

Meeting of:	Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 12 October 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Healthy Living and Social Care
Report Title:	Citizen Engagement Annual Report
Purpose of Report:	To illustrate to the Scrutiny Committee the outcomes and recommendations of the annual consultation programme for Social Services for 2020-21
Report Owner:	Director of Social Services
Responsible Officer:	Head of Resource Management and Safeguarding
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Social Services Senior Management Team
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual report highlights the citizen engagement that has taken place across Social Services during 2020/21, to ascertain the views of citizens, their relatives and some of our staff about the care and support provided and specifically communication and support during the COVID 19 pandemic. We consult annually with individuals who have received services to ensure that we are providing a high standard of care and support. • The annual report draws the attention of Scrutiny Committee to the current good practice identified in our service provision, and areas of potential development. • The annual report brings to the attention of Scrutiny the outcomes and recommendations of the Social Services annual consultation programme through the Social Services Citizen Engagement Annual Report for 2020/21 (link below). The report proposes that recommendations are acknowledged and considered by the relevant service areas and that they are responsible for ensuring that action plans are followed <p>Carrying out the annual citizen engagement programme ensures that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are consistently measuring the quality of our information and advice. • We are identifying areas of good practice and improvement. • We are identifying areas of good practice and improvement whilst the service has been affected by the COVID pandemic. 	

- We are complying with specific service area requirements (for example RISCA (Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016).
- We are ensuring that citizens and their families have received good quality communication throughout the lockdown period and that we have used appropriate methods for this.
- We are aligning our engagement work with the relevant wellbeing objectives.

Recommendations

1. That Scrutiny Committee considers the context and structure of the Social Services Citizen Engagement Annual Report for 2020-21 [Annual Report 2020-1](#) (and the newly agreed priorities for consultation in 2021-22).
2. That Scrutiny Committee considers the methods employed when we obtain the views of our citizens and their families.
3. That Scrutiny Committee Considers the improvement priorities for the service areas as highlighted by the recommendations within the Annual Report.
4. That Scrutiny Committee considers the impact COVID 19 has had on the service through the experiences of citizens and carers, and the resilience that the service has demonstrated.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To increase awareness of the context of the 2020-21 Social Services Citizen Engagement programme, including the impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic.
2. To appreciate the inclusion of the more varied methods with which Social Services engages with citizens and their families through COVID 19 and beyond.
3. To increase awareness of the positive work achieved by the service and the plans to drive improvement.
4. To increase awareness of the impact of COVID 19 on the service.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Vale of Glamorgan Council Social Services Directorate provides care and support to vulnerable citizens and as part of our aim for provision of high-quality services, we undertake an annual programme of engagement to consult citizens and their families to gauge satisfaction with our service and identify areas of improvement.
- 1.2 This programme of engagement is designed to help us to ensure we are achieving our specific well-being outcomes. These outcomes link to wellbeing objectives in the Corporate Plan (2016-2020) which in turn reflect the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. to explore service users' experiences of choice, involvement in the care process, and having their voice heard. This is to ensure we are meeting our responsibilities as a service as well as working with other services to ensure a joint approach.
- 1.3 A report is produced in response to each consultation for each service and an action plan is developed to address areas identified for improvement across Social Services. Service managers are encouraged to respond to these with plans to address improvements.
- 1.4 The programme incorporates a wide and varied methodology and methods are always tailored to each service area. Questionnaires are developed with the

citizen's requirements in mind, and also the restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic, for example, electronic formats or video conferencing was used, and symbolic formats were developed electronically for people with additional learning requirements.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

2.1 Questionnaires/interview questions are developed for individual services; however, all follow a structure that enables us to gain feedback in relation to the following:

- **Information and Advice:** How citizens feel about the initial information advice and the information they received throughout the COVID pandemic.
- **Communication during the COVID 19 Pandemic:** We explored what methods of communication were used and how citizens and families felt this worked.
- **Support:** Overall satisfaction with care and support received and the impact our service has had on citizens' and carers' wellbeing overall.
- **Recommendations:** Future service developments based on feedback and what respondents felt could be improved.

2.2 Outcomes from citizen engagement align with specific wellbeing objectives and support the delivery of services that improve the well-being of citizens and their families. This is reflected in the content of our Annual Director's Report, to highlight how people are shaping our services.

