

Meeting of:	<b>Cabinet</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Monday, 13 September 2021</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Healthy Living and Social Care
Report Title:	Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020-2021
Purpose of Report:	To ensure that Cabinet agree the future priorities for the Directorate of Social Services
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health
Responsible Officer:	Director of Social Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Social Services Senior Management Team Health Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Challenge Version of the Director's report was considered by Scrutiny Committee in July. Committee Members provided positive feedback and welcomed the new presentation of the report.</li> <li>• A finalised version following feedback from partners is being presented to Cabinet for approval.</li> <li>• The report contains a number of priorities which the Director of Social Services has determined. These have been set in the context of the pandemic and significant changes in demand. Cabinet are asked to agree these improvement priorities.</li> </ul>	

## **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet considers the content of this report.
2. That Cabinet approves the Director's Annual Report for 2020-2021 – <https://sway.office.com/GOBm0HRsTESWUX5t?ref=Link>
3. That Cabinet agrees the improvement priorities for Social Services as set out in the Director's Annual Report for 2020-2021.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To ensure that the Director's Annual Report is considered by Elected Members.
2. To ensure that the Director's Annual Report for 2020-2021 has the approval and agreement of Cabinet.
3. To ensure that the priorities as set out by the Director of Social Services are approved by Cabinet.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 As part of the statutory duties, the Director of Social Services is required by the Welsh Government to produce an annual report on the effectiveness of social care services in the Vale of Glamorgan and on our plans for improvement. This gives the Director an opportunity to provide people in the Vale of Glamorgan with a rounded picture of social services - based on evidence drawn from a wide range of sources such as what users and carers say, key performance indicators, and measurements of progress against the overall goals of the Council.
- 1.2 The report is written for a wide range of people, including service users and carers but also Elected Members, the Council's own staff, and the range of partners and providers who help us deliver our services. It is used by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as evidence and to guide their inspection programme in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.3 The report reflects on progress over the last financial year.
- 1.4 The Corporate Plan sets out our vision for the next four years by identifying priorities that are aligned to well-being outcomes and objectives. In planning how we will deliver services over the coming years, our annual Service Plans 2019-20 outline our service specific contributions to these priorities. The corporate Service Planning process has been used to set out our improvement agenda and to inform the development of the priorities for 2020-21 in the Director's Annual Report.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 This is an important report for the people of the Vale of Glamorgan, Members of the Council and our partners, both statutory and in other sectors. It outlines the

current context within which social services are operating and details proposed priorities for improvement.

- 2.2 The final report has been prepared following the circulation of a challenge version. This has allowed key stakeholders opportunities to comment and make observations before the report is finalised, ensuring that it accurately reflects the position of social services.
- 2.3 As part of the challenge process, the challenge version of the report was presented to Scrutiny Committee to provide Elected Members with an opportunity to contribute their views. This is regarded as a key milestone in finalising the report because of the crucial role which the Committee has in providing consistent oversight and monitoring of social services.
- 2.4 The challenge version was amended following consideration at Scrutiny Committee and the feedback from partners and stakeholders. This year, no substantive changes have been made as a result of the feedback received.
- 2.5 The final report will be made available via the Council's website.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1 The challenge version of the report was a consultation document and was sent for consideration to a wide range of partners. A feedback pro forma was provided which was returned via email. The comments received were evaluated and, where appropriate, changes to the report were made. There are no matters in the report which relate to an individual ward.
- 3.2 The need to ensure that services are sustainable in the longer-term is a key element in the priority outcomes set out in the annual report. This is consistent with the direction set by Welsh Government for delivering sustainable social services through greater emphasis on prevention and people accepting more responsibility for tackling factors which can increase demand for social care and health services.

### **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 4.1 The report is set within the context of:
  - increasing demand for help and support;
  - managing the impact of the UK Government's previous austerity measures on public sector finances; and
  - efforts to focus on more of our work on supporting people to remain as independent as possible.

- 4.2** The priority objectives contained in the reports will be delivered within the financial constraints set by the Social Services Budget Programme, which is approved by Cabinet and reported regularly.

### **Employment**

- 4.3** There are no employment issues as a result of this report.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.4** The former reporting requirements for Directors of Social Services in part 6 of the “Statutory Guidance on the Role and Accountabilities of the Director of Social Services” (Welsh Government June 2009) have been replaced as a consequence of both the Social Services and Well-Being Act 2014 (SSWB), and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.

- 4.5** The requirements for the social services report are scattered under a number of pieces of legislation and codes. In purely headline terms the requirements are that every local authority must produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions and the report must include:

- An evaluation of the performance in delivering social services functions for the past year including lessons learned (Part 8 Code on the role of the Director);
- How the local authority has achieved the six quality standards for well-being outcomes (set out in the code on measuring performance);
- Qualitative and quantitative data relating to the achievement of well-being outcomes (also set out in the code on measuring performance);
- The extent to which the local authority has met requirements under Parts 3 and 4 of the SSWB Act as set out in separate codes covering assessing needs and meeting needs;
- Objectives for promoting the well-being of people needing care and support and carers needing support for the following year including those identified by population needs assessments under section 14 of the SSWB Act;
- Assurances concerning: structural arrangements enabling good governance and strong accountability, effective partnership working via Partnership Boards and safeguarding arrangements;
- The local authority’s performance in handling and investigating complaints responses to any inspections of its social services functions;
- An update on Welsh language provision how the local authority has engaged people (including children) in the production of the report.

## **5. Background Papers**

The Local Authority Annual Social Services Reports Guidance:

[https://socialcare.wales/cms\\_assets/hub-downloads/The Local Authority Annual Social Services Reports Guidance.pdf](https://socialcare.wales/cms_assets/hub-downloads/The_Local_Authority_Annual_Social_Services_Reports_Guidance.pdf)

[Report to Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021.](#)

# Vale of Glamorgan Council Social Services: Director's Annual Report 2020/21



# Foreword



As the Director of Social Services for the Vale of Glamorgan Council, I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2020/21.

