enabled us to effectively respond to adults at risk reports; we are also able to share reports with our Commissioning Team or our regulators, as required.

We are piloting, in line with Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board the implementation of a rapid response policy; this means that where a death is a suspected suicide, we aim to provide a multi-agency rapid response to managing the consequences and impact.

2. The safeguarding duties set out in part 7 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, do not extend to people who display high-risk behaviours which puts them at risk of harm or people or who do not look after themselves well, resulting in self-neglect or hoarding. Concerns of this nature suggest that the person is at risk from their own actions or inactions, and as such do not meet the criteria for an adult safeguarding report to be made to social services.

Self-neglect covers a wide range of high-risk behaviours including neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and

includes behaviour such as hoarding. To address this area of concern, we have, alongside our regional Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board partners, held our first high risk behaviour panel, which was well received by all present.

3. We submitted a response to the UK and Welsh Governments on the proposed Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) legislation that will be replacing the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). LPS provides protection for people aged 16 and above who are, or who need to be, deprived of their liberty to enable their care or treatment, and lack the mental capacity to consent.

4. Work continues to be done to determine the impact the new LPS legislation will have on our operational teams in readiness to ensure they comply with their statutory duties and training is being put in place to support the transition. However, the date of transfer to LPS from DoLS has not been confirmed by the government with the earliest anticipated date being April 2024.

We have in place a Mental Capacity Act peer support group which aims to improve knowledge and skills in relation to practical application of the act and to prepare staff for the implementation of LPS.

We have monthly update sessions to keep operational managers informed of developments. We are also active partners in the Mental Capacity Act Regional Forum where knowledge, skills and learning are shared.

In April 2023 the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing has issued a Written Statement providing an update on the implementation of the LPS. This follows recent confirmation from the UK Government that it will not be progressing the implementation of the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 and the LPS within this Parliament.

5. We have continued to see increased levels of demand in the Older People's Service and during 2022-23 have experienced unprecedented waiting lists for assessments, which has also had an impact on how quickly we have been able to do reviews. We have put several things in place to try and help us reduce the delays including:
  - Commissioning of two external agencies to do assessments and reviews; unfortunately, we have not seen the numbers reduce as much or as quickly as anticipated.
  - Arranged for our commissioned carers service to undertake carers assessments; again, we have not seen the numbers reduce as much or as quickly as anticipated.

- Developed an assessment priority framework to support prioritisation when screening referrals. We have also developed a report which provides us with clear oversight on individuals waiting for assessment and the level of urgency (emergency, urgent, routine); the report also provides detailed information on staff caseloads which, assists managers in allocating work.
- Arranged for the Community Connector Service to make wellbeing calls to people waiting for a service, which also helped us understand any change in need.
- Continued to make daily screening calls to prioritise referrals and ensure they go to the right team(s) first time.
- Continued to innovate and trial new ways of working within our teams to create efficiencies. We have had some success in reducing the volume of outstanding carers assessments by deploying a reviewing community support officer to undertake these remotely.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Reduce our waiting lists and the time individuals have to wait for an assessment.

## **Quality Standard 4 Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society**

### **Children's Services**

#### **What we said we would do**

1. Fully implement the 16+ accommodation project.
2. Work with our education partners to ensure virtual school sessions meet the needs of children in care.
3. Increase the number of care leavers who are in full time employment, education, or training.
4. Increase the number of care leavers who are living in permanent accommodation.
5. Continue and expand the work of the Intervention and Prevention Service working with families to allow them to stay together safely.
6. Continue to promote and refer to the Regional Domestic Abuse Perpetrators' programme.
7. Continue to deliver and promote the healthy relationships programme in Powys Schools.

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

1. The 16 plus provision has been implemented in the north of the county and is being fully utilised. This has enabled several young people to remain in Powys or move back to Powys from placements outside of Wales. There has been some delay in the implementation of the provision in mid Powys due to needing to wait for fire safety compliant building work to be completed. This work has begun, and the service is due to have its first young people move in, in early June 2023. We are still searching for a suitable property in the south of the county to provide 16 plus accommodation.

The 16 plus provision has enabled more Powys young people to remain in Powys, attend their local college or high school and complete their education here. It has also allowed them to live in their communities, close to their friends, family, and support networks.

2. The virtual school has designated specialist teachers covering each key stage area. It has strengthened relationships with our schools in county but also out of county and we are able to ensure that our children looked after are accessing the support they need to learn. If a provision is not meeting a child's needs, we are aware of this in a timely way and can respond to look at alternative options. Each child is having their termly Personal Education Plan meetings where progress is tracked and recorded; these multi-agency meetings ensure clear and measurable plans are devised.
3. We have maintained the number of care leavers in full-time employment, education, or training: 76 out of 133 on 1 April 2022 (57%) and 73 out of 127 on 31 March 2023 (57%). We have a good number of care leavers accessing higher education and continue to support care leavers during their courses. We are now looking at the option of apprenticeships within the council for care leavers and aim to increase the overall percentage over the next year.

The development of the virtual school is aiming to strengthen the experiences of children in care within education and to support them to achieve; it is likely that a care leaver who finds learning or work-based opportunities enjoyable is likely to continue to engage in training, employment, or training.

Agencies such as the Sunflower Lounge and Communities for Work+ are working with other professionals to support children in care and care leavers to access training, education, and employment.

