



Annual Report of the Director of Social Services **2016 - 2017**

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Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services Annual Report 2016/17. Over the past few years the Department has been developing this annual report to highlight the key areas of improvements and challenges that have been faced.

This report has been developed in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWB), referred to as 'the Act' throughout this document. The Act aims to provide the most radical change to the way in which we provide Social Services since 1948. It focuses on improving the well-being of people who come to Social Services for support. It is person centred and focuses on prevention and reducing the need for care and support. It recognises that responsibility lies not only within Social Services Departments, but in the wider Local Authority and with our partners (particularly health and the third sector).

The Act shares similar principles with a number of key national/regional strategies that are being implemented throughout the Council, in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Director of Social Services has a statutory requirement to publish an annual report in relation to the delivery of its functions, to evaluate its performance and also include lessons learned. A key aspect of the report is showing how we have implemented the six quality standards in relation to well-being outcomes.

This report provides a strategic overview of the work we have undertaken throughout 2016/17 and what we plan to do moving forward. Further supporting information can be found in section 6 of the report.

Throughout the report we have tried to evidence where we have worked collaboratively with partners and where we have captured the views of service users in order to provide improved services that meet the needs of local people. The report has also been circulated to partner agencies to ensure that the evaluations provided within this report are reflective of their experiences.

Experiences and learning from service users has been considered as part of the development of the report. Service users have been engaged through a number of forums such as the Carers Group, 50+ Forum and Young Carers Group. A questionnaire, required as part of the Act, has also been distributed to children, parents, adults and carers. The recent Population Needs Assessment, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) findings, case studies, complaints and compliments have all been considered as part of the development of this report and evidence from these has been used to inform future learning.

The annual report is used to demonstrate accountability to citizens and service users. As part of this process, the report will be presented to full Council for ratification before it is published on the Council's website and will then be sent to Welsh Ministers. The report will be available on line bilingually.

Director's Summary of Performance

As the Corporate Director of Social Services in Blaenau Gwent, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2016/17 which is a requirement of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). Also, in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 ('the Act'), I intend to use the new format for 2017/18 this year as a forerunner and benchmark for coming years.

Feedback from service users, carers, families and partner organisations together with complaints and compliments are all important learning and development opportunities for the Directorate, in addition to the Social Services and Well-being Act questionnaire we have tried a number of other methods to engage with the public both as a whole and as individuals accessing our services. This will continue to be a focus for the coming year both locally and regionally through the citizen's panel. We view complaints and compliments as a great opportunity for the Directorate to improve the services and the service user experience moving forward (See Chapter on How People are shaping our Service Page 5).

The Act came into force on the 6th April 2016 and the Directorate has made good progress throughout the year in implementing the Act and has started to embed itself into day to day practice. However, we cannot be complacent as the cultural change for practitioners is significant and we will need to continue to reinforce the changes for the legislation to have its desired impact. The Directorate has reported its Action Plan for implementation of the Act to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee as part of its quarterly monitoring reports. We are continuing to work with staff to make the necessary cultural and operational changes required and the Workforce Development Team are now rolling out a programme of more Act specific training.

The main development for the implementation of the Act during 2016/17 was the creation of two Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) hubs for children and adults which has been in place since January 2017. These have been developed collaboratively with our partners especially the third sector. There is evidence within Adult Services that the information provided was supportive and reduced the need for follow up support (Page 14). In addition we have also launched Dewis Cymru website, a resource providing a wide range of community and national resources to help people maintain or improve their well-being.

During 2016/17 we worked collaboratively with our Carers Support Worker and Community Connectors and through the secondment of a Care Support Worker from Age Cymru we have been able to expand our offer and support for carers across GP surgeries, in order to enhance opportunities for carers to access leisure facilities and clubs to reinvigorate them for their demanding roles. The Carers Service received a positive review from CSSIW as well as some recommendations for areas of development which are being reviewed and actioned accordingly.

Accompanying the Act were a number of new performance measures which we have collected and provided to Welsh Government throughout the year. It is difficult at this time to draw any conclusions on our performance as there is no benchmarking data to compare against and also possible differences in interpretations of the measures and data to be included against these new performance measurements.

However, performance has been maintained and improved in some areas, our rate of delayed transfers of care for example is 1.38 per 1,000 population 75 and over which equates to 8 delayed transfers of care for social care reasons for 2016/17 which is again a good result. Also, despite significant workload pressures on Children's Teams all child protection referrals received a response within 24 hours.

Very much linked to the Act has been the preparation throughout the year to the implementation of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) which went live on the 15th May 2017. Blaenau Gwent was the first Local Authority across the region to implement the new system. This has involved staff from both Adult and Children's Services cleansing data for migration from the old to the new system and also the development of assessment documentation and forms for the system. In addition, staff have been trained to use WCCIS and 30 plus 'super users' were identified and undertook more intensive training to support the implementation. This has been resource intensive and without the dedication of staff and some additional resource this would not have been implemented successfully and on time.

The safeguarding of children, families and vulnerable adults remains a priority moving forward for the Directorate. Adult safeguarding was a performance theme of CSSIW during 2016/17 and we received positive comments following their visit to the team, however there are areas for development and we will be focussing on these in the coming year. As part of their visit they attended a Joint Education and Social Services Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee meeting and were impressed by the information provided, how it was presented and the robust challenge by the Scrutiny Committee. The Corporate Parenting Board has also done work around safeguarding children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and Sexually Harmful Behaviour. We work well on a regional basis in relation to the Adult and Children's Safeguarding Boards, with regular attendance and representation. Safeguarding will be a priority for the coming year as we move forward.

A priority from last year where we have made little progress has been the safe reduction in the numbers of Looked After Children (LAC). The number of LAC is higher than the Directorate would have wanted however it does reflect the needs of our community. We are confident those in our care should be there to ensure they are safeguarded as the vast majority of these cases are presented to the Courts and agreed by the Judiciary. However, this has put pressure on staff to meet the demanding timescales in both Social Services and Legal and therefore we have agreed some additional resources to support this demand. We have spent the second half of 2016/17 developing a strategy to safely reduce the number of LAC and also visited a number of Edge of Care teams across Wales to potentially replicate here in Blaenau Gwent. In addition, we have also restructured our Families First team to ensure more professional expertise within the team to allow them to manage more complex cases within the community which do not need a statutory intervention, the new structure went live in April 2017.

A key theme of the Social Services and Well-being Act is prevention and early intervention. In Children's Services we have Families First, Flying Start, Early years and Play, all important in the preventative agenda to avoid the need for accessing statutory services. In Adult Services the Supporting People Team has recommissioned services in order to provide support to more vulnerable people in our communities.

During 2016/17 we established our statutory regional governance arrangements, which led to the creation of the Regional Partnership Board from April 2016. The Board is made up of Senior Leaders from Health, Local Authorities and the third sector and has overseen the implementation of the Act. The Board has identified its priorities for the coming years i.e. older people with complex needs, carers including young carers and children with complex needs. The Board has also begun to oversee the priorities and spending of the Intermediate Care Fund.

Blaenau Gwent Council, along with many other Local Authorities in Wales are facing serious financial problems and Social Services, like Corporate Services colleagues have had to find savings to ensure the authority delivers a balanced budget for 2016/17. A major area of budget pressure during 2016/17 has been the impact of the National Living Wage which has seen the authority needing to access its reserves to fund these increases for its commissioned services. This will continue to be a pressure moving forward, although Welsh Government have agreed to partly fund for 2017/18 which is welcome but will fall short of the anticipated increase required by our providers. The LAC figures not only continue to put pressure on

staff but also on budgets, there was a £2.5 million overspend in Children's Services in 2016/17 mainly down to the number of children in residential placements, secure accommodation and the increase use of foster carers thus an increase in allowances. However, this was reduced to £1.7 million because of under spends within Adult Services.

The Directorate has made progress on the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards and the 'More than just words' strategic framework. We have identified further development work in this area, although as a Local Authority we like many other authorities are experiencing challenges in recruitment and the retention of skilled staff, we do struggle employing Welsh speakers within the sector although we, and our commissioned services, do try where possible to achieve this.

The challenge for 2017/18 will to continue to manage demand and to do more with less. We will look to explore further opportunities for collaboration where it will improve the wellbeing of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent and it is right to do so.

