

Local Authority Social Services Annual Report 2023/24

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Governance Arrangements

Meeting dates	Deadlines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMT - 10th October 2024 • CMT – To be circulated. • Scrutiny – 21st October 2024 • Pre-Cabinet – 4th November 2024 • Cabinet – 18th November 2024 • Council – 11th December 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9th October 2024 • To be circulated • 10th October 2024 • 23rd October 2024 • 6th November 2024 • 2nd December, 2024

Introduction by the Director of Social Services



This is my **eleventh** annual report as Statutory Director of Social Services in Carmarthenshire and my **fourteenth** as a Director of Social Services. There is a statutory requirement for me to report on the performance annually to demonstrate the improvements and the significant challenges we faced during 2023/24. I also set our priorities for the current year 2024/25. As always, the report remains in draft as we engage with staff and elected members. This enables me to take on board feedback as it progresses through to final sign off.

2023/24 was a challenging year in Local Government where demand, expectations of the public, cross sector labour shortages and post pandemic impacts coalesced in an unprecedented year of challenge and change for Social Services.

Pressures impacting on Children's Social Services have included increased rates of poverty created by the cost-of-living crisis, the deterioration of Children's mental health post Pandemic and in their relationship with social media. This, alongside the UK wide market failure in the provision of placements and a national reduction in the number of social workers practicing created a perfect storm for the service in 2023. Locally we saw long standing officer's retirements, shortages in front line Social Workers and leadership changes that have all created change that we are now firmly on the way to managing with excellent corporate understanding of the support needed.

Increased support began in the summer of 2023 when performance reporting highlighted unprecedented pressure on workforce, budgets, demand and placements. As a council we responded corporately with an unprecedented level of financial intervention. The service received a 7.5 Million injection of funding and a plan that sought to address pressures with funding for placements and packages of care alongside millions of investment in new models of care, an in house residential service, additional social work and a £600,000 traineeship scheme to ensure supply of social workers now and in the future. I continue to chair a corporate board that continues to support and challenge the service.

In 2024 we have expanded the service and appointed to dozens of social work posts and are on track to be fully staffed and agency free in this financial year. This creates the foundation we need to improve social work practice that will better keep families together. We have also created 5 local homes for Children and Young People that are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC) and are on schedule to offer places locally for all new arrivals sent under the mandatory Home Office Scheme. Pathways around early intervention is improving and the growth in the number of looked after children has slowed with the same number of looked after children in September 2024 as there were in March 2024. We continue to have the lowest number (by population) of looked after children in Wales and the hard work is underway to reduce further where it is safe to do so.

The priorities for the board in the coming year will be to accelerate and support the development of additional in-house residential placements, launch a new fostering

payments scheme and agree a new resource eligibility scheme for children with disabilities. These are vital reforms and investment is in place to ensure the future sustainability of children's services. The foundation we now have will allow the service to focus on practice and support in families throughout 2024/25.

I was delighted our Youth Justice Service was graded by the UK Probation inspectorate as 'Outstanding'. This was the best in Wales and was judged to be amongst the best services of its kind in the UK. At the heart of this amazing performance was a stable workforce, excellent leadership and a commitment to prevention. Attributes we seek to reflect across all services for children.

For Older people we continue to focus on responding to the 3% a year growth in the number of those with frailty and needing care as our growth in numbers needing a service grows even faster than national trends. Looking ahead the council is facing growth of more than 60% in those needing care by 2043 and will need to consider this reality in our budget setting moving forward as savings become harder to deliver. A sustainability plan will be published in March 2025 and the council will need to be in a position to increase funding for the huge growth in numbers of older people year on year if we are to meet statutory duties and maintain service standards. Preparation for an even bigger annual increase in the growth of our over 85 population in 2030 is underway. As with children's services markets are taking advantage of growth in numbers for residential care and whilst we are currently coping, the sector is becoming increasingly fragile and expensive. As with children's services we see continued consolidation of the sector with large, often hedge fund backed, companies running multiple brands seeking monopolies through acquisitions and requiring top ups of up to 25% on our fee rate.