The report is framed around the six well-being standards, as defined in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. In this report, we outline what progress has been made against each of the priorities we set out we would focus on over the past 12 months. The progress and developments outlined within this report are closely aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-25 and associated Annual Delivery Plan for 2020-21.

Under each well-being standard the report identifies the key priorities for the forthcoming year. The identification of priorities for next year was not done in isolation but was part of a far more holistic and integrated process that is closely aligned to our public consultation on the Annual Delivery Plan. The priorities/actions set out in the Annual Delivery Plan have been shaped by the voice of our citizens and remains the key planning document we have used this year to support the identification of priorities for Social Services in the forthcoming year.

This past year has been the most challenging Social Services has ever experienced. The pandemic put our social care services under enormous pressure which significantly challenged how we deliver our services. However, we have managed to fulfil our statutory roles and functions. Although we acknowledge that the challenges will remain with us for many more months to come, what has been critical is how we have risen to the challenge by evolving and adapting our response to a rapidly changing and uncertain landscape. Our approach has been defined by our ability to quickly galvanise our workforce to work in new ways that has enabled us to reprioritise and repurpose our resources and redirect them to the front line where they were most needed. None of this could have been achieved without the dedication and resilience of our workforce. Our capacity to navigate through this crisis was also further reinforced through effective collaboration with our partners. By working with our partners, communities, and citizens we have been able to maximise our effectiveness and help those most in need.

There are several achievements over the last year that we are proud to celebrate (as outlined in this report). Throughout this challenging year we have continued to focus on enhancing our service delivery where the well-being of our citizens continues to be a core focal point. For instance, we have focused on developing our 'strengths-based' model of delivery which is both holistic and multidisciplinary in supporting citizens to enhance their sense of well-being. Adopting a 'strengths based' approach focuses on working collaboratively with individuals that enables them to achieve outcomes that draw on their strengths. This has gone hand in hand with our continued focus on embedding a very person-centred approach to how we deliver care and support services, that are shaped to the needs and wishes of individuals enabling them to co-produce outcomes and improve their well-being.

In terms of the challenges, it is widely acknowledged that the effects of the pandemic are going to be widely felt for many years to come and alongside this are the pre-existing pressures we face regarding balancing our budgets against a rising demand for our services. We have consistently focused our efforts on responding positively to these challenges by



proactively taking steps to innovate, transform, and collaborate in order to ~~Wagard to all of those services both us, our services to get them~~ running as normally as possible, as restrictions hopefully continue to ease. This uncertainty requires us to not only plan for recovery, but to also be ready to respond should further restrictions come into force.

Social Services was a key contributor to the development of the Council's Recovery Strategy that was approved by Cabinet towards the end of 2020. The Annual Delivery Plan was refreshed to reflect these COVID-related recovery priorities. You will notice in this report that many of the priorities we set ourselves for the forthcoming year have a recovery focus.

I want to thank all those members of staff and our partners for the vital role they play in delivering high quality care and support to the citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan. I recognise the enormous effort and additional work they have done in the context of their own personal circumstances. Social Services in the Vale of Glamorgan needs to acknowledge the traumatic events of the last year and support our staff through this in order that they in turn can support our residents.

## Director's Summary of Performance

### Summary of Performance

Despite the impact the pandemic has had on Social Services, we have continued to collect a range of performance measures from across three divisions (Children and Young People Services, Adult Service Resource Management and Safeguarding) that make up the Directorate. This collection and reporting of performance information alongside management information is now undertaken through the Welsh Community Care and Information System (WCCIS). It is this suite of performance measures that has provided us with a snapshot of our performance over the past year.

The pandemic has presented a number of challenges to how we deliver our services, despite this we have continued to consistently meet targets and maintained a steady improvement in our performance which in turn has contributed to enhancing the well-being of our citizens.

During 2020/21, some of our key performance achievements have included reducing our reliance on out of area placements, continuing to enable where possible children to remain with families and enhancing support to enable adults to live more independently in their own homes. We have continued to maintain a good awareness of the areas of performance we wish to improve. In particular these areas include timeliness of assessments and review of care and support plans. We recognise that there are a number of challenges and associated risks in the future and through our robust approach to managing our performance we are in a strong position to turn these challenges into opportunities for improvement.

Outlined below are some infographics that provide a snapshot of our

performance over the last year.

## **Our response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

COVID-19 has been the greatest global crisis of our lifetime. Much of what we do and deliver within Social Services is person-focused and reliant on face to face contact. The emergence of COVID-19 significantly threatened and challenged how we delivered our services, statutory functions, and

safeguard those most vulnerable in society whilst keeping our citizens and staff safe from COVID-19. We were able to quickly adapt to the changing public health landscape and respond efficiently and effectively to the challenges by prioritising and repurposing our resources, so they could be redirected to areas of the frontline to ensure continuity of care and support for our citizens. We believe that our knowledge and understanding of our communities and the dedication shown by our staff has enabled us to navigate our way through this crisis, so that we could effectively target support where it was needed most.

Some of our Ty Dyfan Residential Care Home Staff He

Outlined below is a summary of how we have responded to the crisis via the newly established PPE Team. It highlights the extraordinary efforts staff have made in keeping our residents and staff safe.

Instrumental in our response to COVID-19, has been the PPE Team that was established at the outset of the Pandemic to support and co-ordinate the distribution of PPE across frontline Council departments, including social care staff, residential and nursing care homes, social care providers, unpaid carers and Third Sector organisations. Throughout the Pandemic, the PPE Team have shown remarkable resilience in what has been an extremely challenging time. Shown below are some of the compliments we have had the pleasure to receive.

