

Meeting of:	Live Well Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 08 July 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Live Well Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Annual Review of Commissioned Services to Adults with a Care and Support Need
Purpose of Report:	To outline the activity undertaken regarding commissioned services for adults with care and support needs during 2024/25, and the priority actions for 2025/26
Report Owner:	Director of Social Services
Responsible Officer:	Operational Manager, Commissioning and Finance
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Head of Resource Management and Safeguarding Team Manager – Finance Team Manager - Commissioning
Policy Framework:	This report is consistent with the Policy Framework and Budget
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This report outlines the activity with regards to commissioned services for adults with care and support needs, undertaken by the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division during 2024/25. The report also includes the commissioning priorities for the wider directorate 2025/26. 	

Recommendations

1. That Scrutiny Committee consider the on-going challenges and demand for commissioned social care services.
2. That Scrutiny Committee considers the changing population of the Vale of Glamorgan and the associated increase in demand for care services.
3. That Scrutiny Committee also considers the availability of commissioned services for Vale of Glamorgan residents and the associated increase in expenditure.
4. That Scrutiny Committee considers the sustained improved timeliness of providing home care to residents.
5. That Scrutiny Committee continues to receive an Annual Review of Commissioned Services for Adults with a Care and Support Need report.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To provide Members with an opportunity to exercise oversight of this key statutory function.
2. To ensure Members are aware of the demographic changes in the Vale of Glamorgan, the relevant social care legislation, and the impact for commissioning care.
3. To ensure Members are informed of the budget implications of providing more care and at a higher cost and the response of the Council in meeting this increase.
4. To ensure Members are aware of the changed and sustained position with respect to the availability of home care for our residents.
5. Scrutiny receives annual update for their consideration and information.

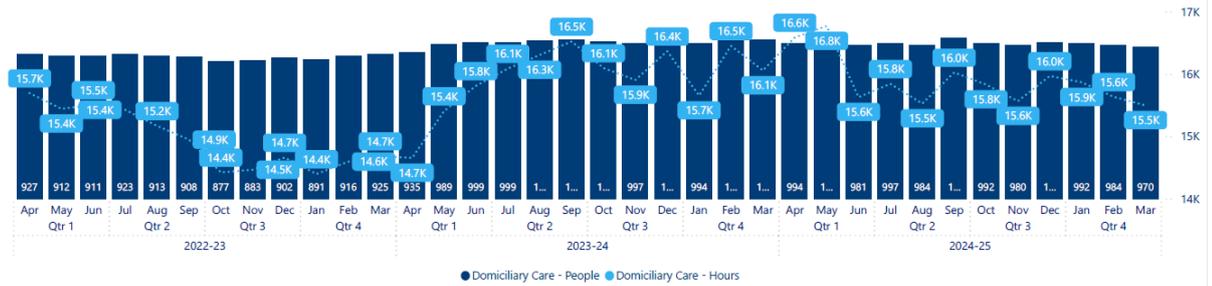
1. Background

- 1.1 Under the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act) adults who believe they have social care needs that may affect their health, safety or independence can make a referral for a care and support assessment. The process for assessing care and support needs is based on what matters to the citizen, considering their personal strengths, and support available from family members, friends or others in the community. The assessment usually includes questions about:
 - Personal circumstances
 - What matters to the citizens – their personal outcomes
 - What is stopping them from achieving these outcomes and possible solutions
 - Risks to the citizen or to other people if these outcomes are not achieved
 - Their personal strengths and capabilities

Should the assessment evidence the need for care and support, work is undertaken with the citizen to agree what type of support would suit them best, and when and how often they would like / need that support. Support provision takes many forms from attending day services to residential care. The Commissioning and Finance Teams within the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division commission such care for Social Services, and work with social work locality teams to ensure that a bespoke service is secured for the citizen that will meet their care and support needs, and their personal outcomes.