2.3 Citizens have become accustomed to newer and more diverse ways of communicating with the service, and most had felt happy with these. It was especially effective where services had to close, but staff remained in regular contact with citizens to keep them informed and updated with developments. Staff maintained this so that citizens and their families were kept updated. Although support looked very different throughout the COVID pandemic, citizens appreciated the continuing contact with service providers. Many missed the social interaction opportunities when services had to close, and others felt isolated and more in need of support, so the contact was valuable to them.

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

3.1 Thinking of the long term: The outcome of the consultation enables services to be aware of, and plan to address, the well-being of current and future generations. Capturing citizens' experiences of what works well particularly during the pandemic, and what could be improved allows us to focus on developing preventative services and ensuring timely support. In addition, we are gaining an understanding of the service further to the COVID pandemic and how to improve how we use technology to engage with the community. This aligns with Wellbeing Objective 1: "To work with and for our communities", specifically objective 1.2 – Work innovatively, using technology. We are aiming

to understand how well we are providing person-centred care and support that is in accordance with citizens individual strengths (Wellbeing Objective 3.3 and 3.5).

- 3.2 Prevention:** We have a duty under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) to promote the wellbeing of people who need care and support. Through our engagement programme, we can identify what is currently working to promote their wellbeing and understand what works at earlier stages for a more preventative approach. Through our engagement, we gain an understanding of how we can help to maintain and improve citizens' physical wellbeing and how well we are providing opportunities for this through our services (wellbeing objective 3.1). Understanding the underlying causes of issues citizens face can facilitate earlier intervention. Exploring risks identified by citizens in service provision could further enhance their well-being in a timely way. Effectively engaging with citizens will facilitate the provision of more proactive support for those in receipt of care and support in the future.
- 3.3 Integration:** The citizen engagement programme is integrated in its approach through exploring experiences of the different stages of the service provision and how teams could work better together to provide more of a seamless experience. We ensure that we ask questions that acknowledge the interdependence that exists between the well-being goals and the outcomes support us to identify opportunities to simplify working arrangements (Wellbeing Objective 1.4, working in partnership to provide more seamless health and social care services).
- 3.4** Our citizen engagement work helps us to understand where integration is already in place and working but also to see progress that has been made to ensure that citizens have access to quality advice, care and support from integrated mechanisms. Feedback will increase our knowledge about how well this is working. This supports wellbeing objective 3 – to support people at home and in their community.
- 3.5 Collaboration:** The planning stages of the Social Services Citizen Engagement programme incorporate working with other agencies such as the third sector and health to ensure any existing engagement work can be expanded or developed to meet the requirements of our work. This ensures that the collective impact of our work is maximised. The engagement programme also considers existing engagement activities across the Council to ascertain whether any of the work might inform or benefit the programme. This will ensure we avoid duplication, and support collaboration between departments. This aligns with Wellbeing Objective 3.4 as we aim to work in partnership to provide more seamless health and social care services.
- 3.6** This annual report is also a reflection of collaboration with the individual services to support their own specific service plans. We work with teams across the service to ensure that question areas are related to and consistent with corporate engagement objectives and those of Adult and Children's Services.
- 3.7 Involvement:** By ensuring we engage people effectively we have recognised how important it is to involve people in decisions that affect them, in particular

through the COVID pandemic which has drastically impacted services and will have a long-lasting effect on citizens and their future generations.

- 3.8** The citizen and carer engagement process incorporates lived experience of all stakeholders to shape the service. By enabling citizens to participate in this work particularly after the pandemic, they are able to understand how this happens. We have developed a broad range of engagement and consultation approaches to enable us to effectively engage with our citizens. User groups (for example our 15 Plus representative group) have also been fully involved in the development of question areas and methodological considerations. This aligns with Wellbeing Objective 1.1 – through improving how we involve, engage and communicate with others about our work decisions. In addition, we are exploring opportunities to maximise our use of digital platforms to enhance our reach and engagement with and for children and young people and their families.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** Consultation and engagement are provided through existing budget arrangements.

Employment

- 4.2** There are no direct employment implications associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** We must engage with citizens and their families to ensure that we are discharging our responsibilities under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 4.4** Through consultation methodologies, we will obtain equalities information and improve our understanding of the diverse needs of the community, so that groups of people protected under the Equality Act 2010 can better access Council Services in the future.
- 4.5** The citizen engagement programme incorporated Government Guidance as a result of COVID at all times and methods were adapted to ensure social distancing measures were complied with.

5. Background Papers

Reports to Health Living & Social Care Scrutiny Committee, 15th October 2019; 9th October 2018 and 9th October 2017.