Throughout the Pandemic our staff and volunteers have shown remarkable resilience in what has been an extremely challenging time. Their effort and dedication to their roles has been amazing.

Chris the courier who has helped to deliver thousands of items of...

Residential Care Home Staff promoting 'Staying Safe'.

Karen from HR redeployed to Ty Dew

Gifts distributed to our Foster Carers to say a 'Big Thank You' in...

A secondary school pupil who used a 3D printer purchased by Ysg...

PPE Team delivering PPE to one of ou

Carers Support Officer repurposed during the Pandemic to manag...

One of many volunteers who made scrubs for our home carers.

Some of our carers wearing their PPE

# Challenges

There are a number of challenges that have presented as a direct result of the pandemic and in other instances many were pre-existing challenges have been further exacerbated by Covid-19. The main overarching challenge facing Social Services has been sustaining service delivery and performance whilst managing demand for our services at a time when our resources have been stretched by the pandemic.

Whilst the ongoing uncertainty of the pandemic still exists, there have been opportunities to learn from the experience to explore and establish new ways of working that will enable us to transform our services in the future. Since we are likely to have to learn to live with Covid-19 for many years to come, the main challenge will be on ensuring that we can future proof our services from any negative impacts or disruption to service delivery.

As we transition from our emergency response to recovery, it presents us with a unique opportunity to develop our understanding of the challenges that lie ahead and how as a service we plan to adapt, evolve and change our response over time.

Summarised in the slides below is a snapshot of some of the key challenges Social Services has tackled over the last year and challenges that we are likely to face going forward.

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## How We Shape Our Services

Engaging with our citizens is fundamental to ensuring we can focus our efforts on improving the quality of our service delivery. We strive towards developing a citizen-centred approach to how we provide care and support, so providing accessible and meaningful opportunities for consultation and engagement are crucial to achieving this. We not only value the views of citizens and their experiences to drive improvement, but we strongly believe that their voice is pivotal to the transformation of our services to ensure that they can achieve their own well-being outcomes.

Although the Pandemic has impacted on our usual forms of engagement, it has provided us with the opportunity to look at how we engage with our citizens and to tap into people's personal experiences of the pandemic to explore where there are opportunities to learn from their experiences and to identify areas for future service improvement. During 2020/21, we continued to focus on our rolling programme of consultations that has helped us to evaluate our services and shape future service delivery. In this section of the report, we outline what we have done, what we have learnt and what we intend to improve or change. During the year, we conducted 10 service specific consultations that included: the Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS), Adult Placement Service/Shared Lives, Residential Services, Day Services, Vale Alcohol and Drug Team (Newlands), Fostering Service, Adoption Service, Flying Start Service, Families First Advice Line and Child Health and Disability.

Outlined below is a summary of the key findings arising from this work.

## Adult Services

During 2020/21, four consultations were conducted in relation to the Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS), Adult Placement Service/Shared Lives, Day Services and Vale Alcohol and Drug Team (Newlands).

Outlined below is a summary of the key findings and outcomes and identified areas of improvement arising from this work.

### Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS)

The purpose of this consultation was to ensure people in receipt of care and support from this service receive high standards of care and support to enable them to improve and maintain independence following discharge from hospital.

#### Outcomes and areas of improvement:

- Continue to maintain the current high quality standards of care and support.
- Ensure that each citizen and their family is aware of what the service provides and the scope of the service prior to referral to VCRS.

### Adult Placement Service

The focus of this consultation is to engage with hosts, people using the service and their families to evaluate their experience of the service to inform future service developments.

#### Outcomes and areas for improvement:

- Ensure that service-level expectations for citizens and their families is effectively communicated.
- Continue to focus on maintaining high quality matches to hosts and ensuring that introductions to host families are in place.
- Greater involvement of the citizen at all times as part of the care and support they access through the service.
- Explore opportunities to provide greater options to meet with other hosts and share experiences to improve peer support mechanisms.
- Further enhance communication channels with citizens, their families and host families and review all information disseminated to citizens to ensure it is accurate, up to date and provided in a timely manner.

### Day Services

The purpose of this consultation was to explore citizens' levels of satisfaction with the range of day services, what their experience has been of the service during the pandemic and to explore the views of citizens regarding the reopening of day services as part of our recovery from Covid-19.

#### Outcomes and areas for improvement:

- The need to ensure that information is shared effectively with citizens that use our Day Services and their families.
- The pandemic has highlighted how the regular telephone contact has been invaluable at a time of limited social contact. This has been flagged as a beneficial new practice going forward.
- The need to ensure that when Day Services fully resume, that the opening arrangements are clearly communicated to citizens and their families and the service remains accessible to all.

### Vale Alcohol and Drug Team (Newlands)

The purpose of the engagement exercise was to assess satisfaction with citizens involvement with their care planning, contact with social workers and the support they received during the Pandemic.

#### Outcomes and areas for improvement:

- The need to continue to focus on tailored support to the individual.
- The importance of regular contact and communication has been invaluable during the pandemic and is something that should continue going forward.

## Children and Young People

During 2020/21, four consultations were conducted in relation to Fostering, Adoption, Flying Start, Child Health and Disability.

Outlined below is a summary of the key findings and outcomes and identified areas of improvement arising from this work.

### Fostering Service

We surveyed foster carers to establish their satisfaction with the support, training and information they received to carry out their role.

#### Outcomes and areas for improvement:

- Ensuring that the new methods of communication are effective at making foster carers feel part of the service.
- Continue to focus on supporting high standards of regular contact with foster carers.
- Explore areas where foster carers felt more support could be provided.

### Flying Start

Parents accessing Flying Start services were asked about their satisfaction with all aspects of the service and the support they received during the pandemic. Outcomes and areas of improvement:

- Continue to focus on maintaining good standards of communication with families.
- Continue to maintain good levels of support for parents accessing the service.
- Maintaining levels of engagement with families.