Hopefully, this report will help you to understand how we support and safeguard children, young people, citizens, carers and their families within Blaenau Gwent and how we will continue to strive to improve our services.

How People are shaping our Services

During 2016/17 Blaenau Gwent continued to implement the required cultural and operational changes that the Act requires in order to ensure that all social care services are individually shaped by the people that use them. This includes improving the ways that we effectively engage with service users, carers, families and partner organisations, whilst actively encouraging all to provide feedback which can be utilised to shape and improve services. The Social Services Department is committed to providing high quality services to its users and multiple methods of engagement were implemented throughout the year in order to achieve this, some examples are detailed below.

Questionnaires / Surveys

- Foster Carers Survey - This was part of the Corporate Parenting action plan. The feedback from the survey was shared with foster carers and Team Managers in January 2017. From the survey an action plan to address the issues raised has been produced.
- Citizen questionnaires - Feedback was used to inform current and future Directorate support and service delivery.
- As part of the Act, people who use care and support services were invited to complete an annual survey in relation to the provision of care and support. The number of questionnaires returned for children, parents and carers was low. In order to address this, Social Services will undertake a further questionnaire again at a later date. However, the feedback from the survey will be used to inform service provision in future. Responses are provided below:

Children's Responses

In respect of Children's Services, 330 questionnaires were sent out to children with 57 returned, making a response rate of 17%. This is below the required response rate to enable a reliable statistical comparison (this would be 55% equating to 180 questionnaires).

Of the responses:

- 90% of secondary school aged children said they live in a home where they are happy; are happy with family, friends and neighbours; and feel cared for and safe.
- Two thirds felt their views about care and support were listened to.
- 68% felt that they can do the things they like to do.
- Of the responses received from primary aged children, 100% are happy with the people around them with 94% responding that they feel cared for and safe.
- 75% reported that their views about care and support were listened to.

Parents Responses

595 questionnaires were sent out to parents to gather views in relation to one question. There was a low response rate with only 32 respondents returning their questionnaire. This equates to a response rate of 5%. Again this response would be deemed to be too low for statistical reliability.

- Of the responses, 59% of parents reported that they have been actively involved in all decisions about how their child's /children's care and support was provided with 25% reporting 'sometimes' and 16% reporting 'no'.

Adult Responses

In respect of Adults Services, 780 questionnaires were sent out to adults aged 18 and over with 302 responses received. This equates to a 39% response rate, this is higher than the service has received from previous surveys, including the pilot undertaken in March. This also exceeded the required Welsh Government response rate of 25%, equating to 264 questionnaires.

- 87% of respondents reported that they lived in a home that supported their wellbeing and 86% reported being happy with support from family, friends and neighbours.
- 43% reported that they can do the things that are important to them, and 47% feel part of their community.

Carers Responses

Questionnaires were sent to 7 carers who had a joint care and support plan with the cared for person. 4 responses were received; the low response deemed the results to be statistically unreliable.

Engagement

- In October 2016, the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) held a family fun day for adoptive families to meet others in a fun location away from the boundaries of conventional support meetings. The event provided the opportunity to engage with adopters to explore their views and experiences in accessing adoption support. This information was invaluable to the service and more events are to be planned as adopters felt these were useful as they were able to discuss their concerns in a less formal environment. Learning from these events is used to shape service delivery in future.
- An Outreach Worker has been employed using a collaborative approach with partners to provide information advice and assistance to carers.
- During 2016/17 the Supporting People engagement event and Carers network/ Community Connector events were held and feedback has fed into the production of relevant plans and future service delivery.
- The data from the recent Well-being Assessment on the Blaenau Gwent area and information from the recent public engagement events, 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' and 'Let's Talk', have been mapped allowing us to demonstrate that the prioritisation of certain areas are grounded in robust evidence. This information has informed the Council's Well-being Objectives, whereby Social Services will actively implement a number of these. The Objectives have been developed through a series of workshops with staff and have been considered through the Council's democratic processes.
- In addition to the above, Social Services case studies are continually produced detailing real examples of service users experiences, work practice and outcomes, both positive and negative, enabling us to review and continually improve.

We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and the complaints procedure provides people with the opportunity to voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied with a service. The service uses learning from these complaints to improve services moving forward. The service also welcomes positive feedback and compliments and also uses this information to improve services. Most complaints received by the service are regarding timeliness of information and communication, with overall compliments being around the positive support received and being diligent and professional.

Below are some examples of complaints received and how these were dealt with:

A complaint was made to the service when a referral was not made to initiate a Letterbox Service (when birth relatives receive updates from adopters about the progress of their adopted child and letters or information from birth relatives are passed onto the children through a Letterbox scheme). In order to ensure that this service was promoted and initiated SEWAS organised an event where the letterbox process was discussed to ensure the process remains high on the agenda. The Letterbox Service will form part of training and presentations to students, newly qualified and qualified staff. Internal systems within SEWAS are currently being reviewed in order to continually improve their services.

One complaint received concerned a family who felt that they were unfairly treated by a Social Worker which resulted in them not being consulted or included in the decision making process for their

relative. The service takes complaints very seriously and uses learning from them to improve services moving forward. The staff member apologised to the family and was also reminded of the importance and the Council's expectations when communicating with families.

Below are some examples of compliments received by the service:

- Flowers and a card received from adoptive parents to thank the team for the work carried out in supporting them to be approved as adopters.
- A thank you card was sent from a family stating that if it wasn't for the support they received from their Social Worker they may not have stayed together as a family.
- The team received a thank you for demonstrating a proactive and child focused approach to decision making.

In order to continue to improve services, the outcomes of complaint investigations include the department learning from the investigation process and what actions were taken to prevent the situation from occurring again. During 2016/17 the following learning/actions were identified and implemented:

- Staff reminded of the importance of communicating in the right way to people, giving clear instructions and ensuring the person is able to fully understand the advice provided.
- Staff workshops arranged to discuss the implications of the Act and how it has impacted on changes to service delivery, in terms of Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA).
- Internal systems are continually reviewed in order to continually improve services.

As part of the Act there was a requirement for a Population Needs Assessment to be developed. This identified areas for consideration in relation to priorities moving forward and full detail of our intentions will be included within our care and support area plan required by April 2018.

'Mwy na geiriau/ More than just words

The Council recognises that language is an intrinsic part of care and people who need services in Welsh get offered them. This is called the 'Active Offer'. A review of the ability to deliver the 'Active Offer' across Social Services was undertaken as part of the creation our new IAA service where it was found that it is proactively promoted and all documentation identifies language of choice. The IAA Assessment for Eligibility Tool recorded within our social care system Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) previously DRAIG, specifically asks the question "Do you require this conversation / assessment to be carried out in Welsh?" The form is then attached to the person's referral.

We have written to all our providers informing them of the requirements under the Welsh Language Act 2011 to ensure they offer services in Welsh when requested. All commissioned Providers have signed the revised contract amendment form which states: "The Service Provider shall, if requested, provide the Service Purchaser with a Welsh Language Development Plan, detailing the steps which the Service Provider proposes to undertake to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Measure 2011 and the Service Purchaser's Welsh Language Scheme."

Going forward, Welsh language community profiles will be used to develop the underpinning Area Plans that will deliver on the priorities identified in the Population Needs Assessment.

The Local Authority also holds a central database that records the language skills of staff. The Head of Adult Services is the Welsh Language Champion for the Council.

Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help

Children's Services

Throughout 2016/17 Children's Services prioritised six key areas to focus on to support service delivery in order to improve the well-being of those we help. The priorities are shown below and the Quality Standards demonstrate where improvement has been made, challenges have been addressed and where outcomes have been achieved. The priorities for 2016/17 were:

- **All teams to contribute to improve outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC)** – At the end of the year this priority was on target. This priority will continue into 2017/18.
- **All teams contribute to the safe reduction in the numbers of LAC** – significant issues identified that requires action. This priority will continue into 2017/18.
- **Ensure Families First, Flying Start, Early Years and Play targets the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan under the Act** – At the end of the year this priority was on target. This priority will continue into 2017/18.
- **All teams to ensure that children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded** - At the end of the year this priority was on target. This priority will continue into 2017/18.
- **The workforce needs to understand and deliver the requirements under the Act** - At the end of the year this priority was on target. This priority will not continue into 2017/18 as it is now embedded in day to day practice and will form part of the Workforce Development Plan.
- **Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget** – significant issues identified that requires action. This priority will continue into 2017/18.