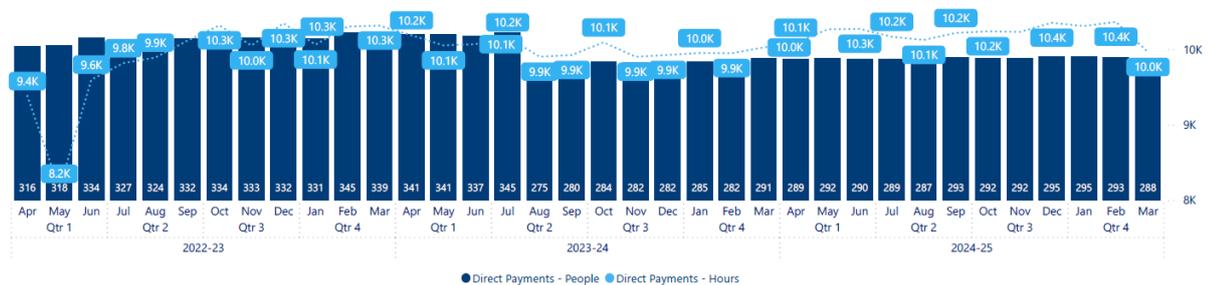
- 1.2 The demand for social care services for citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan has been progressively increasing since the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014, which came in to force on 1st April 2016.
- 1.3 There continues to be recruitment and retention challenges, and some social care staff are leaving the profession for jobs in other sectors with better terms and conditions. These issues are due to many factors, including the cost-of-living crisis, registration requirements with Social Care Wales, working patterns and hours and the responsibilities that come with providing social care services. This has been eased in some areas with the recruitment of migrant workers, which has brought additional capacity. Reforming immigration policy may change the availability of migrant workers in the future and in doing so impact on the availability of care services.
- 1.4 The Vale of Glamorgan has an ageing and growing population, with the proportion of people aged over 65 and over 85 projected to rise, from 29,207 in 2021 to 35,158 by 2031, an increase of 20%. Census 2021 information shows that between 2011 and 2021 there was an increase of 24.9% in people aged 65 and over in the Vale of Glamorgan; this compares to an increase of 17.7% for the whole of Wales. The growth of the population aged 65 and over is particularly prevalent in the Western Vale. In mid-2013 the Western Vale outgrew Barry as the most populous area of the Vale of Glamorgan for those aged 65 and over. In mid-2019 an estimated 9,737, 34% of the Vale of Glamorgan's 28,347 people aged 65 and over live in the Western Vale.
- 1.5 Many citizens and their families are choosing to receive care in their own homes, rather than through residential or nursing placements. There has been an overall increase in the number of people receiving **care and support at home** (home care) over the last 2 years from 925 to 970 people, but a decrease noted between March 2024 to March 2025 (see graph). Demand clearly fluctuates however there is an overall increasing trend over the years. This increase reflects the ongoing demand and need for services and growth in population. The decrease in the last year can be attributed in part to the work undertaken in reablement services to reduce the need for ongoing care and support at home through rehabilitation support. In addition, quarterly quality assurance is undertaken by senior managers to assess all requests for support to divert people to local resources and support services where this can best meet needs.

Domiciliary Care (RCB3) & (RCB4)