#### **Families First Advice Line**

The purpose of this engagement exercise was to assess levels of satisfaction with the quality of initial advice, support from staff as well as the quality of communication.

Outcomes and areas of improvement:

- The need to ensure that during the initial contact stage that communication by staff is both effective and supportive at all times.
- Continue to focus on the quality of information provision and the need to maintain levels of good quality support and signposting.

#### **Child Health and Disability**

This engagement exercise sought to assess parents' views of the support they received for transition and what their experience was of the support to set up Direct Payments.

Outcomes and areas of improvement:

- Review the levels of paperwork necessary to access service provision.
- Ensure that families' priorities for services are considered.
- Continue to focus on effective communication with families.

## **Resource Management and Safeguarding**

During 2020/21, an engagement exercise was undertaken in our residential care settings.

Outlined below is a summary of the key findings and outcomes and identified areas of improvement arising from this work.

#### **Residential Care**

Residents, relatives and staff were asked their views and opinions regarding the quality of care and support provided by our residential care homes that included: Cartref Porthceri, Southway, Ty Dyfan and Ty Dewi Sant.

Outcomes and areas of improvement:

- Continue to focus on high quality care and support.
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- Explore further ways to enhance our use of digital technology in residential care to support and promote interaction with families and friends to maintain social contact.

## Compliments and Complaints

### Compliments

Compliments are vital to identifying what we are doing well and to use it as an opportunity to share this experience more widely across our service areas. Compliments also provide a means through which we can recognise and praise the achievements and dedication of our staff.

During 2020/21, Social Services received a total of 56 compliments of which 51 related to Adult Services, 3 related to Children and Young People Services and 2 related to Resource Management and Safeguarding Service. The compliments predominately related to the types of services and support citizens received or experienced. They would often name specific staff where they felt the individual had gone over and above what was expected of them.

To put this in context, outlined below is a snapshot of some of the compliments we have received.

### Complaints

Through our complaints handling process we have continued to focus on maintaining a person-centred approach to how we deal with complaints. By following this approach it enables us to fully understand the issues

from the citizen's perspective and puts us in a stronger position to be able to find an amicable resolution and to learn from any mistakes.

The Complaints Officer takes a proactive approach to preventing and mediating issues before they have the potential to escalate into a complaint. Sometimes, citizens may contact Social Services unsure whether or not their concern equates to a formal complaint. In previous years, the Complaints Officer would normally arrange to meet with the individual to help clarify potential issues and to listen to their concerns. However, due to the pandemic these visits have been curtailed and the Complaints Officer instead reverted to having these conversations via telephone. Often speaking with an individual who has raised a concern is an effective and invaluable way of reaching an early resolution and preventing concerns escalating into complaints.

As at 31st March 2021, just over half (51%) of complaints received were resolved within the designated timescales. Designated timescales for responding to stage 1 complaints are 10 working days and a further 5 working days to confirm the outcome of the discussion. For stage 2 complaints, the timescales are 25 working days. Meeting the designated timescales for responding to complaints is increasingly more challenging and this has been particularly so during the pandemic, as many service areas have been under enormous pressure to deliver continuity of care and support. We also acknowledge that the nature of complaints have become increasingly more complex and as a consequence this can impact on our timeliness of response. Although just over half of complaints were resolved within the designated timescales, in all instances an extension to response times is mutually agreed with complainants. To ensure that timeliness of response remains at the forefront, the Complaints Officer undertakes weekly monitoring of complaints that is circulated to Senior Management to flag complaints that require follow up. This proves to be an effective escalation tool to remind managers of the importance of responding to complaints within the required timescales.

The table below provides a full breakdown of all compliments, enquiries and complaints received during 2020/21.

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The vast majority of complaints received during 2020/21 were in relation to

quality of service (9) and the second highest were in relation to members of staff (8). The other areas of complaint related to charges for services, lack of response, quality of care, communications or other.

The table below provides a breakdown of the nature of stage 1 complaints by division.

## **Lessons Learnt**

During 2020/21, a summary of key lessons learnt include:

## Promoting and Improving the Well-being of

This section of the report sets out our performance in promoting and improving the key aspects of Well-being of people in the Vale of Glamorgan who need care and support and carers who need support in relation to six well-being standards.

Resident from Southway residential care home

## Well-being Standard 1: Working with people

### What Did We Say We Would Do Last Year?

For 2020/21 we identified two key priorities as follows:

- **Priority 1:** Explore the use of digital solutions and technology to maximise our opportunities to support adults to achieve their own person outcomes.
- **Priority 2:** Implement an outcomes-based approach to commissioning contracting services across both a regional and localised footprint.

## **Priority 1: Explore the use of digital solutions and technology to maximise our opportunities to support adults to achieve their own person outcomes.**

Embracing digital solutions and technology enables us to improve quality and efficiency of the care and support services we provide, as enhance the overall experience of our citizens. Utilising new technology will enable us to assist people with independent living and provide a range of choices for those in need of care and support so that care support is tailored to their own personal outcomes.

The pandemic provided us with an opportunity to explore how we further expand and enhance our use of digital technology in new ways.

During 2020/21 we have:

- Increased the number of Telecare installations to ensure that vulnerable individuals can be supported via digital means to live safely and independently as possible. To enhance our take up of Telecare services, throughout the Pandemic we waived the installation fee.
- Supported our care home residents to have video contact with relatives where appropriate to enable to maintain social interaction and relationships throughout the Pandemic.
- Progressed the development of a SMART transition house, which will enable individuals to use technology solutions to maximise their independence and control over their own lives. When these individuals then move onto either independent living or supported accommodation, they are confident in using the technology to support their independence.
- Used digital means to complete assessments/reviews of individuals we provide care and support to.
- Enabled service users to access the Insight App developed by the Innovate Trust. This app has been developed to enable people with learning disabilities to develop their digital skills and to access online activities and challenges. We have further enhanced our online presence for Day Services by upskilling our staff to contribute to developing online activities to support our service users to remain connected, active and engaged.