The annual citizen and carer consultation for 2020/21 took place during the height of the COVID 19 pandemic, where restrictions were at their height, and social care staff were under extreme pressure. As a result, citizens and carers were considerably reliant on the service to maintain relationships, and support wellbeing.

Staff in particular were often under additional pressure due to COVID related absences, and anxiety was experienced by many due to rapidly changing guidance and unprecedented demands in both professional and personal lives.

The last year has been unprecedented and there was pressure on all services, and we specifically wanted to know how effectively we have communicated and supported people throughout the pandemic.

This annual report provides an overview of the areas we consulted on and recommendations for development.

These are:

Information and Advice

Communication

Support

Recommendations

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the consultation is

- To consult with all citizens and carers (where possible) who have received care and support from social services
- To ensure that people are receiving a high standard of information, communication, care and support from the service
- To identify areas of good practice and improvement.
- To gauge the direction of development of the service in the future

Scope of the engagement programme:

Adult Services

Residential service (and carers/relatives)

Vale Drug and Alcohol Service

Adult Placement Service

Vale Community Resource Service

Day services (and carers/relatives)

Children and Young People Services

Children Looked After

Placements and Permanency

Adoption

Families First Advice Line

Flying Start

Leaving Care/15 Plus Team

Child Health & Disability

Information and Advice



Key Themes

Initial information and advice provided was of a high standard in many services; it was in an appropriate language, in a clear format, and gave a good overview of the service.

Carers accessed specific information via online chats and video calls. Many had been advised about the Cardiff and Vale Carers Gateway which provides information and support to unpaid carers in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. Telephone support had also been useful or citizens particularly for those who had been accustomed to seeing social care staff regularly. Young people felt they knew who to speak to about their care and support, although some would have liked more specific advice.

Most services had provided information or advice about how the service could support citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic/lockdown period and how the support had been adapted.

"Lots of information - shared in manageable chunks. Opportunities to ask questions."

"The information evening was very positive, and gave plenty of information needed."

"It was very informative and gave a really good overview of the process"

Adoption Service

"Communication has always been very good and kept updated re any change in policies or procedures"

"The service is provided by very welcoming staff that always try to help with any query we have."

"Communication has always been very good and kept updated re any change in policies or procedures"

Adult Placement Service

"Citizens have had all their questions answered in a way they understand"

"The day service is keeping in contact regularly"

"The day centre phone regularly to check we are ok"

Day Services

"We felt listened to and understood"

"I rang to be put forward onto a support course and I finished the call with positive results".

"Listened and were reassuring and helpful."

Families First Advice Line

Emerging issues

- Although many appreciated the information and advice through the COVID pandemic, many remained concerned about the impact of COVID on the ability of the service to support them, and consequently, their wellbeing.
- People missed the support but acknowledged the support the service attempted to provide through other methods of contact.
- In some cases citizens suggested that not enough is known about services and support and more information should be available earlier on in the involvement.
- Good quality information and advice was even more valuable than ever in such an uncertain time.
- Citizens felt they needed information to be clear at the start and the process explained clearly to all citizens and their families/carers.
- Some young people had not yet met their most recent social worker at the time of consultation due to the pandemic.

"We have weekly video calls discussing what we have been doing and offering help or advice if we need it"

"The day centre phone regularly to check we are ok"

Day Services

"Communication has always been very good and we have been kept updated regarding any change in policies or procedures"

"The service is provided by very welcoming staff that always try to help with any query we have".

"Our project worker is amazing and always let me know of any changes or updates"

Adult Placement Service

"We communicate weekly mainly –but I can always phone in the meantime. Always texts me back ASAP if I text them."

"I have been given websites to look at which were quite useful. It helps you to know that the information has been provided is sound."

"Couldn't have done it alone. Having a constant connection and not feeling judged really made a difference".

Vale Alcohol and Drug

Service

"Pleased to be able to communicate with the residents via other methods such as video calls".

"We have tried new ways of visiting and seeing people although technology doesn't always allow this"

"We can speak to anyone in the home. All are very helpful and they always keep us updated"

Residential

Service

"Social workers have been in regular contact via a variety of means".

"I have 2-3 calls a week from my supervising social worker; they've been amazing"

"Good communication and easy access to support"

Fostering

Service

Emerging Issues

- Communication mechanisms have adapted considerably since the COVID Pandemic, some in a positive way, but in other ways it has become more challenging with some technological issues, or reduced resources.
- Social care staff have done their utmost to overcome barriers to communication with citizens however some feel that more could be done to communicate more frequently and consistently.