A strategy to develop two new in-house residential nursing homes will be essential and we have advanced plans to build one 60 bedded and one 72 bedded residential/nursing home. It is likely that we will require up to 30% of the capital costs for these if we are to have them in place by 2027. This is a radical change from established public/ private narratives as our improved efficiency in house, critical mass and the lack of profit means we can now deliver care cheaper than those homes requiring top ups whilst providing better terms and conditions for staff.

We continue to successfully run integrated services for older people with our Interim Head of Service successfully deploying services in the community to meet our populations Health and Care needs. Deployment of technology and equipment is increasing, and we have seen more awards and an outstanding CIW inspection report for Llesiant Delta Wellbeing. A key challenge in West Wales is the provision of care to an increasing number of frail people in residential homes and the reduction of nearly 50% in the health board funding of nursing home care beds.

As a result, Carmarthenshire funds almost the highest number of residential beds to population in Wales. Taking frail individuals with high levels of medical care has made individuals harder to place from hospital, residential homes needing increasing large proportions of district nursing time and care homes struggling to meet the high levels of need in their homes without additional staffing. Ensuring assessments in hospital reflect the volatile health needs of frail individuals will be crucial if we are to meet the

needs of this very vulnerable population moving forward. Continued disinvestment in Nursing home care will not be sustainable as this vulnerable population grows. Domiciliary care provision is provided at the Welsh average (down from top quartile 5 years ago) and waits in the community have been dramatically reduced and waiting times for assessment are manageable. Those waiting for discharge from hospital because of social care is at pre pandemic levels, long waits have reduced and, whilst there is still more to do, form a very low proportion of total numbers in hospital. In Learning Disabilities and Mental Health, the service has been successful at containing demand for residential care with a substantial growth in supportive living provision.

As complexity has increased this has been a considerable achievement. We intend to accelerate this still further, moving forward. Our Adult Safeguarding Service continues to perform well, and the service's leadership now takes a lead coordination role in a newly launched Council wide Corporate Safeguarding governance structure. Our Home Care and residential units have all received positive inspections as investment in electronic records and staffing levels continue to improve. Increasing our share of the homecare market consistently above 40% remains challenging as recruitment and retention in the sector was slow even as waiting lists have fallen.

I am pleased to say our regional Safeguarding boards CYSUR (Children's) that I chair and CWMPAS (Adults) goes from strength to strength with strong and consistent partnership that provides critical regional governance for learning in areas such as VAWDASV. We continue to perform well as a region in learning from cases and are the national lead board at developing the new format (SUSR) for case reviews that bring together reviews across a range of areas in a single process.

I am enormously proud of our workforce in the last year and am glad our pay structure for staff across social work and Care rewards them better than almost any other authority in Wales. A strong workforce is the foundation of all our provision, and I hope we can now build on our relative stability to expand our care provision and improve Social Work across all services. We are lucky in Carmarthenshire to have a corporate team that understands and supports Social Services, this teamwork will be essential if we are to meet the challenges in the coming years.

Jake Morgan

Statutory Director for Social Services

Overview of Services Provided

Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care is a large diverse division comprising a range of teams and services: Learning Disability, Mental Health, Substance Misuse, Safeguarding, Day and Respite Services and Home Care.

The impact of the pandemic has been challenging for the social care workforce, and this remains one of our greatest challenges. We have had challenges retaining staff particularly in home care and we have seen an increase in demand and complexity over the last year. These challenges, against the backdrop of financial austerity have resulted in unprecedented challenges for Adult Social Care. Encouragingly secondment initiatives in 2021/22 have seen an improvement in the recruitment and retention in Social Work with qualified individuals now arriving.

Building a sustainable workforce is therefore a key priority and our *'grow our own'* strategy is proving successful. Within home care we have an aggressive recruitment campaign that is beginning to make a difference. To support this, we have streamlined our recruitment processes, introduced additional capacity to support recruitment and improved the grading structure for home care staff.

Within the home care service, the management team have introduced a number of progressive initiatives such as electronic records and more efficient systems to manage HR processes. A recent CIW inspection was very positive and commented on the high standards of care:

"People and their relatives speak highly of the care workers and the care they provide. --- "the carers are a great help, I don't know what I would do without them", "the carers are 'spot on', they visit my gran four times a day, they are fantastic, she couldn't be cared for better which is great to know and see".