## **Key Successes/Challenges:**

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The video clips shown below provide an overview of the what the Insight App is and the other two videos are examples of digital content developed by our Day Staff to engage Service users.

## **Priority 2: Implement an outcomes-based approach to commissioning contracting services across both a regional and localised footprint.**

An outcomes-based approach to commissioning and contracting services focuses on developing a values driven way of commissioning services. Instead of focusing on traditional output-based commissioning the emphasis is on effective co-ordination of outcomes that matter to our citizens. This 'whole system' approach to commissioning relies on effective collaboration and innovation in order to produce outcomes for our citizens that enhances their well-being.

Projects such as 'Your Choice' have been pivotal to transforming how we design, develop and deliver services to our citizens. The 'Your Choice' service offers a way of providing care and support for people who help to remain healthy, safe and independent in their own homes. The service is designed to give individuals greater freedom, promote their independence and increase their well-being in a way that matters to them. This dynamic way of working places a strong emphasis on partnership working, as Social Workers, Social Work Managers, care agency business staff, Commissioners and domiciliary care agencies work together with the service user to plan care and support. The significance of this approach means that it puts the person in receipt of care in an equal partnership between the person in receipt of care and the care agency and Social Worker.

Cartref resident keeping fit by taking part in physical activity...

During 2020/21 we have:

- Focused on service continuity throughout the pandemic by working with existing service providers to support individuals in their own homes.
- Secured new packages of care with agencies to provide additional support to service users.
- Supported individuals to remain safe in their own homes which has been a particular priority for many during the pandemic.
- Delivered flexible packages of outcome-focused care that meets the assessed needs of our services users which has given them greater choice and control over their services wherever possible.

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Shown below are two service user stories that evidence the difference that our outcome-based commissioning approach ('Your Choice') has had on the lives of our service users in empowering them to define and co-produce their own personal well-being outcomes.

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## **Well-being Standard 2: Working with people**

### **What did we say we would do last year?**

For 2020/21 we identified two key priorities as follows:

- **Priority 3:** Develop an 'Alliance Model' within the Vale locality that will enable us to operate more effectively across organisational boundaries.
- **Priority 4:** Review our working practices to enable us to operate more sustainably.

### **Priority 3: Develop an 'Alliance Model' within the Vale locality that will enable us to operate more effectively across organisational boundaries.**

The development of an 'Alliance Model' is a new service model where the emphasis is on achieving better outcomes for citizens. Establishing an 'Alliance Model' in the Vale will enable health and social care partners to work together collaboratively to improve how health and social care services are delivered in a more integrated way for adult services.

It is anticipated that setting up an Alliance Model will enable us for the first time to bring together all adult community services in order to develop a more seamless and integrated services for our citizens.

Unfortunately the pandemic delayed some of our progress in meeting this objective, but summarised below is what progress was made during 2020/21 in laying the foundations for a new operating model.

During 2020/21 we have:

- Consistently referred to the 'Vale Alliance' in our communications throughout the year to embed understanding of what the Alliance is and its overarching vision and purpose.
- Secured funding to further develop the 'Alliance Model' during 2021-22.
- Undertaken preparatory work for the development of a Project Plan and recruitment of key staff as we begin to shift towards laying foundations for the next financial year.

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### **Priority 4: Review our working practices to enable us to operate more sustainably.**

The purpose of this priority was to consider how our working practices could be adapted to enhance our ability to operate services more sustainably. As a consequence of the pandemic there was an acceleration of these plans that saw an immediate shift towards more agile working practices. At the onset of the pandemic we needed to quickly galvanise our

resources. This saw our non-front line staff and systems quickly reverting to normal. Although working presented its own set of challenges, our staff quickly demonstrated remarkable resilience and the ability to adapt to new ways of working at an extremely testing time.

Pursuing more flexible ways of working contributes to us being able to operate our services more sustainably in terms of reducing our carbon footprint, but also to operate our services more efficiently. When flexible/ home working is balanced effectively, it can also offer a better work-life balance to our staff.

Outlined below is the progress we have made, in the context of the pandemic, of operating more sustainable working practices in the future.

During 2020/21 we have:

- Rapidly established remote working for our staff during the pandemic. Staff working from home were supported to work in an agile way through rapid roll out of IT capability and equipment to enable staff to log into the Council's network securely.
- Supported access to digital solutions to enable staff to stay in touch with each other and with other professionals.
- Put in place virtual meetings to meet statutory conferencing requirements for children and young people.
- Ensured that statutory assessments and interventions were conducted for the first time via digital means. This enabled our staff to maintain contact with service users, it sustained their engagement with the service and with professionals and ensured continuity of care and support.
- Established a mechanism for Financial Officers to undertake assessments through digital means, whilst still maintaining effective contact with service users.
- Maximised opportunities to develop and pilot new services via digital means such as our delivery of outreach activities for Day Opportunities.
- Used our experience and learning from the Pandemic to progress discussions in determining a preferred operating model for the future. Current working arrangements have enabled us to try and test out the delivery of virtual activities and methods of engagement.

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## Well-being Standard 3: Taking steps to protect

## What did we say we would do last year?

For 2020/21 we identified two key priorities as follows:

- **Priority 5:** Enhance and strengthen our regional approach to recruitment and retention of foster carers.
- **Priority 6:** Scope and implement a strength-based model for working co-productively with children and their families.

### **Priority 5: Enhance and strengthen our regional approach to the recruitment and retention of foster carers.**

Recruiting and retaining foster carers is a challenge experienced at local, regional and national levels. A loss/decline in foster carers impacts not just only on the choice and availability placements but also on existing placement stability. The drive to increase the number of local authority foster carers also enables us to reduce our reliance on more costly foster care placements.