4. We continue to support care leavers to access their own accommodation within Powys by referring young people to the housing department at the age of 18 years: four out of our 108 care leavers were in unsuitable



accommodation on 1 April 2022 (3.7%) and three out of our 106 care leavers were in unsuitable accommodation on 31 March 2023 (2.8%). Some young people remain in their foster placements under the When I'm Ready arrangements, we continue to recruit Supported Lodgings hosts and we will have our 16 plus mid Powys property available soon.

By working with our housing partners, we have secured springboard properties in the north, mid and south of Powys which has enabled young people to step into independence with support. Several care leavers attend university, and we fund their accommodation for the duration of their course to help provide stability.

We will be expanding the 16 plus accommodation in the south of Powys once a property has been secured.

5. Our team members continue to develop their skills and knowledge through learning opportunities, and we now have staff trained in the strengths-based Signs of Safety protection model and the trauma recovery model, practitioners trained in the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) recovery toolkit, some are Parent Assessment Manual (PAM) trained and are experienced in supporting family network meetings.

We continue to embed our ethos that promotes a strength-based approach to child protection and recognises that families can be successful in achieving success and identifying their own solutions with the support of their professional and personal network. The approaches we adopt when working with families is instrumental in the successful outcomes we are achieving. The service recognises the importance of 'doing with' and empowering families and it is the key to achieving success. We are passionate about ensuring that the people we support feel that they are being listened to, and we use reflective discussion and motivational interviewing to pull out strengths and encourage motivation to effect change in their lives. We continue to receive positive feedback from stakeholders for the approach we take and the interventions we carry out.

During 2022-23 the Edge of Care Service has:

- Supported 255 children.
- Reunited 24 children with their parents, in their family home.
- 93% of children we worked with remained at home with their families.
- 82% of families reached their goals – with some being signposted to early help services to complete their plans.
- We have supported all areas of Children's Services in Powys including the Integrated Disability Service, Assessment and Care

and Support teams, Fostering Service, Adoption Service and Children Looked After Services.

- Reunited 37 children with their families or supported them to live independently.
6. We continue to promote and refer into the Regional Domestic Abuse Perpetrators' programme, which is delivered in partnership with Calan DVS and Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre. We attended operational team meetings to raise awareness and share information about the scheme.
  7. We have provided resources for schools (cards to support relationship and sex education discussions for every school which has done the Whole School Approach to Relationship and Sex Education training). We have made available C-card (where to access free condoms) resources, and these will be used by youth workers to co-deliver relationship and sex education sessions in schools. We meet quarterly to review delivery and to explore further ways in which we can best support schools.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Further develop multi-agency family centres in the south of the county.
2. Develop a strategy for supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
3. Further develop our supported lodgings service.
4. Implement our Bright Spots action plan to better support our looked after children.
5. Explore options for using the virtual school to improve the percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training.

## **Adult Services and Commissioning**

### **What we said we would do**

1. Recruit an employment access officer (carried forward from 2021-22).
2. Create a strategic workstream to focus on the aspirations, experiences, opportunities, barriers, support, and assets available to people at risk of exclusion from full and equal participation in work, leisure, and learning.

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

1. Following a review of the job description, we successfully recruited an employment access officer who began in post in November 2022. The post is fixed term until 31 March 2024.

We have completed a review of all commissioned providers who offer supported employment and have in a place a directory to support understanding of this by our operational teams.

2. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, business continuity and workforce pressures we have not been able to progress this project as originally planned. However, following the employment access officer taking up post, we have started to take the project forward alongside partners.

We have designed our programme of engagement and consultation and will be using a co-production approach to ensure parity between those involved.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Expand the opportunities for supported employment across sectors and communities in Powys.
2. Undertake engagement, develop, and implement new co-produced innovative models of day opportunities (all ages) within communities across Powys.

## **Quality Standard 5 - Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.**

### **Children's Services**

#### **What we said we would do**

1. Continue and expand the work of the Intervention and Prevention Service working with families to allow them to stay together safely.

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

1. Our team members continue to develop their skills and knowledge through learning opportunities, and we now have staff trained in the strengths-based Signs of Safety protection model and the trauma recovery model, practitioners trained in the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) recovery toolkit, some are Parent Assessment Manual (PAM) trained and are experienced in supporting family network meetings.

We continue to embed our ethos that promotes a strength-based approach to child protection and recognises that families can be successful in achieving success and identifying their own solutions with

the support of their professional and personal network. The approaches we adopt when working with families is instrumental in the successful outcomes we are achieving. The service recognises the importance of 'doing with' and empowering families and it is the key to achieving success. We are passionate about ensuring that the people we support feel that they are being listened to, and we use reflective discussion and motivational interviewing to pull out strengths and encourage motivation to effect change in their lives. We continue to receive positive feedback from stakeholders for the approach we take and the interventions we carry out.

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- We have supported all areas of Children's Services in Powys including the Integrated Disability Service, Assessment and Care and Support teams, Fostering Service, Adoption Service and Children Looked After Services.
- Reunited 37 children with their families or supported them to live independently.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Continue and expand the work of the Intervention and Prevention Service working with families to allow them to stay together safely.
2. Develop a plan for providing pre-birth support which aligns with our regional partners.
3. Ensure that there is the right support for parents who have had their children removed from their care.