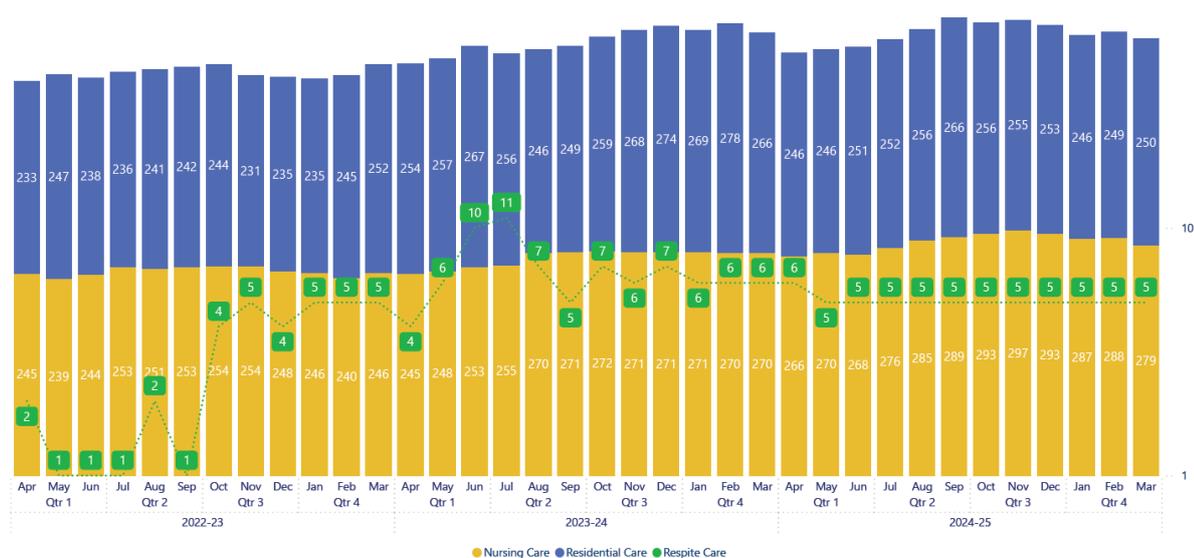


1.6 An alternative to domiciliary care to deliver care in the home, is the use of a Direct Payments. Direct payments are a way for people to arrange their own care and support to improve choice, control and independence. Direct payments are not a form of income but are paid specifically to buy services or equipment. There has been an overall slight decrease in the number of people choosing to access care and support via a Direct Payment with number of care hours increasing slightly between 2023 to 2025. There is a Direct Payment project group in place across social service to improve the potential reach and use of Direct Payments as an alternative to traditional Domiciliary Care at home. In addition, Direct Payment workers received a 12.35-6.5% pay uplift in 2025/26 to ensure that all Direct Payment workers within the Vale of Glamorgan are paid a Real Living Wage.

Direct Payments (RCB3) & (RCB4)



1.7 With citizens living independently for longer they are entering **residential/nursing care** later, and with more complex needs. The main pressures on placements are for residential dementia and nursing dementia placements. In addition, due to the increased frailty of people staying at home there is increased demand for respite and emergency placements often for people with nursing needs. Nursing homes tend not to offer respite bookings in advance and external providers of respite have inflated costs associated with short term stays, and minimum bookings of 4 weeks. The below shows the gradual increase in demand for both residential and nursing placements with a maintained use of respite. The ability to deliver respite is further impacted on by the increase in permanent residents within homes.



- 1.8** There is also a growing need for services for younger people with early onset dementia that struggles to be met by existing services. The Commissioning Team have been supporting a local nursing home provider in their plans for supporting citizens with younger onset dementia. This provision is nearing completion and visits have been planned in partnership between case management and commissioning teams to review this ahead of opening.
- 1.9** Many of the existing care homes are based in older buildings that do not necessarily meet the needs of citizens with a dementia. These buildings require investment to maintain standards or adhere to regulations set by Care Inspectorate Wales. The Council's own residential homes have had capital funding over the last 3 years to improve technology and the home environment, designed to make them dementia friendly homes.
- 1.10** The Population Needs Assessment for Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan (PNA) was considered by Scrutiny Committee and subsequently Council. It was published on 1st April 2022 in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014. [Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Population Needs Assessment - Cardiff & Vale Integrated Health & Social Care Partnership \(cvihsoc.co.uk\)](https://www.cvihsoc.co.uk)
- 1.11** A Market Stability Report has been completed, which assesses the overall sufficiency of care and support in the Vale of Glamorgan, and the stability of the regulated care provision for adults. [Document Library – CAVRPB](#). This report, together with the PNA and Market Position Statement, is used to review our commissioning priorities for preventative, integrated, citizen-centred care and support services for the coming years.
- 1.12** The Council's Local Delivery Plan relating to the Market Stability Report was presented to Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee in December 2024. It reports that there will continue to be an increased demand for home care services and respite. Services will need to continue to focus on prevention of escalation in care and support needs based on the citizens' required outcomes.