We have continued to focus on strengthening placement stability. During 2020/21, 7.8% of Children Looked After experienced three or more placements. We are committed to recruiting more in-house foster carers and to supporting the work of the National Fostering Framework which has been developed across Wales to address the national shortage of mainstream foster carers.

A picture of foster care couple, Kaye and Da...

Working across a regional footprint, provides us with an opportunity to further enhance and strengthen our recruitment and retention of foster carers. By working collaboratively across the region it will enable us to share knowledge and expertise as well support effective joint recruitment and retention campaigns and initiatives. By working in partnership, it will enable us to tackle the issue more effectively and transform how we recruit and retain foster carers in the future.

During 2020/21 we have:

- Supported the development of a regional core offer for all foster carers that has been agreed. This core offer has been developed to not only attract new foster carers but to also retain existing and experienced ones too.

- Worked with the region to refresh and update the Regional Workplan to ensure it remains current and focused on the key objectives for the region.
- Reviewed and updated our foster care agreement.
- Revised payments for skilled foster carers to give them more of a development pathway but to also enable an increase in their allowances.
- Worked with the region to develop the Foster Wales brand and enhance our own local branding.
- Continued to focus on recruitment campaigns, training and assessment of new foster carers.

A picture of Nicci, one of our foster carers, holding f

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## Priority 6: Scope and implement a strength-based model for working co-productively with children and their families.

Developing a strengths-based model focuses on working co-productively with children and their families to identify their strengths, assets as well as needs and difficulties to enable them to achieve outcomes and enhance their well-being. This involves moving away from the traditional needs-based assessments to a focus on strengths-based conversations.

The holistic implementation of a strengths-based approach is a long term (over 2years) development plan in Children and Young People Services, which aims to develop the workforce and systems in order to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and to manage risk confidently.

There is a significant programme of work underway that has been designed to embed and sustain the evolution of practice whilst continuing to build on developing a stable and confident workforce. There are four strands associated with the development of this strengths-based model, each with specific activities to enhance the functioning of each systemic layer as follows:

- **Strategic development (organisational culture)**- delivered through quarterly workshops.
- **Systems development (organisation process and practice)**- delivered through the monthly System Development Group.
- **Individual development of practice** - progressed by the Practice Supervisors Development Programme and through talking and listening to children.
- **Colleague and partner development**- achieved through regular briefings with the dual purpose of informing, listening and relationship building.

During 2020/21 we have:

- Developed a framework for practice for our workforce that will enable us to embed a strengths-based approach when working co-productively with children, young people and their families.
- Developed an implementation plan that will support delivery of the four strands of systemic development mentioned above.
- Secured the services of Professor Gillian Ruch and Jo Williams, who are experts in relationship-based work with children and families and practice supervisor development to consult on the implementation of our framework. They will also be offering regular workshops and sessions to all levels of our workforce.
- Purchased 'Kit Bags' for all workers and foster carers, which carries a strong message on how much we value the importance of talking and listening to children that will support our workforce in having strengths-based conversations with children and young people. The principles of communication and emotional literacy that the Kit Bag represents will be spread throughout the entirety of our service development work.

## Well-being Standard 4: Encouraging and

## What did we say we would do last year?

- **Priority 7:** Delivery of a consistent strategy in relation to carers in terms of policies and practice to be followed by professionals.

### **Priority 7: Delivery of consistent strategy in relation to carers in terms of policies and practice to be followed by professionals.**

Carers provide a vital role in supporting the most vulnerable in society to live well and safely in their own homes and communities. It is widely recognised that caring responsibilities can have an adverse effect on the physical and mental well-being of a carer.

It is crucial therefore, that the contribution carers make not only to the lives of those they care for but to society as a whole be recognised and supported. During 2019/20 a Regional Carers Strategy was developed in partnership with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Cardiff Council as well as other key partners. Working with our partners on a Regional footprint has enabled the sharing of knowledge, experience and resources which will enable us to improve the essential support to carers in our communities. The Strategy has been developed to strengthen how we provide support to carers across the region and it promotes how carers can access support.

Although the initial launch of the Regional Carers Strategy had been delayed due to the Pandemic, our focus during 2020/21 has been on how we ensure consistency in terms of how the Strategy is now delivered by professionals. Outlined below is the progress we have made during 2020/21.

During 2020/21 we have:

- Continued to promote and support the work of the Carers Gateway (community-based outreach service for carers providing information and advice delivered by the Carers Trust South East Wales). This service has been invaluable during the pandemic in supporting carers through the crisis when they often found themselves isolated in their caring role. The Gateway has been widely promoted, so that Social Services practitioners are aware they can refer any carers to receive support. By working in partnership with Carers Trust South East Wales, the Gateway has been able to conduct their own well-being assessments (a proportionate assessment on behalf of Social Services) and where necessary the Gateway can escalate to a full assessment by Social Services.
- Made financial contributions to support the establishment of a grant fund to help carers adversely affected by the circumstances of the Pandemic.
- Worked in partnership with the Carers Trust South East Wales to establish a Carers Expert Panel to ensure that the voices of carers are heard and carers are able to influence and shape the services they receive.
- Overcome some of the challenges associated with the lockdown restrictions, by working closely with all our contracted carer services to ensure continuity of support.
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- Progressed work on the development and introduction of a Regional Young Carer's Identity Card as part of a National Welsh Government Training Video. (Click link to [Vale Carers Assessment Video](#)). This video was created to promote the uptake of Carers Assessments.

## Well-being Standard 5: Supporting people 1

### What did we say we would do last year?

- Priority 8:** Explore opportunities to maximise our use of digital platforms to ensure our reach and engagement with and for children and young people and their families.