In relation to reablement, we have successfully established a triage arrangement for intermediate care with health colleagues; the Home First team. This is having an impact on hospital flow and reducing waiting lists. The team have also won several externally prestigious awards.

A key objective in Adult Social Care has been to develop a range of supported accommodation to reduce the reliance on residential care. This improves outcomes, promotes independence and choice for individuals. This programme of work is also impacting on savings targets for the division, by reducing over provision in some cases. We have established a new governance structure for this work which was identified as an area of improvement last year and this programme is now progressing at pace.

Seven housing schemes have been opened with more to follow this year. Approximately 32 individuals have stepped down from residential care. We are improving our planning mechanisms for those young people in transition and

collaborating with children's services, housing, and commissioning to ensure that young people will be able to remain in their home area on reaching 18.

Our transformation journey in learning disability day opportunities has been wholeheartedly embraced by the staff team who are constantly being innovative including activities in collaboration with leisure. The newly established skills hub in Cross Hands offers arts and crafts, woodwork, skill development and accredited training. The next phase of the skills hub is to progress volunteering and supportive employment schemes which is a significant step in providing people with learning disability and mental health real opportunities to maximise their potential.

Our Respite Centre for learning disability received a very positive CIW inspection, the following are quotes from the report highlighting the impact:

Staff told us "It's a very rewarding place to work, we are a really good team with a great manager". A family member told us "The staff at Tir Einon are fabulous with X and have made him and ourselves as a family feel very welcome. Professionals also praise the leadership and management of the service "The service that is provided by [manager] and her support staff is absolutely second to none.

The investment in Mental Health Services has enabled us to establish a wellbeing pathway across Carmarthenshire which focuses on early intervention and prevention.

Our Wellbeing Service provides:

- An inclusive approach to mental health support
- Utilises a strength-based and preventative approach.
- Aimed to improve the resilience and mental health of adults across Carmarthenshire.

Demand for this service is growing with some positive outcomes being reported from those who have accessed this service. "The service has given me hope for the future" "my worker is very supportive and leaves me feeling positive".

The wellbeing service also presented at a Social Care Wales national conference in 2023 as part of a good practice event.

One of the areas that require an increased focus this year is suicide prevention as we have seen a significant increase in the number of suspected suicides in Carmarthenshire and across the region. In 2023 we established a rapid response to suspected suicide which enables us to reach out immediately to those affected and offer support. We also obtained grant funding to employ an officer to undertake a mapping exercise to identify support and services as well as the barriers for those seeking help. This work will inform our developing prevention strategy. The prevention of suicide and self-harm and the mental health of children and young adults is a priority this year.

In relation to Safeguarding of Adults, we have seen an increase in safeguarding activity and an increase in the complexity of referrals, but we continue to deliver and

continue to be held in high regard in relation to safeguarding and lead on many of the regional projects. The Senior Manager (Safeguarding) is now also the lead for Corporate Safeguarding which is an acknowledgement of the high standards of practice attained in this area of Adult Social Care.

The Substance Misuse Team have also seen increased complexities related to increased substance misuse, but despite the operational pressures, the team continues to be innovative and are progressing several initiatives such as services and accommodation projects for those with Alcohol Related Brain Damage. The additional grant funding to employ two recovery workers is already having an impact. They work directly with individuals to establish and maintain meaningful activities of daily living and promoting independence.

West Wales Shared Lives (WWSL) provides adult placement service across three regions, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, and Pembrokeshire

Feedback from Shared Lives Carer:

“My officer is so kind and helpful. I am not online so she brings her laptop to work on. Nothing is too much trouble for her. She is just a phone call away. I get invitations for outings by post. Thank you.”

We have been improving operational practices whilst reviewing current procedures. We have updated and launched a new Shared Lives website. We have planned recruitment roadshows and champion groups for the remainder of the year with our partners from Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. We have reviewed the training and development programme for Shared Lives Carers and we are reviewing the regional Shared Lives development plan with our partners in Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion. The team have experienced a change in management and they have embraced these changes positively.