## **Adult Services and Commissioning**

### **What we said we would do**

1. Begin expansion of the early help and support at home service from three to 13 localities in collaboration with local services and communities.
2. Re-commission the community equipment service in collaboration with Powys Teaching Health Board.

3. Continue to explore ways of supporting unpaid carers, including formal and informal methods, and expand successful provision to other parts of the county.

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

1. Home Support in east Radnorshire continued for the fifth year and a new Home Support scheme in Builth and Llanwrtyd Wells began in September 2022. Both are currently funded via the Regional Integration Fund.

The Home Support service in the Rhayader and Llandrindod Wells locality, and the Llanidloes locality became sustainably funded and delivered by the council and is known as Mid Powys Home Support.

The Early Help and Prevention Steering Group was established to support the roll-out of Home Support. Delays were experienced due to changes in staffing and Adult Services and Commissioning being in business continuity.

The project remains focussed on securing sustainable endorsement and resourcing (financial and staffing) for home support services provision across all 13 localities in Powys.

2. A new service provider was commissioned to deliver the Powys Integrated Community Equipment Service. It supports residents through the provision of a range of disability and technology enabled care equipment for use in their own homes.

3. This original action related to a project which did not progress. However, Credu, our commissioned provider, has been successful in securing additional funding to support the creative respite project which includes delivering short breaks for unpaid carers. An exchange programme between Powys young carers and young carers in Denmark has also progressed with a visit for Powys young carers planned for Summer 2023.

Credu continue to support unpaid carers in one-to-one and group sessions which helps to make them feel valued and build their resilience to continue caring whilst knowing support is available should it be needed. There were a diverse range of activities offered including wellness retreats, counselling support, creativity groups, and coffee and chat drop-ins (countywide).

Through the Carers Steering Group, partnership working across the third sector has been enhanced, e.g., supporting people to establish and maintain carer peer support networks, which will be run directly by carers once fully established.

## **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Secure commitment and financial resource for further home support services, in collaboration with local services and communities.
2. Continue to support unpaid carers through the provision of respite, one-to-one and group-based activities.

## **Quality Standard 6 - Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.**

### **Children's Services**

#### **What we said we would do**

1. Develop additional in-house residential homes in Powys.
2. Further develop our supported lodgings service.
3. Continue the recruitment drive for foster carers.

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

1. A key area of our work over 2022-23 has been developing our in-house residential provision. We currently have two regulated residential homes: Bannau based in Brecon and Glynmawr in Ystradgynlais. We have a further two residential settings which we are working towards getting regulated: Pum Copa in Welshpool and Henrhyd in Ystradgynlais.

The service has evidenced a high use of agency staffing to meet needs and this has led to two recruitment events in the north and south of the county to develop teams with permanent Powys employed staff. The biggest challenge will be recruiting to the registered manager posts for Henrhyd and Pum Copa, which is essential to meeting the requirements of Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) registration. The budget for residential facilities within Powys has been overspent during 2022-23 financial year. The business plan for residential facilities will require re-visiting to build a realistic budget and staffing complement that ensures the homes remain safe and meet the needs of the young people who live there.

Powys Regional Partnership Board successfully secured £525,000 capital funding from Welsh Government (WG) to buy a property to develop safe accommodation for children with complex needs in Powys. The purchase of the property has been completed and work is underway to make the necessary adaptations to the home to comply with the conditions of the

planning approval and to meet the requirements for registration with CIW. Partners had been invited to bid to WG for additional revenue funding to develop and implement a model of care to support children with complex needs and open a safe accommodation residential home in Powys. A joint bid has been agreed and submitted to WG. This type of residential provision would be designed to avoid escalation of need that could result in a secure welfare placement or tier 4 inpatient mental health placement. It could also be used as 'step down' provision to enable discharge from a secure or tier 4 setting and could help with avoiding placements out of county or out of Wales.

2. The Supported Lodgings scheme has continued to develop over the past year, with three new hosts being approved, 31 recruitment opportunities taken advantage of and the organisation of the first 'in person' host support group. In April 2022 we had 13 approved hosts, taking into consideration the newly approved hosts, one resignation and the completion of one specific placement, at present we have 14 hosts. During the past year, our available hosts have been used to support nine new placements, with six young people currently living in Supported Lodgings. Despite having only 14 enquiries over the past year, three of those have been approved, two led to an assessment being partially completed and then the potential host withdrawing and four are currently under assessment and awaiting panel approval.

One Supported Lodgings co-ordinator is undertaking their social work qualification leaving the other co-ordinator to carry out the supervision, recruitment, and assessment of our hosts. The second co-ordinator will return to the role at the end of summer 2023.

We continue to advertise for further Supported Lodging hosts and are attending local events and advertising on social media. We are targeting areas within Powys where it is known that housing opportunities are limited due to the demand or available housing stock.

3. Foster Wales has allocated funds for a second recruitment and retention officer. This two-year funded post will focus on our social media presence and support with our marketing opportunities. This post will support the face-to-face recruitment events across Powys with an aim of increasing our in-house fostering capacity to reduce the need to use independent fostering agency (IFA) carers or providers who make a profit.

Our recruitment activities:

- Social media and media campaigns – emergency homes for young people, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, 'The time is right/New year's resolution', supporting unaccompanied Ukrainian young people.