During a comprehensive assessment of performance at the end of 2016/17, the following achievements and challenges were identified as part of the Council's Performance Management Improvement Framework to ensure that the right areas are identified as priorities moving into 2017/18.

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

The Department has developed an Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) Team for Children and Adult Services. The Children's IAA service includes the Children's Duty Team, Connect 2 Blaenau Gwent (the Council's Contact Centre, C2BG) Workers, the Family Information Service and a Families First Worker. Children's Services have revamped their care planning documents to ensure they are in line with the Act and staff training has focused upon the 'what matters' conversation, the principle of the Act and how we can work with people to assess and identify personal well-being outcomes.

The results from the Act citizen feedback questionnaire, showed a positive response to the question 'people reporting that they have received the right information and advice when they needed it', with 88% of children completing the easy read questionnaire and 81% of parents agreeing with this statement. This was supported by the response to the question, 'people satisfied with the care and support they receive' with 94% of children completing the easy read questionnaire supporting this statement, '*xx is lovely and I know I can ring her on mum's phone anytime. I think she really cares about my Family*'.

During 2016/17 the structure and service delivery of Families First was reviewed leading to a restructure. It is hoped that the restructure of the Families First Team (which occurred from April 2017), will start to have an impact on reducing the numbers of referrals into statutory services and target preventative services at the most vulnerable families in order to prevent needs from escalating. Monitoring the impact of the Team will remain a priority throughout 2017/18 and an evaluation of its impact will be undertaken.

The Head of Service and Service Managers have met with Newport City Council to look at their FASS Team (a Team which works with families whose children are on the edge of care) and a report on the development of a similar team in Blaenau Gwent will be presented to Corporate Management Team in the new financial year. The development of this team forms part of the strategy to safely reduce the number of Looked After Children (LAC) which is a priority that will roll over to 2017/18.

The percentage of assessments completed for children within the statutory timescale of 42 days remains high at 85% or 366 out of 433.

The numbers of LAC was high at the end of 2016/17. To manage this situation a strategy to safely reduce the numbers of LAC has been developed and will be implemented from 2017 to 2020. The Children's Management Team regularly reviews the numbers of LAC and the Head of Service has written a number of reports to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee to keep them informed of the situation and for them to scrutinise the approach being undertaken to manage this situation. To date, the Scrutiny Committee has been supportive and felt that the service is doing what it can to manage the situation.

Due to the sustained increase in LAC numbers, particularly those who are in residential care, the Children's Services budget was £2.5 million over spent this financial year. This has been partly offset by the underspend in Adult Services. The Authority was given support from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to scrutinise the performance information and strategy to safely reduce the numbers of LAC. A report has been received which outlines factors which needed to be considered to robustly implement the strategy.

Despite best efforts, the number of children living at home who have a care order in place that could have this revoked is high. This is because of a lack of capacity in both Social Services and Legal Services, cases have not been taken back into court for care orders to be revoked. It is hoped capacity will be freed during 2017/18 as a result of the restructure of Families First and exploring the development of an Edge of Care Team.

The development of new local and regional polices in line with the Act has been slow owing to capacity. This is something that will be addressed in the coming 12 months.

Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

Under the priority, "Ensure Families First, Flying Start, Early Years and Play targets the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014", significant work has been undertaken to restructure the Families First Team. This restructure increases the professional expertise within the team to enable the team to manage more complex cases which don't meet the need for statutory interventions, and target interventions toward the most vulnerable families within the Local Authority. This new structure is in place and will be ready to deliver services from April 2017. The priority will continue into 2017/18.

The priority, "All Teams contribute to improve outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC)", is primarily driven forward by the action plan developed by the Corporate Parenting Board. Within this action plan one of the priorities is "All our LAC enjoy good physical and mental health and emotional well-being". In order to evaluate if this was being undertaken an audit of the recommendations made at each looked after review was undertaken and a report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in June 2016. This highlighted the majority of recommendations were achieved and in respect of the small number that were not achieved none of the issues related to health.

The health of our children and young people is important and the teams work with families and children to support the Children's Services measure of 'the percentage of children seen by a registered dentist within three months of becoming looked after'. For 2016/17, the outturn figure was 53.97%. We also measure the percentage of LAC registered with a GP for which the performance outturn was 69.95%.

The Gwent Children and Families Partnership Board have commissioned a piece of work to research children and young people with escalating complex needs using Intermediate Care Funding (ICF). This research will look at the steps that Local Authorities, the Health Board and partners could take to help prevent the escalation of complex needs. To reach a position where this research has been jointly commissioned via the partnership board is a big achievement.

Antenatal support has been embedded within the core service delivery of the Flying Start Programme in collaboration with Families First and the Family Information Service. This has been achieved by a midwife becoming part of the Flying Start Team. This has resulted in an early intervention approach when identifying mothers who are at risk of post-natal depression and the associated risk this poses.

Owing to a lack of capacity, the development of a joint adult and children safeguarding team has not progressed, although recent discussions are showing that both teams are functioning well and there may not be a need to merge the two services. The driver for change was to make the teams more resilient and the possibility of developing a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) being developed across Gwent. Newport is piloting this work and it was agreed to wait for the outcome of this pilot before making a final decision on whether to merge the teams or not.

Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

The safety of children is paramount and Children's Services work hard to ensure children are safe and, most importantly, feel safe. To support this, 90% of children completing the SSWB Act citizen feedback questionnaire and 94% of the children completing the easy read questionnaire said they felt safe, *'I feel very safe with my foster family'* and *'I feel extremely safe as xx won't let anyone hurt me'*.

Significant activity occurs in relation to safeguarding within Children's Services. During this year, despite significant workload pressures, all child protection referrals received a response within 24 hours. The majority of initial child protection conferences have been held within the 15 day timescale as required under the All Wales Child protection procedures. The same picture applies to review child protection conferences. Reports on safeguarding have been provided on three occasions during the year to the Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee. This has given members the opportunity to look in depth at the safeguarding activity across the Council and give appropriate challenge in order to make improvements to the service.

The Corporate Parenting Board includes the action, 'All our Looked After Children (LAC) are protected from abuse and neglect'. The Corporate Parenting Board has been tracking the progress made in relation to those LAC who are at risk of childhood sexual exploitation and those displaying sexually harmful behaviour. This exercise has demonstrated that, in the majority of cases, those identified as at risk have had these risks reduced following interventions provided by social workers and other agencies.

In May 2015, 8 young people out of all the children looked after at that time were identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE). This cohort of children were tracked and monitored to establish if interventions delivered were effective in reducing the risk. The Corporate Parenting Board heard in September 2016 that of those 8 children identified as being at risk of CSE, 6 had been assessed as no longer being at risk (using the SEREF assessment) due to the interventions delivered by the social work

teams. The remaining 2 continue to be at risk and have their needs met and risks managed via their individual care plans.

In May 2015, 10 young people were identified at risk of displaying sexually harmful behaviour (SHB). Again, this cohort of children were tracked and monitored to establish if interventions delivered were effective in reducing the risk. The Corporate Parenting Board heard in September 2016 that of those 10 children, 7 were no longer assessed as being at risk of displaying SHB due to the interventions that had been delivered by the social work teams. The remaining 3 are still assessed as being at risk and this is being managed by their individual care plans.

The children on the child protection register continue to be scrutinised by the Children's Senior Management Team. This has shown, over the last 12 months, the length of time a child remains on the child protection register has reduced. This demonstrates that risks are being managed in a timely manner and where they cannot be managed action is taken to put the matter before the court to remove the children.

The increasing demand for placements due to an increase in child protection referrals is leading to an increased amount of court work and LAC numbers. A lot of pressure has been put on the Independent Reviewing Officers as they now have to deal with an increased number of children on the child protection register and the related increases in conference numbers, and also an increasing number of LAC reviews being required. The 14+ team went through a difficult period with staffing issues and increasing workload however they are now more stable and fully staffed.