- Newer methods of communication used include video calls and WhatsApp. Many citizens have preferred to use the telephone as they are not as comfortable with video contact. Others are willing to learn and gain the technological skills to enable this.

Support



Key Themes

Many citizens and their families struggled with not having social contact when services had to close/reduce support. Not experiencing social interaction was the most challenging aspect of the service during the COVID pandemic.

Some services continued to provide support as much as possible which was appreciated. Young people who were looked after valued the contact they had with their social worker although sometimes they felt this could have been for longer.

People felt less involved with their care and support this year due to the pandemic but still felt they had been included in decisions related to their care. Their views had been sought about their care plans but some young people felt that decisions had been made without their views considered.

Overall people acknowledged the determination of the service to continue to provide care and support. They felt safe, and felt they had been treated with dignity and respect by social care staff. Wellbeing of citizens and their families has also been promoted through the care and support they have received.

Day Services

"They are doing my shopping and going to help with my domestic issues."

"(Receiving a hot meal from the day service) is important to her because she is unable to cook herself a hot meal".

"They give us a ring to make sure we are all right and collects shopping for us when we need it"

Children Looked After

"(Social services has) listened to what I have to say and changed things within reason."

"(Placed) me with a very loving family"

"(Social Services) is available if I need support or help"

"(You have helped me) become more confident and healthy"

"(My social worker) has explained the care system and what will happen when I turn 15."

Child Health and Disability Service (Direct Payments Service)

"We were very lucky to employ a new personal assistant. It has given my son the opportunity to go out once a week"

"They are usually brilliant and I can get support on the phone when I need to from Direct Payments"

"We were very lucky to employ a new personal assistant. It has given my son the opportunity to go out once a week"

Fifteen Plus Team

"Helped me to join groups and come to cookery workshops. Given me more opportunities".

"Everything was good in my life once I had moved out of the situation."

"The support has been good"

"The places I've been sent to and the support I have had has all helped."

Residential Services

"Very satisfied with the care and support provided by the staff."

"Everything - virtually everything. Cannot complain about anything. The staff are very approachable."

"Feel safe and secure especially in relation to COVID protection."

"Still meet up and do things. Played skittles one day. Had a link to see an orchestra play. Had hairdressers. Help with other things like giving out tea".

VCRS

"Absolutely, totally impressed by the carers: So professional and kind excellent staff"

"Sitting and talking to me - lovely to see people. Did a lot for me mentally"

"They used their training and kept rigidly to the guidelines with personal protection equipment"

"With a lot of encouragement got me through a bad spell in my life"

Emerging Issues:

- Most were satisfied with the support they received during the lockdown but some were not. Citizens needed further reassurance about the procedures that are going to be put into place once the services reopen.
- Concerns about mental health of both staff and citizens increased significantly during this time along with concerns about the situation during the winter months.
- Some families felt they needed more respite hours so that they can spend more quality time with other family members.
- Citizens felt that sometimes paperwork to complete can be unnecessarily time consuming.
- Young people feel there should be more one to one support for them.
- Citizens acknowledged that social care staff did their best under the very difficult circumstances.
- Families feel extremely stretched to provide the social stimuli that services provide, however they appreciate that it is a very challenging situation for staff to address.

Recommendations

Social Services will ensure the following is incorporated into service development to underline the need for timely intervention and prevention and encourage a more joined-up approach.

Information and Advice

Address some of the inconsistencies of the information received and ensure that citizens are receiving enough at the right time.

Ensure information that is signposted to is up to date and relevant for the citizen concerned.

Ensure that information focuses on accessing care and support within their area; the types of support services available; and how to raise concerns about the wellbeing of people who appear to have needs for care and support.

Ensure that all citizens know who their social worker/key worker is and how to contact them if they need to.

Communication

Ensure communication is provided in accordance with the citizens' needs.

Ensure that young people are provided with consistent information on a regular basis.

Where staff are unable to respond as quickly as they would like, this must be explained to the citizen so that expectations are met.

Ensure effective communication processes are implicit whether in the social care planning, delivery or reviewing processes. Communication needs must be noted in care and support plans, for reference by all professionals working with citizens.

Support

Ensure that all citizens are made to feel involved in their care plan development

Ensure all are asked their views during reviews and that these views are responded to and considered in service delivery.

More opportunities are required to meet other citizens in similar roles, for example other care providers.

The wellbeing of staff and citizens must be foremost in service provision. This must be explicit in care planning and work planning.