- Coffee shops – monthly info sessions in Costa Coffee, Brecon, Newtown and Welshpool, and The Herb Garden in Llandrindod Wells.
- Information pop-ups – monthly across Powys libraries, with an electronic poster in Builth Library. Also at supermarkets, town markets, and Warm Spaces.
- Local community events – Christmas markets including Welshpool Christmas Cracker event, Guilsfield Show, Royal Welsh Spring Festival, Royal Welsh Show and Winter Fair, jobs fairs at Brecon, Ystradgynlais, Newtown, Llandrindod Wells, and Welshpool, Builth Wells community engagement event, summer fetes, Voices from Care summer event, Care Leavers’ Week fundraising event, primary school parents’ evenings, councillor information ‘marketplace’.
- Poster/leaflet drops – undertaken throughout the year covering Brecon, Ystradgynlais, Builth, Llandrindod, Hay, Talgarth, Newtown, Welshpool, Machynlleth, Llanfyllin and surrounding areas.
- Banners – outdoor banners in use around the county and placed in Talgarth, Builth, Brecon, Sennybridge, Ystradgynlais, Welshpool and Newtown. Banner also placed at Quackers Indoor Play Centre, Newbridge-on-Wye.
- Media and other places used – regular posts on Foster Wales Powys social media, schools’ newsletter, council job pages.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Develop additional in-house residential homes in Powys.
2. Further develop our supported lodgings service.
3. Increase 16+ accommodation within county.
4. Develop and implement a quality assurance framework for our in-house residential provision.

## **Adult Services and Commissioning**

### **What we said we would do**

1. Continue working with partners to open two new extra care schemes in Welshpool and Ystradgynlais. Make progress with the planning application for an extra care scheme in Brecon.
2. Through the Closer to Home project, continue to understand future accommodation needs for adults and work with partners to ensure



current and new developments are fit for purpose and meeting the needs of Powys people.

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

1. The works on the extra care housing project in Welshpool (Neuadd Maldwyn) continue to progress. We have held a workshop to support us in identifying innovative technology enabled care to support the needs of future tenants. All extra care schemes are bespoke, and we have continued to learn from existing facilities based in other council areas. It is anticipated that this exciting new scheme will open in March 2024.

The extra care scheme in Ystradgynlais (Pont Aur) has had difficulties with the building contractor going into administration. The housing association appointed a provisional contractor to secure the site and to provide a new quote for completion of works. Despite this, it is anticipated that the project will be delayed by no more than 12 months and should open in early 2025. A positive open day has been held by the housing association.

The planning process for the Brecon extra care project is well underway.

2. We have been working with Powys Teaching Health Board colleagues on the Closer to Home project to identify and secure new accommodation developments that are fit for purpose and meet the needs of people who will become tenants.

Our operational and commissioning teams have worked closely together to develop a new accommodation form which highlights the needs of people and when the accommodation is required. This will support people to live in their communities of choice within Powys.

We are working alongside independent providers on developing a residential mental health service in Powys; this project is in its early stages.

In early 2023-24 we will be opening a new supported tenancy provision in the north of the county that will provide accommodation for three tenants whose interests and needs have been identified as similar.

We have worked throughout the year to maximise existing accommodation within the county providing opportunities for people living within and outside of the county to move back to a community of choice.

### **What do we plan to do in 2023-24**

1. Further develop and progress extra care options across Powys.
2. Begin a review of council owned residential accommodation.

# How We Do What We Do

## Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

### Leadership

The last 12 months have seen changes in terms of senior leadership roles within Social Services. Following the departure of the previous Director of Social Services, line management was realigned with Adult Services, Commissioning and Partnerships and the statutory responsibilities held by the Interim Director of Social Services and Housing, with Children's Services sitting with the Director of Education and Children. The alignment of services in this way has promoted relationships and collaborative cross service working. During the year, a permanent appointment was made to the Head of Children's Services, with a permanent Head of Adult Services starting in quarter 1 of 23/24. The remaining interim arrangements have been extended for up to 12 months to provide ongoing stability.

### Children's Services

There have been several areas within Children's Services where there has been an increase in demand:

- At the Front Door for Information Advice and Assistance (IAA).
- Around Child Protection Registrations.
- Accommodating our Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children (UASC)
- Resourcing two managed social work teams due to staffing reductions.
- Unregulated placements due to the national shortage of provision.
- Our in house foster placement availability.

During the January to March 2022 period, we experienced both permanent and agency staff leaving Powys to work for other councils where the pay rates were higher. This left us unable to function safely and effectively within our core service area, so two managed teams, supplied by recruitment agencies, were commissioned.

Managed teams exited earlier than planned, but we managed to recruit some of their members to work within the service area teams, which was more effective.

Through our Grow Our Own Social Worker development programme we appointed five newly qualified social workers into the service during the summer and autumn 2022.

We have also increased the number of wellbeing worker positions within some teams to try and establish if this is a more effective way of working.

We currently have 353 people employed in Children's Services. We have 72 vacancies, which includes 45 social worker posts. Of these, 29 are being covered by agency workers. At the beginning of the financial year, we had 40 agency workers.

Recruitment and retention of qualified social workers remains an issue and is a key objective of our integrated business plan for the next year: 'To have a high-quality service, delivered with a skilled, supported and sustainable workforce'. Within this objective we have actions to improve the recruitment and retention of qualified social workers and staff within our residential homes. Our HR business partner and our commissioning assistant for agency recruitment attend our Children's Leadership Team meetings each month to help us manage our staffing levels.