A key piece of data used to measure keeping children safe is the percentage of re-registrations of children onto the local authority child protection register, in Blaenau Gwent for 2016/17 the figure was 0%. The service did have 31 re-registrations but these were not within the 12 month timescale. The average length of time for all children who were on the child protection register during the year was 170.99 days.

The work of the Safeguarding Boards (Children's and Adults) ensures appropriate policies and training is available for staff, and learning from cases is disseminated across the region. This is part of our core business ensuring appropriate staffing levels and response. As this is part of our core business safeguarding will be a continuing priority for 2017/18.

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

One of the actions under the Corporate Parenting Board is, 'All our Looked After Children (LAC) are enabled to reach their full potential in education, training and recreation'. To support this a report was presented to the December meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board which reported on the outcomes of our LAC who had left statutory education.

Of the 12 learners who completed their statutory school studies in 2015-2016, 7 are engaged in college courses, one has remained at school as a post 16 learner, one is engaged in a training programme and one has gained employment. Two young people are currently not in employment, education or training (NEET). A task and finish group has been set up to establish a corporate education, training and employment scheme for our LAC and care leavers which will come to fruition during 2017/18. 40% of care leavers are still in education, training or employment after 12 months and 24 months after leaving care. This equates to 4 of 10 young people.

The same report highlighted that the average number of days spent out of school for LAC on fixed term exclusions during 2015-2016 was 2.9 days. This is compared with an average length of 3.2 days for the

previous academic year. Therefore, there has been a reduction in the length of fixed term exclusions for our LAC.

Attendance of our LAC at primary and secondary school has improved year on year. Primary attendance stood at 97.3% for 2016 and at 94.9% for secondary attendance.

The percentage achieving the Core Subject Indicator at key stage 2 was 57.50%, this equates to 23 of 40 children. The percentage of children achieving the Core Subject Indicator at key stage 4 was 16.67%, this equates to 6 of 36 children. This data has been pre-populated using the Children in Need Census.

Although Children's Services do their utmost to support children to do what matters to them, through engagement we have identified a gap in the availability of social and leisure facilities for children which is outside of the councils control. This message is supported by the number of children reporting that they can do what matters to them with only 68% in agreement with this statement.

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

The priority, "All Teams contribute to improve outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC)", is again primarily driven forward by the action plan developed by the Corporate Parenting Board. Within this action plan, one of the priorities is, "Our LAC have healthy domestic, family and personal relationships", and this is demonstrated with 74% of children reporting that they feel part of their community, *'all my friends live around here, or near and I feel safe and comfortable here'*.

A large proportion of our LAC need to have their contact supervised by the Department which occurs at Beaufort Road to try and maintain healthy family relationships. A survey was completed with those children and families who use the facility in order to seek views on the quality of service delivery and feedback was positive, *'Contact rooms clean and tidy'* and *'Feel welcome'*.

Within the Adoption Service a targeted recruitment approach has been put in place which has reduced the number of adopters waiting. The service has been able to place more children with adopters and this has included placing sibling groups. A review of adoption support has been undertaken and the findings will be included within a report for implementation during 2017/18. 14.2% of LAC had experienced 3 or more placements during the year. This figure includes 3 children placed with relatives who have moved out of county but remain with same carers. This figure will be post - populated from the LAC Census.

The workload within Children's Services has been very high over the last year and there are increasing demands placed upon us to meet tight timescales set by the Courts. In addition, case law dictates that children placed with extended family members by the Local Authority (when there are safeguarding concerns) should be classified as looked after and, therefore, their family members have to be assessed as foster carers which in term attracts fostering allowances. This then has an impact on the Children's Services budget. Though we are working hard to safely reduce our LAC population, we must acknowledge that the deprivation faced by residents of Blaenau Gwent is one of the highest levels in Wales and there are clear links between poverty, deprivation, abuse and neglect. We have needed to manage significant change agendas and these will continue into the next financial year.

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

Within Blaenau Gwent 27.3% of care leavers experienced homelessness during 2016/17. As part of our support to ensure Looked After Children (LAC) live in suitable accommodation, a task and finish group has been set up, a gap analysis of accommodation for our care leavers has been undertaken, and an action

plan is now in place to address these gaps. This work will continue to be a part of the Corporate Parenting Board action plan for 2017/18. Work has been undertaken to ensure that children have an appropriate plan for permanence in place which facilitates their early discharge from the looked after system and into accommodation which meets their needs. This is demonstrated with 90% of children reporting that they live in the right home for them, *'They keep me safe and they look after me very well'* and 83% reported that they are happy with whom they live with, *'Because they look after me and home is warm and cosy'*.

In the Safeguarding, Children with Disabilities, 14+ and Fostering Team partnership working has been undertaken with Housing Associations in order to increase the provision of suitable accommodation for young people with the development of Ty Parc.

Blaenau Gwent has been successful in becoming an early adopter in delivering the Welsh Government's Programme for Government, Taking Wales Forward, to deliver free childcare for working parents of 3 to 4 year olds for 48 weeks per year. The project, offering 30 hours of free early education and childcare per week, will be piloted from September 2017 in specified locations within Gwynedd, Anglesey, Flintshire, Swansea, Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taf. The aim is for the childcare offer to be a catalyst for a wider transformation in the childcare sector, increasing the accessibility, affordability and availability of childcare for parents and children, improving the flexibility and quality of what's available in order to encourage parents back to work.

This year the Placement Team have taken responsibility for undertaking connected persons assessments due to the high demand for these assessments within court proceedings. This has resulted in very few generic foster cares being assessed and there has been no increase in the numbers of foster carers within Blaenau Gwent.

2017/18 Priorities

Five out of the six 2016/17 priorities will continue to be a priority into 2017/18 and these have been identified using the comprehensive evidence above. The priorities are:

- **All teams to contribute to improve outcomes for LAC** – Good progress was made throughout 2016/17 to improve the outcomes for LAC, however this will remain a priority moving forward as part of the corporate parenting role of the directorate working alongside the Corporate Parenting Board.
- **All teams contribute to the safe reduction in the numbers of LAC** – As the number of LAC remains high this will continue into 2017/18 addressed by the LAC Reduction Strategy.
- **Ensure Families First, Flying Start, Early Years and Play targets the most vulnerable families in BG who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan under the SSWB Act 2014**– Good progress was made throughout 2016/17 and will continue into 2017/18 in order to monitor the impact the new Families First structure has on reducing the number of children becoming looked after.
 - **All teams to ensure that children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded** – Positive work was undertaken throughout 2016/17 and will continue into 2017/18 as safeguarding is part of the Directorate's core business.
- **Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget** – Children's Services, at the end of 2016/17, identified a significant overspend due to the sustained increase in LAC numbers. This priority will continue into 2017/18.

Adult Services

Throughout 2016/17 Adult Services prioritised five key areas to focus on which would support service delivery to improve the well-being of those we help. The priorities are shown below and the Quality Standards demonstrate where improvement has been made, challenges have been addressed and where outcomes have been achieved. The priorities for 2016/17 were:

- **Manage the Adult Services Budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget-** At the end of the year this priority was on target. This priority will continue into 2017/18. Expenditure detail can be found on page 23.
- **Implementation of the Social Services and Well-being Act** – At the end of the year this priority was on target. This priority will not continue into 2017/18 as it is now embedded in day to day practice and will form part of the Workforce Development Plan.
- **Continued Implementation of the Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century Strategy** – At the end of the year this priority was on target. Work streams will continue within team plans during 2017/18 and will therefore not form an overarching Adult Service priority for next year.
- **To seek and explore further opportunities to collaborate and integrate with Health and other key partners/stakeholders** – At the end of the year this priority was on target. This priority will continue into 2017/18 as part of a merged priority with the priority below, *‘progressing alternative methods of service delivery’*.
- **Progressing alternative methods of service delivery** – At the end of the year this priority was on target. This priority will continue into 2017/18 as part of a merged priority with the priority above, *‘to seek and explore further opportunities to collaborate and integrate with Health and other key partners/stakeholders’*.
- **Prepare for the implementation of the new Community Care Information System** - At the end of the year this priority was on implemented. This priority will not continue into 2017/18 as it is now embedded in day to day practice.