K said, “It is good living there, I like sewing, diamond art, swimming at the leisure centre, the walking group, Dance Gold and have started back at yoga, they are all close by at the leisure centre, staff come with me to help make sure I am safe crossing the roads I see some of my friends there. I see my family on weekends. I asked about living in the home and K said “I like my bed, my room and clean it and help with the shopping. I love all the things I do here “. “Today I am going to Techniquet with the others living here and the staff, we are going on the train.

A parent commented, “He volunteers a couple of times at Prince Phillip Hospital and when I called earlier this week, he had no time to talk as he was heading out to do the household food shop, he is like a changed man, he is flourishing and enjoying having greater independence”.

Over the last year, increased demand and complexity have been a consistent feature in all the social work teams in Adult Social Care. This includes our learning disability teams who are responding to the impact of the pandemic on individuals and their families and increasingly responding to complexity and behaviours that challenge. Despite the challenges, the team have continued to deliver a person-centred social work service and successfully transitioned a number of individuals to move into independent living.

Our 0-25 Disability team is a joint team managed and delivered with Children and Family services. The team was introduced in 2020 with the aim of limiting the number of changes of team for disabled children and commencing planning earlier for transition to adulthood. Whilst the model has been successful the team have seen an unprecedented demand for help and support since 2021, an increase of over 40%.

We have also seen increasing numbers of young people with neurodevelopmental conditions and mental health needs who require a high level of support, some of whom need support within residential children's homes. In 23-24 we supported 12 young people at a cost in excess of £3million a year in these settings. Upon turning 18 this group of young people normally require ongoing support from adult social services within a community setting.

A lack of supply of suitable accommodation and support for this group can result in use of adult residential provision to try and meet the young person's needs and manage risk. In most cases this is unnecessary, being overly restrictive for young people and of high cost to the local authority.

Supporting carers to continue in their caring role is a priority for the division, there are Carers Champions in all social work teams and all teams have either completed or are completing the Investors in Carers Awards.

The Substance Misuse Team have recently completed their silver award. The comments from the assessors were very positive. Assessors were impressed with the quality of the evidence, especially within the timescales, which is further evidence that the work is obviously embedded in the settings day-to-day business. "Congratulations and please keep up this good work".

Last year we recognised the need to improve our engagement with carers in the development of services so earlier this year we hosted a conference to ensure a co productive approach to inform this work. A colleague from Social Care Wales commented "This was a wonderful example of co-production, and the day enabled qualitative information to be gathered, so that the voices of carers could be included in planning for support provision.

In order to manage demand going forward, we have to ensure that we have a robust prevention strategy to provide advice, information, assistance, early intervention and timely response to those in crisis. This will allow us to, wherever possible, help people to maintain their independence for as long as possible, and prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and residential care.

Our progression and review team have made progress in stepping people down from residential care and also ensured that we are maximising the independence of individuals and not over providing. This has also had a significant impact on our savings targets. Person centred practice will be at the heart of everything we do. We also work collaboratively with our health partners, third sector and those who use services and their carers and we have listened to them in identifying our priorities for next year. This collaborative approach is key in delivering our service and corporate objectives. Getting this right must be our key focus for the next financial year.

Integrated Services

Integrated Services is a broad division across both Health & Social Care, supporting older people and people with a physical disability or sensory impairment to remain independent within their own homes & communities, for as long as possible.

The division was restructured during the latter part of 22/23 into four pathways that enabled better organisation of support for the population within Carmarthenshire and sought to ensure equity of service. These pathways are:

- Prevention
- Proactive & Planned Care
- System Flow & Urgent Care
- Long Term Care

2023/24 has been a challenging year and unprecedented in terms of both demand for services and the complexity of people requiring care and support. We continue to see a 3% year on year growth in our population demographics, with a particular growth in our over 75 years of age population.