Levels of staff sickness improved throughout the year, with the incidence of covid-19 absences, and long-term sickness, decreasing.

During the year we have had 44.3 full time equivalent leavers and 51.4 full time equivalent starters.

The service approach to development and training is that we want to create a culture of progressive thinking and learning.

A newly appointed practice development manager has been in post for nearly 12 months and is working hard to offer a wide range of opportunities for learning. This includes briefings, webinars, online learning, face-to-face learning, lectures, and access to the latest research, which is promoted across the service.

Training, development, reflective practice, and continuous exploration of innovative practice is critical to the work of Children's Services.

In 2023 we will look to further enhance the offer around staff wellbeing, drawing upon a trauma informed organisation and looking at Schwartz engagement, which is a technique used within health services.

## Adult Services and Commissioning

The fall out of Covid-19 has seen escalated pressures on the whole social care workforce. Whilst some short-term additional capacity has been sourced via grant funding, our current staffing structures are not able to meet the increased demand. The external market has also faced recruitment pressures.

We have seen recruitment and retention issues across the social care sector as a whole. We have experienced difficulties recruiting:

- Reablement and care and support workers, especially in the north of the county.
- Approved mental health professionals.
- Hospital team social worker for the south of the county.

There have also been changes in relation to the use of current agency workers for reablement and domiciliary care to meet procurement requirements; this has resulted in extra work to recruit and induct a whole new team of staff.

We have continued to have a 'grow our own' ethos, with staff securing permanent posts via recruitment into the Disabilities Team. We have also recruited some agency staff into permanent positions in the council through safer and competitive recruitment.

The service participated in a Recruitment and Retention Working Group, which has led to several new initiatives, including an increased focus on value-based recruitment and the creation of an 'apply now' function, which speeds up the application process significantly.

Ongoing discrepancies in caseload sizes and salary/terms and conditions between the council and Powys Teaching Health Board staff have been identified. This has resulted in staff leaving Adult Services to join the health board. There are also wider issues in relation to terms and conditions which are resulting in staff moving to work for other councils. Despite all these challenges, we have seen staff continue to show flexibility during our time in business continuity resulting in a more collaborative culture and many new skills being learnt.

We have seen an increase in mental health team referrals as well as an increase for mental health act assessments (both in and out of hours); this has had a negative impact on our ability to manage our approved mental health professionals' rota due to recruitment issues across the county.

We have seen a significant increase in Mental Capacity Act (Section 21A) legal challenges, which can create a high risk of reputational damage. We have seen additional pressures for staff and identified the need for increased legal capacity to meet these challenges.

We have seen a significant increase in our requests for legal support including subsequent requirements in relation to attendance at court.

To support our operating model, we have begun work on reviewing our staffing structures. This has seen us further develop our dedicated hospital team, which works in collaboration with district general hospitals, as well as our operational and commissioning teams, to support discharge of individuals from hospital at the earliest opportunity. We have also created an integrated occupational therapy and sensory services team and have restructured our disabilities team, replacing a countywide team with two teams for the north and the south, with the aim of providing increased management capacity and oversight.

We have initiated a locality pilot in the Older People's Service, which has seen us move from having north and south teams, to having teams based around Welshpool, Newtown, Llandrindod Wells, and Brecon and Ystradgynlais. Early feedback from staff suggests this has led to more time for management duties and providing support.

We have moved away from having separate reablement and domiciliary care job descriptions to one overarching reablement care and support worker job description and are in the process of converting our reviewing community support officer posts into social care practitioner roles. This will see them take on some responsibilities for formal care and support planning and assessment whilst working in partnership with other professionals, agencies, and communities to promote person-centred outcomes for people with care and support needs.

Staff are reporting frequent working over, and above contracted hours and we are seeing an impact of virtual working with staff spending whole days in back-to-back meetings and then spending time outside of that to 'catch-up' with work and identified actions. We promote staff wellbeing at every opportunity

but there is a significant challenge in supporting staff to obtain a work-life balance.

Responding to numerous complaints and queries and enforced down-time caused by failures with the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) is also having an impact on staff morale and wellbeing.

We continue to promote the Care First employee assistance programme as part of our wider staff wellbeing offer and have supported out teams through the New Ways of Working changes. This has seen many members of staff move from being office-based to becoming flexible workers who can carry out their roles from any location, including their homes.

Our staff continue to be acknowledged for their work, e.g., our Safeguarding Team Manager was highly commended for “outstanding practice demonstrated in the safeguarding of adults at risk” in the 2022 Safeguarding Awards.

Through the supervision and appraisal process staff training needs are identified. Where appropriate staff can apply to the Qualification Panel to have their social care qualifications funded.

The following year end statistics gives an overview of training in 2022-23:

- Staff beginning a social work degree – 5.
- Staff already studying for a social work degree – 7.
- Staff due to qualify for a social work degree this Autumn – 5.

Three members of Adult Services staff qualified in the autumn of 2022 and moved into roles in Community Mental Health, Older People, and Disabilities.