During a comprehensive assessment of performance at the end of 2016/17, the following achievements and challenges were identified as part of the Council’s Performance Management Improvement Framework to ensure that the right areas are identified as priorities moving into 2017/18.

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

In January 2017 the Local Authority launched its new Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) hubs. The creation of these hubs has enabled us to fully implement our proportionate and long term assessment processes and tools including our National Assessment and Eligibility Tool (NAET) and Integrated Assessments. Both include a focus on the 'what matters' conversations, a focus on a co-produced process of defining, implementing and monitoring personal outcomes. Statistics we have gathered within our Adult Service Teams evidence that there has been 1,403 NAETs completed by the newly created IAA during the year. The assessments were carried out for 1,214 individuals and it has been positive to record that our evidence is indicating that 89.9% of adults who received support from the IAA service did not contact the service again after 6 months, showing that the information provided was supportive and reduced the need for follow up support.

Critical to embedding principles of the Act, and in particular the implementation of our new assessment, has been the training that Care Management staff have received using the principles of collaborative communication with citizens including supporting staff to co-produce care and support plans that inform the delivery of personal outcomes.

Throughout 2016/17 Adult Services collected and reported performance information to inform us of our progress in relation to the first year of the new Act. Despite there being differences in reporting processes across Wales, Blaenau Gwent has been able to report on the numbers of assessments completed, which was 2,371. In addition, information collated from our SSWB Act citizen feedback questionnaire was positive in relation to the numbers of citizens supported by the department. In the main, responses from our adults survey were positive - with 81% reporting that they had received the right information and advice when they needed it and 93% reporting that they were treated with dignity and respect. One citizen

commented, *'My social worker and OT were superb. The services they provided have been extremely beneficial not just for me but for my husband too'*.

A priority for Adult Services has been the support we give to unpaid family carers. During 2016/17 we increased the collaborative work of our Carers Support Worker, our Community Connector Team and our new Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) pilot where we seconded a Care Support Worker from Age Cymru. This collaboration has enabled us to expand our offer and support for carers assessments across our GP surgeries, enhance the opportunities for carers to access leisure activities or hobby clubs to reduce their stress and reinvigorate them for their demanding roles. This team approach has been instrumental in developing a Carers Provider Forum which meets on a monthly basis. In addition, an Integrated Carer's Assessment Tool has been developed in line with the Act and specific training for carers has been delivered to supplement the online training currently offered across the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) / Gwent footprint.

Our Provider Services, both in house and externally commissioned, have a critical part to play in ensuring that outcomes are embedded. Our Commissioning Team has continued to work across our care homes in conjunction with the Care Home Ask and Talk service (C.H.A.T), RSVP befriending services and the home managers and owners. This has been done using the feedback to improve the quality of life for people living in residential settings. During 2016/17, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) reviewed our in house respite service for people with a Learning Disability (Augusta House) and it was pleasing that they identified guests are encouraged to make their own choices and to fulfil their personal preferences in respect of their everyday living, supporting the delivery of outcomes that people wish to achieve. CSSIW also identified that, *'Guests are encouraged and supported to remain independent. They can choose to assist in their meal preparation, laundry etc. if they wish and were supported by staff to do so. We found that guests are encouraged and supported to maintain independence in line with the care plan'*.

The implementation and embedding of the Act including the whole scale cultural changes that are required have provided and continue to provide ongoing challenges. Our workforce is continuing to change their practice and adapt to new ways of working linked to the requirements of the Act. Empowering and increasing the confidence and knowledge of staff will require continuous investment in learning and development opportunities. There has been a particular challenge in the co-production of outcomes and undertaking the 'what matters' assessments with citizens who lack the mental capacity to fully engage in the collaborative conversations. A further challenge during 2016/17 has been the restrictions on our ability to change our practices at the 'front door' of our service as our new IAA service only went 'live' in January 2017. Therefore, until January, we had limited capacity to fully embrace the concept of preventative working and proportionate assessments. Further development of this will be a priority for 2017/18. The 'Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century' Strategy is a key cornerstone of our vision for Adult Health and Social Care in Blaenau Gwent and we are ensuring that the key actions of this strategy are aligned to the principles of the Act.

Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

Priorities identified within the Adult Services business plan work to promote collaborative working arrangements that protect and promote people's well-being. Adult Services has successfully worked in partnership with colleagues from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) and the third sector to develop both preventative and long term care and support. This has included the development of initiatives funded by the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF). These have increased our capacity to provide reablement as well as intermediate care and support for frail and vulnerable people in order for them to

remain in their own homes and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. In terms of residential homes, the average age of Blaenau Gwent residents entering homes in 2016/17 was 82.

We have developed additional support and enhanced services for people experiencing a mental health crisis. This has been achieved with the introduction of a worker from Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Mind within our new IAA Team. Our BOLD (Better Outcomes for Learning Disability) project also developed new pathways for learning disabled citizens, including a range of preventative options to support and promote well-being and independence in the home. We have introduced a new Community Connectors Learning Disability post into the team to prevent social isolation and increase opportunities to community activities.

The Community Resource Team (CRT) has continued to deliver positive outcomes for our citizens including supporting people to remain in their own homes and avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital through the use of reablement models of support. Performance data from 2016/17 has supported this, for example, 17 of 21 citizens reduced their package of care at the end of a period of reablement, with 2 maintaining the level of care and only 2 increasing their care package. Importantly, the reduction was maintained 6 months later for the 17 individuals which equates to 80.95%. For those individuals no longer requiring a package of care at the end of reablement was 69.81%, which is 74 of 106 individuals. Our CARIAD (step up/ down) intermediate care beds have remained a positive way of reducing hospital admissions and reducing length of stays in hospital. During 2016/17, 44 citizens accessed the CARIAD beds and as a Local Authority we have maintained a very low number of delayed transfers of care, which is a key objective of the Welsh Government to avoid 'bed blocking' within the NHS systems. This is supported by the data for delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 and over as the figure was only 1.38, equating to 8 individuals. This has been achieved through effective and robust planning arrangements with our local providers and partners including effective use of ICF to support initiatives such as the CARIAD beds.

Promotion of emotional and physical well-being is equally key across our Provider Services. Across our in house provision, the services we provide at Cwrt Mytton Residential Care home have been enhanced with key staff embedding their learning from the Dementia Care Matters Training. Collaborative opportunities have been developed to enhance activities and the environment of the home, for example, through partnership working with Ebbw Fawr College Art Department to create a more Dementia friendly environment, the piloting of a new falls service, and development of the Herbert Protocol with Gwent Police. A recent review of Cwrt Mytton by CSSIW identified the positive relationship experienced between the staff and the residents, one comment from a resident included, *'I can't fault it. The staff are good, they appear to me to be gentle people, caring and very kind. The food is good. It's very homely'*.

Integrated Health and Social Care services are key in protecting and promoting people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being. However, many of our preventative services are currently funded via the ICF grant funding from Welsh Government which is administered by the Health Board. There are long term questions over the sustainability of the funding and therefore impact on some projects in future. We are witnessing increased demand for our preventative/ reablement services which presents challenges as we have continued capacity issues within the Community Resource Team (CRT). This will continue to be a priority for 2017/18.

Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

The department has worked to enhance our adult safeguarding services in line with the requirements of the Act and newly introduced safeguarding legislation. The Adult Safeguarding Team has revised its operational processes including the development of the IAA proportionate assessments in order to screen referrals accurately and ensure a quality assurance of recording of cases. Specific work has been undertaken to improve our response to increasing adult safeguarding referrals and a recent CSSIW review

reported that the Safeguarding / Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) team is performing well. They identified that, *'Good communication is evident between the authority and local care providers and partner agencies. Feedback received from both care providers and partner agencies was positive with good relationships evident'*.

All relevant staff within Adult Services have been provided with additional training on the new duty to report / enquire legislation so that we can appropriately respond to safeguarding alerts. This is evident with 100% of adult protection enquiries being completed within the statutory deadline of 7 days. The total number of enquiries was 479. Those completing the Act citizen feedback questionnaire were positive in reporting that they felt safe. 72% of adults who responded felt safe and 20% felt safe some of the time, *'I have a new pendant alarm which makes me feel safe inside the house'*. Carers also reported feeling safe with 75% of returns stating this. With the easy read questionnaire 85% of adults reported feeling safe.