Our hospitals continue to become frequently overwhelmed, with frail older adults being the greatest challenge. Over 70% of the occupied beds in our hospitals are people within this age and health profile. Every day of a hospital stay causes loss of muscle mass and overall deterioration, often requiring some level of care and support to be discharged. Front door turnaround in hospital, reducing length of stay for necessary hospital admissions and preventing admission in the first place is therefore critical to enable us to manage the rapid rise in demand the demographic change that is going to hit us over the coming 10 years. A sustainability strategy for Social Services will be published in March 2025 and will be critical to help the authority plan to meet pressures in the long term.

Social Work teams within the division were re-aligned and re-organised during the middle of 23/24 with teams moving from locality based to an Intake and Assessment structure in November 23. The Intake Team is based in Eastgate Llanelli, along with the Home First/Crisis response teams. It has geographical coverage across the County. There is also a Llanelli long term team and a Carmarthen long term team with the Amman Gwendraeth being split across the two.

All referrals for social work from the Community all go through the Intake Team for screening and triage, with the aim being to respond and put measures in place to prevent a person requiring input from the long-term teams. Data demonstrates that there has been a significant reduction in the number of cases being referred through to long-term social work since the re-alignment.

We continue to develop our multi-award-winning Home First pathway which is a partnership approach with Hywel Dda UHB, Welsh Ambulance Service & Delta Wellbeing. This delivers a single point of access for anyone who requires intermediate care to support hospital discharge and also to avoid an admission in the first instance in the event of a crisis, whether that is medical or social.

Welsh Ambulance support with an Advanced Paramedic Practitioner who triages the '999' stack to identify individuals who could be supported to remain at home with alternative pathways of care and successfully support around 70% of people they intervene with to remain at home. This is heavily supported by Delta Wellbeing Rapid Response who support fallers in the community and successfully manage to keep 96% of people they attend to at home. Overall, this pathway supports on average, 200 people a month, who would have otherwise been conveyed to hospital. This is significant in terms of managing demand from a social care perspective.

Where long-term care is required, we have been reducing the number of people waiting for domiciliary care from both hospital and the community. Our priority is to keep those people waiting for care safe, particularly in the community. This has been a particular strength and the introduction of care and support co-ordinators that we have now made permanent posts in the division, have been a significant support to social work teams in keeping in contact with people.

Providing this regular line of communication with people and their families, has resulted in very low complaint rates relating to waits for care and support and an ability to escalate those who may deteriorate during the time that they are waiting for their care and support to be put in place.

We continue to make best use of the care capacity available by using the releasing time to care methodology to actively reduce care packages where appropriate and release hours of care for those who need them most. Occupational Therapy is at the heart of this model, using their expertise to source equipment solutions to reduce 2 carers down to 1. The capacity of this team will be increased for 24/25 as part of an invest to save project to release further efficiencies and to ensure we are being prudent in our commissioning of care.

We are in the process of developing a Prevention Strategy that will be focusing on Living Well in Carmarthenshire. This will be across Adult Services & Integrated Services. This is an opportunity as a county to understand and highlight what living well in the context of health and wellbeing means to the people of Carmarthenshire and what more we can do to support living well in Carmarthenshire.

The strategy will set out 5 key opportunities which will highlight where we are now with regards to prevention and what more we can do to improve and will be developing an implementation plan for taking these opportunities forward.

As part of this development, we will be engaging with our local communities as to what living well in a health and care context means to them and what can be done to improve opportunities to live well in Carmarthenshire.

Social prescribing is a holistic service available throughout Carmarthenshire, located within GP practices. It accepts referrals from practice staff, community teams, third sector entities, and also welcomes self-referrals. The essence of social prescribing lies in empowering GPs, nurses, and other health professionals to direct individuals to a broad spectrum of local, non-medical services.

This approach aims to comprehensively address an individual's needs, focusing on what is important to them and supporting their autonomy in managing their health and wellbeing. Social prescribing initiatives often encompass diverse activities, generally facilitated by organisations in the voluntary and community sector. These services enhance outcomes for individuals by providing them with more options and control over their lives, fostering a sense of community through involvement in local groups and activities.

Social prescribing is particularly beneficial for individuals requiring additional mental health support, those managing chronic conditions, experiencing loneliness or isolation, or facing complex social challenges that impact their wellbeing. From the 1st of April to the 31st of March 2023, the Social Prescribing Service in Carmarthenshire received a total of 1009 referrals.