- Staff beginning Practice Educator’s Award – 1.
- Staff completing Practice Educator’s Award – 4.
- Staff completing Rehabilitation Officer Visual Impairment (ROVI) qualification – 2.
- Staff completing Porth Agored Award (Graduate Certificate in the Consolidation of Social Work Practice) – 4.
- Staff on Porth Agored programme on 31 March 2023 – 5.
- Staff due to complete an Occupational Therapy degree in late 2023 – 3.

We look to support continuing professional development for our qualified, registered, and non-qualified workforce. Within our social work teams, we also provide opportunities for peer reflection and support.

To support new starters within Adult Services we have developed an Induction Handbook; we are looking to convert this into an e-book in 2023-24.

Through Workforce Futures (Powys Regional Partnership Board), our new reablement care and support workers are supported via a joint induction programme alongside health care support workers (Powys Teaching Health Board). The first joint induction programme ran in March 2023 with positive feedback received. The next cohort of staff will receive their induction in May 2023.

The Powys Health and Care Academy (Workforce Futures) opened in autumn 2022 and provides additional training and development options for current and future social care staff.

Team Teach, train the trainers, has been completed this year with the Practice and Development team due to begin an in-house programme for frontline staff working with people with complex and challenging behaviours in the community. This is in line with the Welsh Government Reducing Restrictive Practice framework.

## Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future

Service Area	£'000	Working Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Over) / Under Spend	Variance (Over) / Under Spend %
Adult Services		74,716	73,930	786	1.1
Childrens Services		28,587	30,594	(2,007)	(7.0)
Commissioning		3,773	3,036	737	19.5

## Children's Services

The past 12 months has been challenging due to the high cost of placements and the need to spend £12,000 per day on agency social workers.

There have been further challenges such as needing two managed teams, supplied by recruitment agencies, which the council paid for out of reserve funding.

During the second half of the year, the service reviewed all internal expenditure, with every penny spent subjected to scrutiny. This helped to reduce the deficit to around £2 million by the end of the financial year.

Going forwards, the aim is to reduce the number of high-cost residential placements and to prevent more children from needing to become looked after.

We also have a strong focus on our Grow our Own social workers programme which, over the next three years, should reduce our need for agency social workers significantly. We also need to consider reshaping some service areas to accommodate capacity and demand and then review the roles of wellbeing workers and social workers and look at how we can build progression within the service.

The savings for 2023 are set against realistic targets around placements, 16+ accommodation, use of Special Guardianship Orders and our Grow our Own social workers programme. This all links with our key objectives for next year:

- Right help, right time.
- Closer to home.
- Staffing – a high-quality service delivered with a skilled, supported, and sustainable workforce.

If we can further reduce risk management and the number of children on the Child Protection Register, while also engaging with families more effectively through the Early Help service, this will help to reduce long-term demand.

Children's Services has relied heavily on grant funding and while this creates opportunities for innovation it also undermines sustainability. The high level of posts which are reliant on this type of funding needs reviewing as it does not create stability within the workforce.



As a service we have refocused our objectives for the next year. We evaluated the current objectives in our integrated business plan and questioned whether these objectives had been achieved and had become our day-to-day business. During a Children's Senior Leadership Team development day, which was focussed on our business planning, we determined the three areas that we felt were our biggest challenge and centred our objectives for the next year around this (outlined above).

## Adult Services and Commissioning

Adults Services and Commissioning delivered an underspend position at the end of financial year; grant income and use of reserves were utilised during the year and 100% of savings were achieved.

The increase in demand at the front door (ASSIST) is anticipated to continue in the next financial year and our operational teams report seeing an increase in the complexity of need for those individuals presenting. As a result, it is becoming challenging to meet statutory requirements, because of increases in:

- Mental Health Act assessments.
- Waits for assessments for older people by occupational therapists and social workers.
- Overdue reviews.
- Legal and court challenges.
- Delays in completing carers assessments.
- Backlogs and delays in the provision of equipment.
- Unpredictability of the provider market.
- Our over 65s' population.
- Recruitment and retention challenges within the workforce.

Addressing these challenges will be a priority in the next financial year and future budget plans will be aligned in order to enable this to happen. Work is ongoing with transformation and improvement programmes, both internally and with partners from health and the third sector. Budget planning work on the Financial Resource Model starts early in the year to ensure that resources are aligned to deliver on the aims and objectives set out within the corporate improvement plan, Stronger, Fairer, Greener and the service's Integrated Business Plan.

Our 7 key objectives are:

1. **Front Door** We operate an effective front door which provides information, advice and signposting which enables residents to make informed choices in relation to their care and wellbeing. The service focuses on resolution at the earliest opportunity for the resident.
2. **Hospital** We work with NHS Partners to have in place a set of arrangements that allow for the speedy transfer of people from hospital, to achieve the best possible outcomes for those people.
3. **Partnership** We work with Powys Teaching Health Board to adopt and reinvigorate a recovery approach to all health and social care services
4. **Community** We work to ensure that there is timely, targeted and effective use of reablement, rehabilitation and support that has a focus on enabling independence and self-management and avoiding the over-prescription of care.
5. **Long term care** We work alongside people with long-term care needs to have a care and support plan with a focus on achieving the maximum possible independence (as is realistic and possible for their individual circumstances) and delivers the desired outcome. We review these plans regularly based on outcomes achieved.
6. **Workforce** We have in place a workforce that is fully trained and supported to work with people needing social care which fits with the ethos and principles of the Council.
7. **Management** We collate and analyse data to help us understand whether there has been an impact on the delivery of outcomes and the management of demand on our services.