We continue to have good relationships with our Care Home and Domiciliary Care providers and work in partnership with colleagues in ABUHB, in particular with the Complex Care and Continuing Health Care Team to jointly monitor providers, ensuring that vulnerable residents and citizens receive high quality care. Our Contracts and Commissioning Team has continued to work closely with the Safeguarding Team and Supporting People Team with the result that the Supporting People Team are currently commissioning a Safeguarding / Domestic Abuse Support Worker post within the IAA team.

The increase in referrals, duty to report and duty to enquire investigations have placed significant pressure on the small Safeguarding Team and has resulted in capacity issues to meet demand. The team has become responsive to increased referrals and ensuring that all citizens are safeguarded but this increased volume has impacted on progressing referrals and the aim is to complete all enquires within seven working days. The Adult Safeguarding Team has often faced challenges when trying to obtain feedback from citizens in relation to the adult safeguarding process and, to date, any service changes or improvements have been driven by professionals as opposed to those who have accessed the service. We have also had limited engagement with citizens who are at risk due to their vulnerabilities but who may have previously declined support from Social Services.

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

The development of alternative models of service delivery as a priority for Adult Services has enabled us to identify key areas which can support citizens learning and developmental opportunities. Work during 2016/17 has included the introduction of a new post of Community Connector Learning Disability and the associated work stream has included sourcing work and volunteering opportunities for learning disability citizens. Adult Services has also successfully recruited a project officer fixed term until November 2017 to progress our social enterprise agenda and alternative model opportunities. Projects underway to date have included the scoping of catering opportunities within the Community Options Service, potential development of an enhanced reablement provision in collaboration with our in house Home Care Team and development of new social groups to prevent isolation across our housing services (Mynydd Project).

Our Community Options Service continues to provide learning opportunities. Our Horticulture Project, 'green shoots' based at Bryn Bach Park Tredegar provides work based horticultural training for individuals who would like to develop their skills and who may wish to progress to mainstream or supported employment. As part of this project we have developed an efficient marketing plan which includes a contract with Tredegar Town Centre. From this we saw an increase in income during the Christmas period following a positive marketing campaign through social media. Positive progress has been made in relation to developing a partnership with Aneurin Leisure Trust and Bedwellty Park. Consultation sessions on the Community Options Outreach Service have been undertaken with families and carers showing positive

outcomes, as individuals using the service have become confident to use public transport to access community activities.

We have continued to develop Dementia Friendly Communities' and have close links to both the work plans of the Blaenau Gwent Dementia Board and Older Person's Forum ensuring that inclusion and opportunities for vulnerable citizens are corporate responsibilities.

The development of alternative models of service delivery and social enterprises has been restricted due to a lack of strategic and development capacity within Adult Services. A project manager has been introduced on a fixed term basis to support with the development in this area.

Although there have been a number of positive activities implemented to support people to participate in society, such as the Community Connectors and the Community Options Café, as well as the support provided within residential and respite facilities. Only 43% of adults who responded to the SSWB Act citizen feedback questionnaire felt that they can do what is important to them, 34% responded 'sometimes', 20% responded 'no' and 3% didn't know. When considering the commentary that supports this question it highlights that respondents were, more often than not, referring to their own health and ability rather than commenting on the provision provided by the service, *'With support I am able to participate with any activities I like. At present I am not able to do any activities due to illness and side effects of medication'*.

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

Within Blaenau Gwent the Supporting People Team is part of the Adult Services. The team is a critical component of preventative services and has continued to support citizens to achieve their personal outcomes (as outlined by the Supporting People Welsh Government Guidance) and the outcomes have been reported successfully to Welsh Government. Supporting People services have increased in capacity with the recommissioning of the Generic Floating Support Services and Specialist Service for people with a Learning Disability. The key principle of the 'Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century' Strategy is to promote independence and support people to remain in their own home. This is being evidenced through the increase in therapist capacity provided within the Community Resource Team / reablement services and the increased availability of assistive technology to support independence. The Council recognised the need to increase the identification, engagement and support for carers. Using a collaborative approach Social Services, ABUHB and the third sector partner Age Cymru Gwent, the Carers Engagement Project was devised. The project employs an outreach worker to have a regular presence in GP practices in both Neighbourhood Care Network (NCN) areas to provide Carers with information, advice and assistance.

Adult Services staff have been working with colleagues across the Gwent area, including the Health Board, in the development of a new place based approach called 'Care Closer to Home'. We have also worked with colleagues in Health to develop increased services for people facing mental health distress including additional supported housing, the scoping of a Shared Lives and Crisis House for development in 2017/18 and a regional approach to Mental Health support services.

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

Adult Services has, throughout 2016/17, worked closely with other services within the Council. This can be seen through the joint working with the housing element of the Environment and Regeneration Directorate. The Local Housing Strategy is implemented jointly with Social Services who have responsibility for some of the activity, identifying the number of properties needing adaptations. In 2016/17, 80 Disabled

Facilities Grants were administered (by Public Protection – Housing Solutions via Social Services referrals) - to help people remain in their own homes and maintain independence. The ENABLE Grant, which Supports Independent Living, funded 20 Independent Living Grants and 93 Rapid Response Adaptations delivered in partnership between Public Protection, Social Services and Care & Repair. Additional ICF was allocated to Care and Repair during 2016/17 to support the early discharge of patients from hospital during the winter period through the provision of low level aids and adaptations including stair lifts, hand rails etc. Our intermediate care beds have enabled citizens to be assessed for suitable accommodation in a non-health (ward) environment and we have continued to use our Extra Care beds to their full potential with both schemes having 100% occupancy rate during 2016/17.

As stated above the Supporting People Team has successfully recommissioned a number of its services during 2016/17. This has included a young person's supported housing project in Ebbw Vale, additional units of Learning Disability floating support services and the remodelling of Older People's services. This has enabled vulnerable citizens to live in suitable accommodation to meet their care and support needs. We have also worked closely with a housing provider and ABUHB to commission a supported housing project for people who are leaving long stay Mental Health units.

The Health and Social Care panel has continued to meet weekly to consider and quality assure applications for long term care placements. Our Commissioning and Contract Monitoring Team have continued to review all the Care Homes within Blaenau Gwent, focussing on monitoring the quality of life for the people that live there in addition to the quality of the care provided and the environment in which they live. With regards to living within a residential care home only 57% of adults reported, as part of the SSWB Act citizen feedback questionnaire that they had chosen to live in this way. The result from the easy read adult questionnaire was 65%, *'I was advised it was best for me and I feel safe here. Staff are kind to me. I have lived in my house since 1947 - so I miss being there'*.

As a department we are aware that there can be trepidation when moving into residential care and a priority of the service is to support people to remain within their own homes for as long as possible. However, when residential care is required we ensure that a high standard of service is provided to citizens.

2017/18 Priorities

Three priorities will continue to be a priority into 2017/18 (however two of these will be merged) and three new priorities will be taken forward for this coming year. All priorities have been identified using the comprehensive evidence above. The priorities are:

- **All Adult Services teams contribute to improved outcomes for vulnerable adults (and their carers) living in Blaenau Gwent** – This is a new priority for 2017/18 as it is a key principle of the Act and incorporates the strategic priorities of the Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century Strategy.
- **All Adult Services teams and our partner agencies ensure that vulnerable adults of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded** – This is a new priority for 2017/18 as safeguarding is a critical part of service delivery and requires robust oversight.
- **Ensure that our IAA / preventative services and community based opportunities support the most vulnerable citizens in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014**– This is a new priority for 2017/18 as it is a key principle of the Act and incorporates the strategic priorities of the Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century Strategy and Older Persons Strategy.
- **Progressing Alternative Methods of Service Delivery across both Health and Social Care through integrated / outcomes based commissioning models to meet personal outcomes and support personal wellbeing**- Good progress was made throughout 2016/17 to progress alternative methods of service delivery and working with Health. During 2016/17 this priority was split into two. Working in

partnership is a key aspect of the Act and further work on alternative methods on service delivery will be explored during 2017/18.

- **Manage the Adult Services Budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget** - Good progress was made throughout 2016/17. This will continue into 2017/18.