- 1.13** The implementation of quality assurance visits to care homes in the Vale of Glamorgan have allowed for exploration of the lived experience of citizens within care settings. The Commissioning Quality Officers (previously Quality Assurance Officers) have identified themes for potential areas of development, these have been shared with providers who welcome the partnership approach to continuous improvement and recognition of good practice. Work continues with partners to build a regional quality assurance framework for use in monitoring the quality-of-service provision, against the required outcomes.
- 1.14** Budgets are under constant pressure, and, despite careful management and oversight, there was an overspend of approximately £2.8m on the community care and residential / nursing provision budgets for the 2024/25 financial year.
- 1.15** Within the last 12 months there have been no care home closures within the Vale of Glamorgan. One new care home has been acquired by a current provider, increasing their overall market share in the county to 5 homes. A new care home has opened in Wenvoe providing additional provision at the luxury end of the market. One additional learning disability provision has opened during 2024/25.
- 1.16** In respect of domiciliary care providers, the Approved Provider list was closed in September 2024 because of saturated capacity for domiciliary care in the market. 8 new providers were added between April 2024 and September 2024. At point of closure there were 53 providers on the Approved Provider list. 22 of these providers are signed up to delivering a Your Choice model of care.
- 1.17** The Vale of Glamorgan is one of a minority of Local Authorities in Wales that has internal residential care home provision. One benefit of this mixed economy of care enables significant risks to be managed when placements have closed and urgent transition of residents in terms of placements is required. Families and residents continue to report their satisfaction with the high-quality care of services provided by the Council's internal residential homes. A change in need presented across our population has triggered a review of our internal care homes to assess current demand and opportunities to broaden delivery. This review will be undertaken in 2025/26 and inform any future planning in this area.
- 1.18** The Council continued to enable the Welsh Government commitment to providing funding for the Real Living Wage (RLW) for workers in Social Care. Our fee setting process for 2025/26 for domiciliary and residential/nursing care has included fee increases that allow for the increase in the RLW to be paid to those staff in registerable roles. We have increased Direct Payment rates so that they now support the RLW being made available to staff in registerable roles.
- 1.19** Commissioned services are subject to regular monitoring and review. Any concerns raised regarding providers are dealt with under the Council's Escalating Concerns Protocol or contract management arrangements as appropriate. A multi-agency Joint Quality Assurance meeting is held every month to discuss providers of concern but also highlights positive practice within service provision.

- 1.20** There is an on-going programme for recommissioning social care services. The latest service to undergo this process was the new commissioning of accommodation services for young people and a regional Advocacy service for adults. The new contract for advocacy started in April 2025 with a new provider supporting advocacy across the region and the incumbent provider supporting individuals with a learning disability retaining their contract. Regular monitoring visits with citizens, families and staff have taken place since, with feedback being given to the provider for them to act upon as necessary.
- 1.21** Over the next 12 months there are several services that are commissioning priorities, including mobilisation of accommodation services for young people, Support Services for Direct Payment Recipients, Older Persons Day Opportunities and Day Support for people with Learning Disabilities.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** There are 43 care homes for adults in the Vale of Glamorgan registered with Care Inspectorate Wales. Of these 9 are nursing homes, 10 are predominately residential for older people, 22 for citizens with a learning disability and for citizens with a mental health issue or acquired brain injury. We are supporting one further home through the accreditation process for people with a Learning Disability. The new nursing home provision in Wenvoe opened during 2024.
- 2.2** Several other homes within the Vale of Glamorgan and across the region now charge, what the Vale of Glamorgan would consider, a high-cost weekly fee and as a result we have implemented a high-cost placement process for consideration of any placement requests.
- 2.3** In 2024/25 the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis to social care providers remained, with reports of further increases in the price of utilities, food and equipment, insurance and the introduction of additional employer NI contributions on 1st April 2025. The Council remains committed to funding social care providers to pay the Real Living Wage (RLW) and the settlement from Welsh Government has allowed in part for this in the 2025/26 fee increases. Following provider feedback and a reasonable response to our cost of care exercise, we amended the sliding scale of fee increases to care home providers. Based on the Council's standard contract rate and the currently weekly fees being charged. Providers who accept the Council's standard contract rate received a 9.8% increase, with further increases applied down to 6.48% for those care homes that currently charge the highest weekly fees.
- 2.4** In 2024/25 we worked in partnership with neighbouring authorities and the health board to understand the variance in cost of care for social care activities in nursing provision. Analysis of information indicated that nursing placements incur a 5% increase in social care charges relating to workforce support, task time and activity outside of health-related tasks. Following provider feedback, we amended the amount of our standard contract rate to reflect in part this additional cost. Providers who accept the Council's standard contract rate for nursing placements received an 11% uplift, with further increases applied down to 6.48% for those care homes that currently charge the highest weekly fees.