## **Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability**

The work of all services across Powys County Council are aligned with the political aspirations set out within the corporate improvement plan, Stronger Fairer, Greener. Cabinet Portfolio Holders provide political leadership, challenge and scrutiny, with wider contributions from Cabinet, Health & Care Scrutiny Committee and Governance & Audit Committee. There is a clear focus on performance, continuous improvement and transformation across Social Services, led and challenged by Councillors from across the council through established governance processes and procedures.

The Council is a proactive member and contributor to regional boards, and aspects of the local authority's improvement and transformation agenda

are being progressed through the priorities of the Powys Regional Partnership Board and the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board.

In line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act (2014), the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) provides cross-sector leadership through a strong and shared commitment to providing improved health and social care services for children, young people and adults living in Powys, with a primary emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

The Health and Care Strategy sets out priority areas and key strategic enablers and, within the last year, the Area Plan has been reviewed setting out future priorities for partnership working with the Health Board and Third Sector partners.

## **Children's Services Governance**

Our Children's Senior Leadership Team holds weekly meetings.

The following governance arrangements are also in place:

- Safeguarding Board.
- CYSUR (Child and Youth Safeguarding: Unifying the Region) - Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Children Board.
- PLOG - Powys Local Operational Group.
- Audit and Training Groups as part of PLOG.
- CPR/MAPF (Child Practice Review/Multi-Agency Professional Forum) Subgroup as part of CYSUR.
- Corporate Parenting Board.
- Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee.
- Executive Management Team.
- Education Service and Children's Services briefing meetings.
- Portfolio Holder briefing meetings.
- Quarterly performance meetings.
- Social Services Board.
- Social Services briefing meetings with directors.
- Youth Justice Board.
- Powys Regional Partnership Board (RPB).
- Start Well Board (Powys RPB).
- Closer to Home Board.
- Residential Homes briefing meetings with director.

- Local Family Justice Boards for North and South Wales where information is presented from CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) Cymru regarding data across Wales, in terms of proceedings both public and private.

These all have their own governance arrangements with terms of reference and actions plans.

## **Adult Services and Commissioning Governance Arrangements**

The following governance arrangements are in place:

- Full Council.
- Cabinet.
- Health and Care Scrutiny Committee.
- Governance and Audit Committee.
- Executive Management Team.
- Senior Leadership Team.
- Assurance Briefing.
- Senior Management Team.
- Operational Management Team.
- Public Service Board.
- Substance and Alcohol Misuse - Area Planning Board.
- Joint Partnership Board.
- Regional Partnership Board and sub-partnership sub-groups.
- Regional Safeguarding Board.
- Responsible Individual Meetings with Director.
- Section 33 Board Meetings.
- Housing Support Grant and Homelessness Board
- Extra Care Programme Board
- Community Equipment Service Board
- Financial regulations, internal procurement rules and the PCR

## Key Partnership Updates

### The Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) in Powys programme

The Improving the Cancer Journey in Powys programme, funded by Macmillan Cancer Support and in partnership with the council and Powys Teaching Health Board, continued to offer residents living with cancer opportunities to have their voices heard and to access a tailored package of support using a 'what matters' conversation and/or Macmillan's holistic needs assessment (eHNA) tool.

The four delivery partners Credu, PAVO's Community Connector Service, the Bracken Trust and the Health Board's Specialist Palliative Nursing Team saw a steady increase in referrals over the year.

Residents living with cancer who had contacted the council's Adult Social Services & Information Team (ASSIST) were discussed as part of the daily screening meeting and referred onto PAVO for a full 'what matters' conversation. This process has enabled each resident to access a wider range of support whether emotional, practical, social, or financial. The council's Money Advice Team which specialises in understanding what benefits, grants, or other support (a blue badge) is available to help a person diagnosed/living with cancer is another key partner in the programme. Funding from Macmillan contributes towards one of the posts.

During June 2022, the ICJ team set up two ICJ information events – one in Welshpool and one in Brecon – which enabled anyone living with or supporting a loved one with cancer to drop by and chat to professionals, access information and take up the offer of the 'what matters' conversation. Agencies included all the partners, plus the Powys Community Health Council (now Llais), Shrewsbury and Telford hospitals, Wye Valley Trust, Freedom Leisure, the library service with a display of the books about cancer and Blood Bikes Wales who deliver specialist cancer medication to Powys residents. There were speaker slots, an ICJ goodie bag given out to every person, a raffle and at the Brecon event there was a canal walk and members of Theatr Brycheiniog's lunchtime uplift choir and the Alive & Kickin' Community Choir sang a selection of their favourite songs.

A coproduced leaflet was also written, designed, printed, and distributed during the year to all the hospitals that treat Powys patients so that clinical nurse specialists could give them out to patients so they knew how they could access

support through the programme. Both the patient experience forum and the peer support network continued to take place and Macmillan has committed to continue to fund the programme for a Phase II.