How We Do What We Do

Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

It has been recognised by the Council that the work in Social Services is increasing and therefore a review of the staffing structure was required. This identified that, in order to manage the service effectively, the management structure needed to be reviewed and the Director made permanent.

The **Social work training and development strategy 2016/21** will be implemented by the Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Workforce Development Service. The strategy sets out the support and development opportunities available to people who are interested in becoming a social worker, students studying to become a social worker and staff employed in the social work profession.

The introduction of the Act has heavily influenced our key themes to ensure we support the social work profession to meet coming changes. To support the delivery of the strategy an action plan has been developed and will be reviewed annually. The last review of the strategy was undertaken in May 2017 and identified a number of achievements including:

- Career and development information is easily accessible;
- Effective partnership working with all Higher Education Institutions has supported the recruitment and retention of Social Workers;
- Citizens were part of the development of the First 3 Years in Practice Programme;
- Learning and development opportunities have increased people's knowledge of the Act in a Social Work context; and
- A training needs analysis has been completed which identified gaps in skills and knowledge and a training plan for 2017/18 has been developed to meet these learning and development opportunities.

Moving forward, the high level priorities of the Plan will continue to be derived from a number of interlocking demands:

- **Legislation** including the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence;
- **Demographics** including dementia and safeguarding; and
- **Financial** including Preventative Services, collaboration and new ways of working.

The Act is being interpreted to inform actions required and to consider the workforce development implications for the social care sector, health and other partners. The requirements of the Act formed the basis of a comprehensive national programme of learning led by the Care Council for Wales (now Social Care Wales). The programme continues to be developed and reflects operational needs as the legislative framework is aligned with policy, procedure and practice development.

The **Regional - Greater Gwent Social Care Workforce Development Plan 2016/2017** has been developed by the five local authority areas that make up the Gwent Region - Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen. The Region is committed to maximising the benefits of collaborative and partnership working. The four local Social Care Workforce Development Partnerships

will integrate into a new regional communication and working structure for providers, established as part of the Regional Transformation Plan.

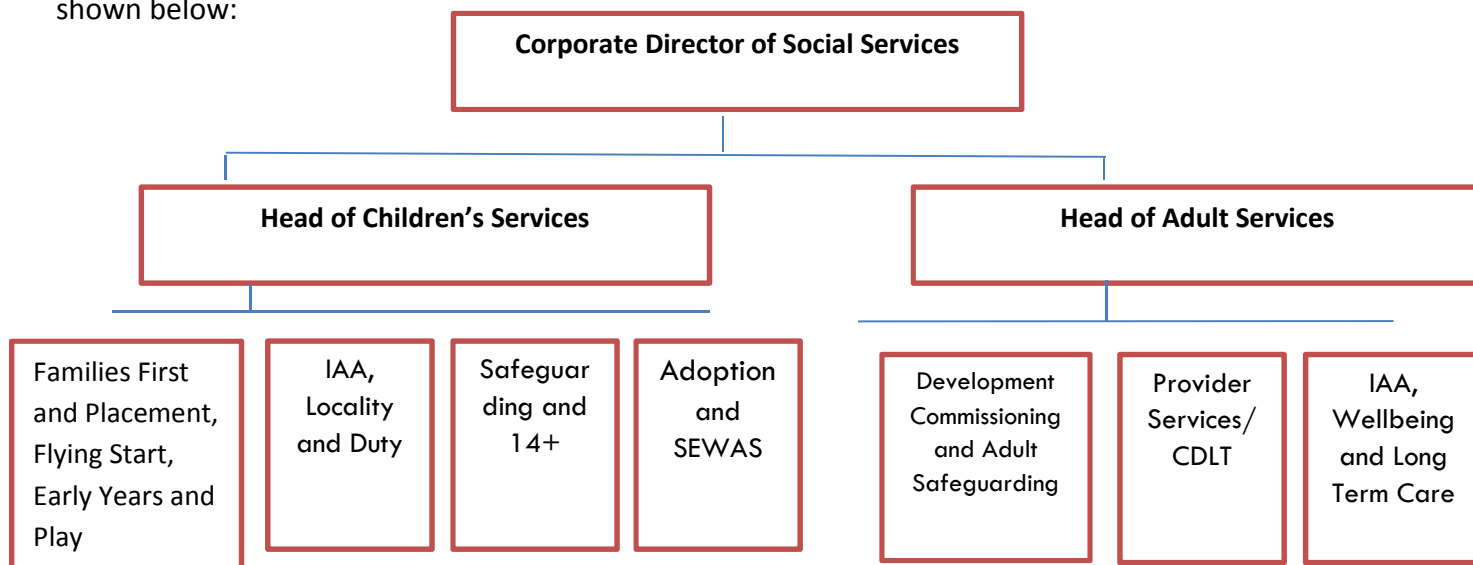
To ensure that the Regional Partnership arrangements mirror the Act, the Gwent Workforce Development Teams have a robust alignment with the Greater Gwent Transformation Team; working collaboratively – maximising resources and minimising duplication – to establish a joint Regional Partnership. Collaborative activity includes:

- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act Training 2014;
- Collaboration developments across Workforce Development Teams;
- Safeguarding;
- Social Work Training and Post Qualification Training;
- Joint Arrangements Management Board;
- Vocational Qualifications and Training Provision;
- Regional Training Managers’ Group; and
- Joint work with Local Health Board.

The Greater Gwent Workforce Board monitors progress of the Social Care Workforce Development Plan. The mid-year report for 2016 – 2017 was presented to the Board on 18th November 2016 and shows 80% of the plan is on target 20% require an extended timeline.

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

The structure of the Social Services Directorate provides clear levels of management and accountability as shown below:



The Corporate Director of Social Services is a member of the Council’s Corporate Management Team, whereby all Council Directors meet on a weekly basis to consider and make strategic and operational decisions (although some decisions need to be considered by Scrutiny and then ratified by Executive or Council). CMT also work together to promote the ‘One Council’ approach, *‘We will be a modern, smart Authority, providing leadership to enable people and communities to thrive’*.

The Directorate has one Executive Member who has Portfolio responsibility for Social Services as a whole. The Directorate is scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

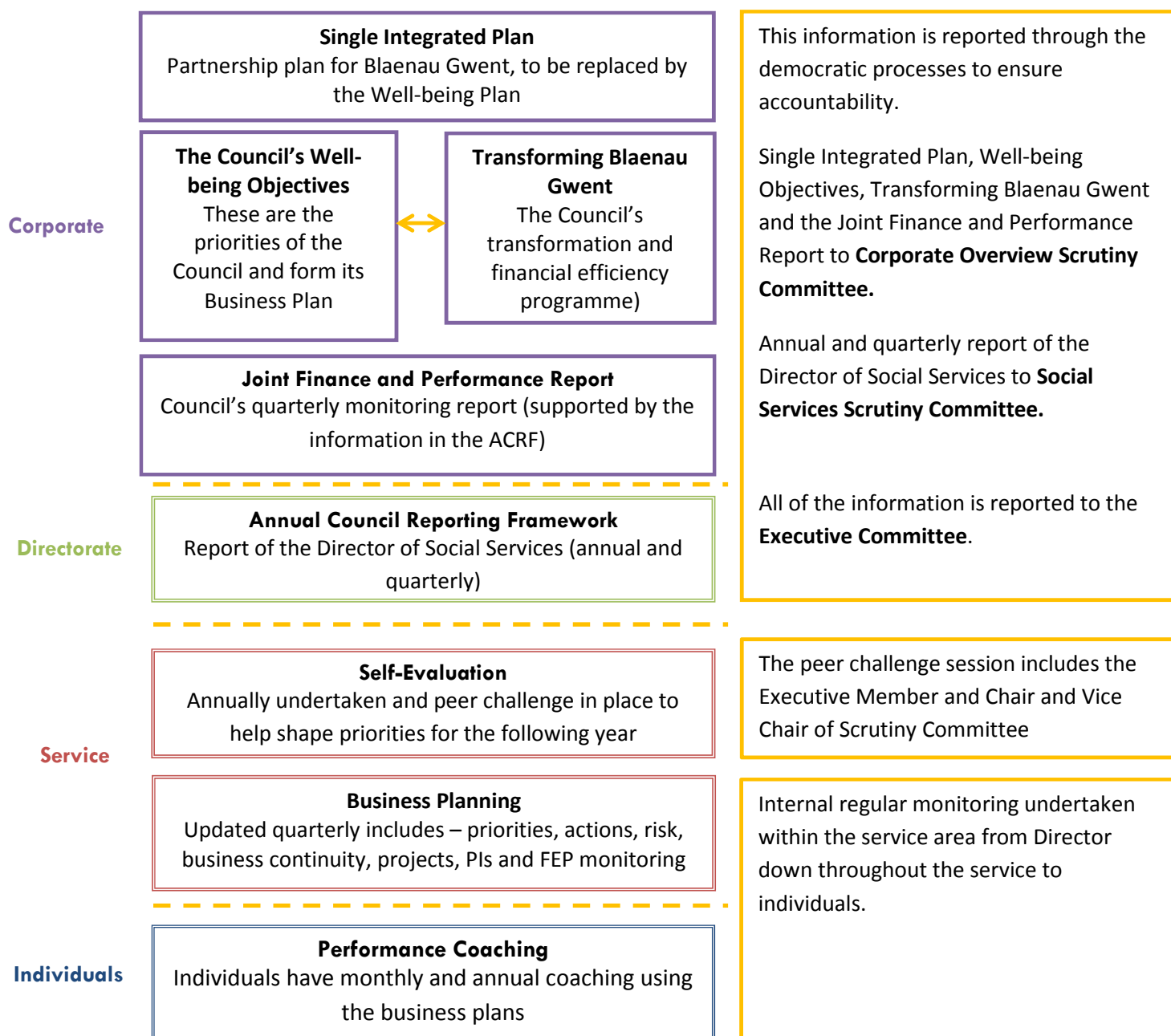
The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW). On a quarterly basis Social Services Senior Managers meet with CSSIW for liaison meetings. CSSIW also undertake an annual review and evaluation of the Directorate’s performance.