As a result of these uplifts, we have seen a small increase in the number of placements now made at standard contract rates with no additional costs added on.

- 2.5** Domiciliary care agencies were again subject to a sliding scale of fee increases. Those agencies that accept the Council's standard hourly rate received a 7% increase, with other increases between 4.84% and 6.2% applied based on current hourly rates.
- 2.6** The uplifts for both domiciliary agencies and care homes should be sufficient to cover the increase in the RLW and the increases to the National Insurance rises and most of the feedback received has been positive.
- 2.7** A small number of domiciliary care providers have highlighted their concern in relation to the decrease in demand for services and the impact this is having on financial viability and the ability to retain staff. Whilst we have not seen any closures during 2024/25, the financial sustainability of domiciliary care agencies is a risk that we are monitoring.

The financial viability of care homes providers is less of a concern. Monthly monitoring of void placements is undertaken within the Joint Quality Assurance meeting. Pre-pandemic, the occupancy for older persons' residential care homes was around 85% and nursing homes 90%. In March 2021, average occupancy levels fell to 71% for residential and 60% for nursing homes. As at the end of March 2024, residential homes reported average occupancy levels of 95% and nursing homes 94%. This position has been maintained with occupancy levels in March 2025 of 93% and 95%.

- 2.8** We continue to deliver and sustain reduced waiting times for domiciliary care with the average wait for service set up being 3 days, a maintained position from March 2024. Whilst we have reduced the numbers waiting for packages this remains an area of fluctuating demand, and the situation remains subject to weekly monitoring. Monitoring includes packages established, increases to care and support, hospital admissions, care home placement and delayed discharges. Our performance in this area is some of the best in Wales.
- 2.9** Several providers have built a considerable reliance on migrant workers on sponsorship arrangements. Of the 25 agencies asked in 2023/24, 10 had not engaged in the sponsorship programme. The remaining 15 agencies had a total of 395 staff, 125 (31.6%) of whom were on sponsorship arrangements. In 2024/25, 46 domiciliary care agencies were surveyed across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. 21 providers responded to this survey. 12 responded to say they employed workers on a visa with a total of 174 sponsored staff. 9 responded to say they did not employ staff on a licence. We plan to review these findings throughout the year to gain a better understanding of the total number of migrant workers within care roles and the wider workforce needs across the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.10** Conditions for the continuation of the sponsorship arrangement is the ability to evidence 37 hours of work per week for staff employed in direct care worker roles. During 2024/25 we experienced instances of the Home Office challenging

providers on this arrangement and investigations into organisations ability to monitor and update their workforce make up. There is a risk of the current overseas carers losing their sponsorship arrangement where hours of work cannot be met, in addition to new issues noted of the potential risk to these care workers in the workplace where threat of visa revocation is perceived. The Commissioning and Finance Teams are responding proactively and in partnership with colleagues in Cardiff to understand further the needs of our migrant workforce to ensure sustainability of services in these areas.