Alongside working to increase the offer of the eHNA the programme team:

- Produced its second End of Year report summing up the key achievements to date.
- Continued to capture patient voice and stories and produced some videos which are available on the Regional Partnership Board's You Tube channel.
- Attended the Macmillan National Conference displaying a good practice poster about the coproduced leaflet and where Sharon Healey (PAVO) took part in a panel discussion sharing how their role in the programme provides a community focus.
- Organised a series of canal walks for people living with cancer during the month of September in conjunction with the Canals, Communities and Wellbeing project. And worked with the Wales Ambassador for parkrun to promote the Walk It campaign held in October. This led to two people living with cancer walking the Builth Wells parkrun event each week. Six months on both residents are still coming along.
- Continued to coproduce ICJ communication materials with the input from the Journeying Together forum which was set up to ensure the voice of the patient was at the heart of the programme, including the second Autumn 2022 ICJ Newsletter and input into the conference poster.

## **The North Powys Wellbeing Programme**

Working under the flag of the Powys Regional Partnership Board, the North Powys Wellbeing Programme was established as a key priority to deliver the county's joint Health and Care Strategy (Powys County Council and Powys Teaching Health Board, 2017) with a vision to "assess and deliver a new integrated model in North Powys in line with the Health and Care Strategy, and to support effective learning and transfer across Powys."

Led by the council and the health board, with support from the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO), this programme will address the biggest causes of ill health and poor wellbeing through partnership between professionals and communities, offering early help and technology-enabled health and provision to ensure residents have a more seamless service when they need it.

A major strand of this programme is a proposed multi-agency health and wellbeing campus in the centre of Newtown (on Park Street).

The campus' Programme Business Case was endorsed by Welsh Government in 2022. The Strategic Outline Case has also been submitted, and work has begun on the Outline Business Case as well as on Business Justification Case for the campus' supporting infrastructure.

Proposals for the campus site include:

- A new school for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen. (This work is being managed as part of the council's Transforming Education programme but both teams are working closely together.)
- Health and care facilities, including the transfer of the town's hospital facilities from their current home on Llanfair Road as well as introducing more diagnostic equipment and facilities to undertake day surgery. Repatriation of services from outside Powys is a key ambition of the programme, helping to save travel time and cost for local patients as well as introduce additional capacity into the system.
- A Health and Care Academy. The first campus in Powys opened in Bronllys in 2022. View the video of the official opening on Powys Teaching Health Board's YouTube channel:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il2xi1\\_QJo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il2xi1_QJo)
- Library and information services.
- Community space for wellbeing activities to take place, working alongside the voluntary sector.
- Short term supported housing.
- Accommodation for academy students and locum staff.

The programme team has undertaken continuous engagement throughout the life of the programme – although this was paused at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic – and will continue to do so up to and after the campus opens to make sure that the citizen voice is at the heart of the programme's plans.

## Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

The Annual Report identifies the progress of the council in providing for the well-being of those people who need our help and support. This report however is not the only source of information available to members of the public, key partners, and service providers.

We have a significant amount of background information that sits behind this report, providing additional detail about what we do and how we do it. Importantly, if something is not mentioned in this report as a key priority it does not mean we are not doing it, as there is a lot of activity across Social Services that plays a part in helping us to provide for some of the most vulnerable groups in our community. It is not possible to capture everything, which is why we are keen to signpost people to further information.

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

- Welsh Government Guidance in relation to the Annual Social Services Report: [Microsoft Word - Annual Report Guidance.docx \(socialcare.wales\)](#)
- Corporate Plan Annual Performance Reports: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/11758/Vision-2025-Annual-Performance-Reports>
- Director of Social Services Annual report 2021/22 and further documents in support of this report can be found here: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/2188/Social-Care-ACRF-Annual-Council-Reporting-Framework>
- Stronger, Fairer, Greener - Our Corporate Plan: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/ourvision>
- The Adult Services Improvement Plan 2018-2023 [Adults Service Improvement Plan Appendix - Powys County Council](#)
- The Powys Population Needs Assessment: [https://www.powysrpb.org/files/ugd/33b29e\\_dfc4dcc31ac34f0cb5ac57fc8693438e.pdf](https://www.powysrpb.org/files/ugd/33b29e_dfc4dcc31ac34f0cb5ac57fc8693438e.pdf)
- Improving the Cancer Journey in Powys: <https://www.powysrpb.org/icjpowys>
- Commissioned Services Plans on a page [Our Strategies and Plans on a Page - Powys County Council](#)



- Social Services Annual Complaints Report  
<https://en.powys.gov.uk/socialservicescomplaints>
- Information about our regional work via the Regional Partnership Board can be found here [HOME | Powys RPB](#)
- Information about the North Powys Wellbeing Project:  
<http://www.powyswellbeing.wales/>
- Powys Market Stability Report:  
[https://www.powysrpb.org/files/ugd/33b29e\\_c597a8982b714296b812887c397d6eca.pdf](https://www.powysrpb.org/files/ugd/33b29e_c597a8982b714296b812887c397d6eca.pdf)
- Powys Regional Partnership Board Annual Report 2021- 2022:  
[https://www.powysrpb.org/files/ugd/33b29e\\_72809254589144598135dbbea41e7f2c.pdf](https://www.powysrpb.org/files/ugd/33b29e_72809254589144598135dbbea41e7f2c.pdf)
- Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards Annual Report 2021-22: <https://www.cysur.wales/our-annual-report-2021-22-is-now-live/>
- Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards Annual Plan 2023-4: <https://www.cysur.wales/our-annual-plan-2023-24-is-now-live/>
- Powys Health and Care Academy:  
<https://www.powysrpb.org/powyshealthandcareacademy>