### **Priority 8: Explore opportunities to maximise our use of digital platforms to ensure our reach and engagement with and**

## for children and young people and their families.

The use of social media and digital technology by children, young people and adults has rapidly accelerated over the past decade. With more and more people preferring to engage via digital means comes an opportunity for some of our support services to be delivered via digital platforms to enhance our reach and engagement with children, young people and their families.

Expanding our use of digital platforms:

- enables us to work efficiently with more children, young people and families that might have otherwise been hard to engage with;
- supports staff to work creatively with children, young people and their families to strengthen partnership working to improve outcomes; and
- streamlines processes and ensures effective use of staff time.

In the context of the pandemic, the majority of our workforce had to rapidly adjust to using digital platforms for a significant amount of their work. The pandemic provided us with an opportunity through which digital transformation could be accelerated. As a result, we were able to innovate in ways that would have normally taken us a significant amount of time to achieve. Digital technology will never be a replacement for face to face interaction with our most vulnerable children, young people and families, but it plays an integral role in strengthening our relationships with them and it opens up opportunities to enhance our practice.

During 2020/21 we have:

- We rapidly reconfigured service delivery in response to the pandemic, so that the majority of our workforce could revert to working remotely and enabled them to use video conferencing tools such as Teams to run virtual meetings with the families we support as well as with other professionals.
- Developed a hybrid approach to working that has seen a combination of face to face meetings for our most vulnerable children, young people and families as well as using Microsoft Teams as another means of engagement.
- Increased flexibility and options for engagement with children, young people and families.
- Developed creative ways to enable some children, young people and families to engage in non-traditional ways.

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# Well-being Standard 6: Working with and

## What did we say we would do last year?

- **Priority 9:** Develop our use of technology to optimise how we contribute to improve the planning and co-ordination of social care services to our citizens.

### **Priority 9: Develop our use of technology to optimise how we contribute to improve the planning and co-ordination of social care services to our citizens.**

Technology-based care co-ordination has the potential to transform how social care services are delivered to our citizens. Maximising our use of technology to plan and co-ordinate care will enable us to deliver more interactive and personalised care services. It will not only support service efficiencies, but will enhance the service user experience by supporting them to manage their own health and well-being. Using technology for care co-ordination will further contribute to embedding a more person-centred approach, that will empower individuals to be actively involved in decisions about their care and to co-produce outcomes to improve their sense of well-being.

During 2020/21 we have:

- Agreed a contractual arrangement with Boots to implement a digital medication administration system in our residential care homes. We anticipated that a new digital system will enable us to streamline workflows and processes, assist in minimising risk of medication errors, enhance care quality and staff capacity and will strengthen communication between care homes and pharmacies.
- Expanded our use of digital platforms to maintain relationships and contact between care home residents and family members during the pandemic. We have also used digital technology to record video messages from Day Service Users to support our service users to remain connected, active and engaged. Working in partnership with the Innovate Trust, we have been able to engage people with learning disabilities and help them to develop their digital skills. It has also provided them with online access to activities and challenges.
- Continued the work of the 'See Me' project within Learning Disability Day Services. This project focuses on supporting service users to create profiles about themselves that communicate information about who they are, what their likes and dislikes are, and what's important to them. This is done through a video about themselves. This has enabled our service users to learn new skills on how to present, record and use an iPad and it has been a powerful way to bring assessment information alive, and put the service user at the centre of all we do. Some of the videos showcasing the service have recently been shown at a Social Services Digital Conference.

The videos below provide an overview of the See Me project and a how by working effectively in partnership and expanding our use of digital technology we have been able to tackle many service delivery challenges we faced as a result of the pandemic.

There are four videos shown below in relation to the See Me project. Three videos have been recorded by our Support Workers who provide their reflections and perspective on the project. There is also a video by the parent of a service user, who shares her experience.

## **Successes/Challenges**

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## **How do we do what we do?**

This section of the report sets out how through our skilled and dedicated workforce, effective partnership working and robust financial management we have been able to overcome many of the challenges associated with the pandemic and met the care and support needs of our citizens.

## **Our workforce**

Our workforce is and remains our greatest asset. This is something that has become even more apparent through our emergency response to the pandemic.

We have successfully embedded our workforce planning and staff engagement processes to enable us to use our staff flexibly and adapt quickly to the fluctuating workforce pressures facing teams at the height of the pandemic. This saw us being able to quickly repurpose and redeploy teams to front line positions that were experiencing the greatest pressures.

We have continued to support and promote a range of corporate workforce initiatives that enhance engagement and recognition of our dedicated workforce. Corporately the clap for carers was supported and promoted amongst staff via regular communications on our internal Staffnet and external website and social media platforms. The Managing Director also disseminated weekly messages to staff to share 'Good news' stories and thank yous to staff who had gone the extra mile.

Outlined in the slides below is a summary of some of our key workforce related developments over the past year and an overview of our workforce priorities we intend to take forward during 2021/22.

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## Financial resources

The Social Services budget is carefully monitored throughout the year. There is robust and effective monitoring of the budget programme through the Budget Programme Board that provides a high level of oversight on how we are managing our financial resources. Regular monitoring enables us to take action in areas of concern. The work of the Budget Programme Board also receives regular updates on progress being made against savings targets as well as supports us in identifying and monitoring cost pressures across Social Services and the Council as a whole. Along with this individual savings schemes and cost pressures are also considered at the Council's Cabinet at appropriate intervals throughout the year.

Vale of Glamorgan Social Services have continued to benefit from additional funding to support the delivery of regional workstreams through funds such as the Integrated Care Fund.

The diagram below illustrates how the budget is deployed across the three divisions of Social Services.

## **Our partnership working, Corporate**

We remain focused on exploring and promoting opportunities for working collaboratively both at the local and regional level in order to improve the quality of care and support we provide to our citizens, to support us in delivering services in a more proficient and effective way whilst delivering savings.