- 2.11** The Your Choice outcome based domiciliary care scheme has increased during 2024/25, with 22 providers now being part of the scheme. The onboarding process was paused in December 2024 to allow for an in-depth partnership review of understanding, outcomes and impact. This review concluded in March 2025 with all current Your Choice providers, social workers and senior leaders contributing to a developing set of draft principles. A review of the Your Choice policy is now underway and a relaunch/restart planned for September 2025.

It is the aim of the Directorate for all citizens to continue to be transferred to the Your Choice scheme where it is appropriate to do so with clear information provided to support social work discussions with citizens and an increase choice for citizens in how they receive their care and support. The Provider Support Group continued to meet throughout the year and the Your Choice Project Group restarted. Reconciliation meetings have taken place on a quarterly basis with all Your Choice providers.

- 2.12** The positive relationship with social care providers continues, with monthly forums taking place. These forums now include colleagues from the UHB and Public Health Wales on a regular basis, which has been welcomed by providers.
- 2.13** There is daily communication between the Brokerage Section and domiciliary providers to ensure the best use of staffing when delivering domiciliary care. Due to this initiative providers have been able to put 'runs' of calls together in smaller geographical areas of the Vale supporting our commitment to Project Zero.
- 2.14** During 2024/25, 30 e-bikes were secured to support domiciliary care workers to mobilise more efficiently across the region. This pilot has received positive feedback from care workers who have been able to increase their work capacity and reduce costs associated with travel (car or public transport). At the end of March 2025 all 30 e-bikes were transferred to care agencies and their use will be monitored throughout 2025/26 as a continued commitment and contribution to Project Zero.

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

- 3.1** There are robust mechanisms in place with colleagues in Adult Services and Children and Young People's Services to ensure that the commissioned services meet the short and long-term needs of citizens. To ensure that providers have

security in the services being commissioned, most contract terms are for 5 years plus an option to extend.

- 3.2** Several services are commissioned as information or ‘signposting’ services for citizens who do not require care and support but wish to access assistance from a third party. The work of the Performance and Information Team includes Family Information, the Disability Index the Carers Services and [DEWIS](#).
- 3.3** Commissioned services are in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 3.4** A Regional Commissioning Board is in place, chaired by the Head of Resource Management & Safeguarding in the Vale of Glamorgan, to ensure an aligned regional approach with partners to commissioning services is undertaken wherever possible.
- 3.5** Commissioning tasks, including procurement of services, involve citizens. It is vital that we ensure commissioned services are appropriate to meet not only people’s care and support needs but also the outcomes they wish to achieve. An example of this during 2024/25 was the recommissioning of accommodation services for young people. A young person was supported by members of the Commissioning Team to develop questions for potential providers during the interview stage of the process. This part of the evaluation was given equal weighting to the Council’s staff panel.
- 3.6** As part of our Section 16 responsibilities under the Act, engagement with Third Sector Providers has increased, with an initial engagement session being held in April 2024. A series of meetings have taken place in 2024/25 and workshop topics on the National Commissioning Code of Practice and Commissioning for Social value are planned for the coming months.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no Climate Change and Nature Implications as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The budgets for commissioned social care services in 2024/25 was £55.5m, with a projected year end out-turn of £58.97m. Income is received from various sources including assessed charges from citizens, UHB contributions to jointly commissioned care, and the Social Care Workforce grant. This grant has remained static over the last 2 years with no uplifts in amounts, which has had an impact on the resource available for both Adult’s Community Care and the placement budget within Children and Young People’s Services.
- 5.2** The community care budget for 2025/26 is £60.7m which is an increase of £5.15m from the 2024/25 budget.

Employment

5.3 There are no employment implications associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

5.4 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

6. Background Papers

Market Stability Report to Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee,
3rd December 2024.