As a whole, the Council has a clear governance and accountability framework and Performance Management Improvement Framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. These frameworks are complied with by Social Services who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Act.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 have shaped the way that the Council is planning to work moving forward and this includes working to support the well-being of individuals across Council services and making links across service planning. The framework below shows how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a ‘golden thread’.

Planning Framework

Reporting Framework



Making improvements and maintaining standards in the current difficult financial times remains a challenge, therefore, it is more important than ever to focus the Council’s priorities and resources on the areas that matter most to the community.

Blaenau Gwent Council supports partnership and collaborative working and the Social Services Department continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. Social Services work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. In addition, Social Services fully participates in the sharing of knowledge, good practice and information, which can result in improved services. The Act is very clear on its expectation for partnership working and integration of service delivery.

Our Financial Resources and How We Plan For the Future

The total budget for the Social Services Department in 2016/17 was £37.9m and the total expenditure was £39.6m. This resulted in an over spend of £1.7m which is a significant increase in expenditure when compared to the underspend from the previous year of £326,682. The increase has been owing to a rise in the number of LAC which has resulted in an overspend of £2.5m (offset by an underspend in Adult Services to make the figure overspend figure reduce to £1.7m).

The Department has been successful in ensuring debt levels remained constant and within an acceptable level. This was achieved through debt monitoring process whereby 1,300 financial assessments were completed within the required deadline of 6th April.

The provision of regular budget monitoring reports in line with the Corporate Resources timetable has enabled the Social Services Senior Management Team to make informed decisions on service delivery. The Team has supported the implementation and assisted in the monitoring of all Financial Efficiency Projects, the majority of which have now been achieved, and included:

- For property income the target was £173,980 which was exceeded with £266,831 income being generated by the end of the financial year.
- Successful Supported Living Bungalows staffing Structure Review aligned to service provision.

The allocated budget and outturn for 2016/17 is provided in the table below and a full breakdown of spend is found in section 6.

Service Area	Budget	Outturn
Children's Services	£9,386,570	£11,932,760
Adults Services	£22,609,170	£21,975,634
Business Management / Staff Support	£6,119,890	£5,855,537
Procurement Savings	-£158,898	-£130,000
Total	£37,956,732	£39,633,931

The allocation of the budget for 2017/18 is provided in the table below and includes additional funding awarded for the cost pressures identified of £3.5m to fund the implementation of the Minimum Living Wage, increase in Capital Limit, pressures in relation to an increase in the number of LAC, legal fees and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding.

Social Services Budget 2017/18		
1	Commissioning & Social Work	3,036,720
2	Children Looked After	6,290,540
3	Family Support Services	239,990
4	Youth Justice	228,140
5	Other Children's and Family Services	1,951,820
6	Older People Aged 65 and Over	5,410,690
7	Adults under 65 with Physical Disabilities	38,650
8	Adults under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,881,990
9	Adults under 65 with Mental Health Needs	708,200
10	Other Adult Services	347,940
11	Community Care	13,714,100
12	Support Service & Management Costs	1,059,650
13	Corporate Recharges	4,858,500
14	Procurement Savings	(158,900)
Grand Total		41,608,030

Conclusion

Throughout 2016/17 there has been substantial progress in the implementation of our priorities but we recognise that there is still further work to do to fully implement our aims and objectives.

The Social Services function remains high on the Council agenda, with priorities being identified corporately to support Looked After Children, the safeguarding agenda, vulnerable people and promoting independence. The Council is looking to address the areas that will have a long term benefit, ensuring that the needs of people of all ages and future generations are at the centre of service design and delivery.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 was a response to the Welsh Government review of Social Services in 2010 (Sustainable Social Services) which recognised that without radical change to the way we worked, services would become unaffordable in the near future as a result of demographic pressures and the changing expectations of the public at a time of financial austerity.

There are a number of key themes that underpin the Act and these include: a focus on people; well-being, prevention and early intervention; partnership and integration; accessibility; and new methods of service delivery. In Children's Services the Integrated Services Team uses a prevention and early intervention approach to support families to remain in universal services to reduce the need for escalation into Social Care.

The Act looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners, where possible, in helping to shape and influence future design of services. This is supported by the Directorate who look to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention.

It is recognised that in the current financial climate there is a need to work smarter and in partnership. The Population Needs Assessment supports this approach and identifies the benefits of further regional working, joint commissioning and maximising of resources.

Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

Useful Documents

Case Studies – Are found within the quarterly reports of the Director of Social Services

http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=SSS

Corporate Parenting Action Plan reported to the 19th January Social Services Scrutiny Committee -

http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/users/public/admin/kab12.pl?cmte=SSS&meet=13&arc=71

Council Well-being Objectives - http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Wellbeing_Objectives_17.03.17.pdf

Finance 2016/17 Breakdown - http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Resident/Health_and_Social_Care/Finance_Breakdown_2016-17.pdf

Looked After Children Reduction Plan – reported to the 13th July Social Services Scrutiny Committee -

http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=SSS

Reports to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee 2016/17 (including the Quarterly Reports of the Director of Social Services) - http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=SSS

Social Services Website - <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/social-services/>

Workforce Development Plan <http://socialservicesblaenau-gwent.caerphilly.gov.uk/Partnership.aspx>

Useful Websites

Care Council for Wales - <https://socialcare.wales>

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) - [CSSIW.org.uk](https://www.cssiw.org.uk)

Data Unit Wales - www.dataunitwales.gov.uk

DEWIS - <https://www.dewis.wales>

Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board - www.gwasb.org.uk

Population Needs Assessment - <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/cy/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/social-services-well-being-act/population-needs-assessment/>

Public Service Board - [Blaenau Gwent PSB](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/psb)

South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board - www.sewsc.org.uk

Well-being Assessment - <http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/media/25323/1-Welcome-and-Introduction-Final-.pdf>

Welsh Government Programme for Government - [Welsh Government – Programme for Government](http://www.welsh.gov.uk/programme-for-government)

Providing Feedback

We welcome any feedback you might have about the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services. Your views are important to us. Please contact us if you would like to give feedback on the plan or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc.

Fersiwn Gymraeg

Yn unol â Chynllun Iaith Gymraeg y Cyngor, bydd fersiwn Gymraeg o Adroddiad Blynyddol y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.

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The Social Services Directorate is satisfied that the information given in this annual report is accurate based on the information available at the time of publication. This annual report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.