In light of the Pandemic, budgetary pressures and the rising demand for our services, it is more important than ever that we have robust leadership, governance and accountability to enable us an organisation to enable us to

have a clear vision of how we navigate ourselves through these challenges and ensure that there are lessons learnt from our experiences to improve the quality of our services. Partnership working remains a central feature in addressing some of these challenges and will enable us to reshape and integrate services that are fit for the future.

## Leadership and Governance

The Social Services Well-being Wales (Act) 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act have fundamentally changed the way we view, plan and deliver our services, so that now the focus is on citizen-centred approach to working that enhances the well-being of our citizens. Therefore, within Social Services we are not driven solely by the need to fulfill our statutory functions as defined by legislation, but we are constantly exploring ways in which we can integrate and streamline our services that will improve the quality of care and support we provide and ultimately outcomes for our citizens.

The Corporate Plan 2020-25, is the Council's key policy document that set out our vision 'Working Together for a Brighter Future'. This plan outlines an ambitious programme of activity for the next 5 years that will enable us to deliver our four Wellbeing Objectives and contribute to the delivery of the seven national Well-being Goals (as outlined in the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA)). Aligned to the Corporate Plan is an Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) that is produced annually to reflect what specific actions the Council will progress during the year to deliver the commitments outlined in the Corporate Plan. This year the Annual Delivery Plan contains a series of Covid-related priorities that service areas will all be working towards, as we transition from response to recovery. Annually, within Social Services, we identify which actions we intend to take forward to contribute to the delivery of Corporate Plan commitments and ADP actions.

The main channel through which we do this is via our Service Plans. Within Social Services there are three Service Plans that reflect the divisions of Adult Services, Children and Young People Services and Resource Management and Safeguarding. This approach ensures that our priorities remain relevant to the Corporate Plan, are realistic within our budgetary means and enables us to comply with our legislative requirements and our statutory Social Services functions. We monitor delivery of our Service Plan activities on a quarterly basis in the form of performance reports that are presented to our Senior Leadership Team, Scrutiny and Cabinet. This provides an opportunity to discuss resource and budget issues as well as address/flag any emerging performance issues and challenges that require consideration by Scrutiny and Cabinet.

The Annual Report priorities identified in this report have been aligned to a new Corporate Plan for 2020-25 and its associated Annual Delivery Plan.

## What does our regulator say about us?

Each year the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) evaluates the Council's performance in conducting its statutory functions that is presented in the form of an annual performance review. Due to the pandemic, it was not possible for CIW to undertake a full annual performance review as it would do under normal circumstances.

The last annual performance review letter was received from CIW in August 2020, relating to the period 2019/20. The [letter](#) summarises CIW's review of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's performance (that includes

Adults and Children's services) in conducting its statutory Social Services functions for the period April 2019 -March 2020. CIW undertook an assurance check in March 2021 and the feedback/findings from this will be reported in the next Annual Report.

In addition, throughout the Pandemic, CIW undertook regular performance and 'check in' meetings with the Director and Heads of Services. The purpose of these meetings was to review and discuss the Council's Covid-19 response and recovery in relation to Social Services. The areas of recovery identified through this meeting have since been incorporated as part of our recovery priorities that have been integrated into the Council's **Annual Delivery Plan for 2021/22**.

## **Promoting Welsh Language and Access to Services**

More than Just Words and the Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care aims to strengthen Welsh Language Services in health and social care and is driven by the need to ensure Welsh speakers can access and receive services through the medium of Welsh.

Summarised in the slides below is the progress we have made during 2020/21 in further promoting the Welsh Language and access to services.

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## **Our partnership working and collaboration**

Through pursuing a progressive collaborative agenda with our health and social care partners we have been able to enhance how we integrate services. At a regional level, we remain committed to developing initiatives as part of the Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board (RPB). Through the RPB we have been able to maximise our use of Integrated Care Funding (ICF) to invest in the priorities identified in the RPB's Plan.

The 2019/20 Annual Report of the RPB is available on the [Partnership's website](#) and provides a useful summary of key achievements over the previous year. The RPB's Annual Report for 2020/21 was not published at the time of writing this report.

# Looking forward

Despite the set backs and challenges the pandemic has presented past year, I hope this report has demonstrated the dedication and resilience of our staff which has enabled us to navigate our way through this crisis. Our ability to swiftly adapt and shape our services in response has not only ensured continuity of care and support for our most vulnerable citizens, but it has also revealed how we can further enhance and develop our services through adopting new ways of working.

The learning from this experience has been invaluable and will be used to inform the development of future models of care and support. This will enhance our capacity to deliver high quality care and support, but also enable us to further embed a strengths-based and person-centred approach to how we operate our services that will empower citizens to define and co-produce their own outcomes and enhance their well-being.

Drawing on the events from this past year and our insight for the year ahead, we intend to progress the following priorities into 2021/22:

## Our priorities

**2021/22**

## Further Information and Key Documents

This report has provided an overview of how we have performed over the past year by outlining key successes and challenges we have faced whilst focusing on improving the well-being of those who need our help and support.

There is a significant amount of background information that sits behind this report and provides additional details of what we do and how we do it.

Further information is available via the following documents:

- [Vale of Glamorgan Council's Corporate Plan 2020-25](#)
- [Vale of Glamorgan Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22](#)
- [Service Plans](#) for Children and Young People Services, Adult Services and Resource Management, Safeguarding and Performance.
- [Cardiff and Vale Integrated Health and Social Care Partnership](#)
- [Public Service Board's Well-being Assessment](#)
- [Population Needs Assessment on the Impact of Covid-19](#)
- [Cardiff and Vale Population Needs Assessment](#) and associated [Area Plan](#) and [Area Action Plan](#).

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