Children and Family Services

The introduction to this report set out the unprecedented challenges the service faced in 2023 with rising numbers of looked after children, increased referrals, national workforce challenges, market failure in the provision of children's homes and inevitable financial pressures on the council.

In response we formed a corporate transformation group that strengthened the vision, introduced corporate governance, oversight and support to the service led by the Head of Children and Families. I chair the transformation group as the Statutory Director of Social Services with attendance of the Children's Senior Management Team who lead the improvement workstreams. Also in attendance are senior leads for HR, Programme Management, Finance and the Director for Education and Children Services. Progress is reported through the corporate management team and to the Cabinet with at least fortnightly updates to the lead member for social services. As a result, unprecedented levels of investment including £7.5 million in revenue has been committed to the service for 2024 with a robust programme of change and oversight to meet the new demands we face.

Six workstreams have been established including Early Help and Assessment; family Support and Resources; Children's Homes; Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers; Support for disabled Children and Young people and workforce and business enabler reform.

1. Early Help and Assessment:

The work is progressing well and is on target to establish an Early Help approach where statutory and third sector partners work closely together to support children, young people and families with the right help at the right time for them. This shared approach will minimise duplication and gaps in support. As a result, Looked after Children numbers have stabilised with no rise since March 2024 and remain the lowest in Wales. The Early Help Hub has been established using existing resources and a Step-Up, Step-Down Team has been established using growth monies. In addition, a 14+ multi agency team pilot is underway using existing resources from Children and Families, Housing and third sector partners. This has now stabilised in the Assessment Teams and re-assessment rates have reduced as we meet needs better at first referral.

2. Family Support and Resources:

Substantial progress is being made in this area with most elements on track to deliver a set of coordinated, responsive services that provide an effective resource for Social Workers to draw with systems thinking review of Family Support teams in Children and Families Services completed and next steps now developed. New posts have been appointed to increase capacity and address shortcomings in practice in fostering, including a Panel Adviser, Marketing and Communications Officer and Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer. We continue to perform well against national targets for foster carer recruitment although there is still a significant shortage of foster placements. We are on track to enter into a consultation process with foster carers on proposed changes to the payments framework to implement by the next financial year.

3. Children's Homes:

We have huge ambitions in this area to remove the dependence on the private sector by the end of 2026. This is an area with complexity and holds considerable risks which require urgent, creative responses. There has been substantial progress although there is much progress still to be made. We have appointed to 75% of posts for our new children's homes (Hafan and Ross Avenue). The staffing structure at Garreglwyd has been reviewed and recruitment to additional posts is now taking place. The application for registration of Hafan in Carmarthen has been submitted and a CIW visit has taken place (Sept 2024). The service is looking forward to approval in the coming weeks. I'm pleased to say three children have moved from emergency 'operating without registration' (OWR) arrangements, to registered children's homes.

To speed up progress in developing new homes, we are increasing project support on capital works and registration compliance, developing move-on accommodation including supported accommodation for care leavers. Carmarthenshire has not provided inhouse children's homes at this scale for many years and there is a need to build skill and capacity in the service to develop and run this provision at an optimum level.

4. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Young People:

In 2023 we saw rapid growth to more than 30 new individuals from a historical average of 5-6. These young people predominantly aged 16-18 are classed as looked after children in law. Costs escalated as the numbers grew and we have taken rapid action to support these young people locally. Again, the private sector responded rapidly with packages that exploited the shortage in supply and cost us up to £1000 a week. We no longer use these providers and have five properties in Carmarthenshire set up from scratch with 10 young people living in them. Since early in 2024, no commissioned placements are being used for any new referrals from the national transfer scheme. This has been an enormous challenge, but the teams are now delivering local and cost-effective care for these vulnerable young people.

5. Support for Disabled Children and Young People

Demand for services for children with disabilities has been significant and despite extra funding services exceed the budget available. To respond to the increase in demand we have expanded the social work service and placed additional posts in Tim Camau Bach (early help for disabled children) to ensure children and their families get the right help at the right time. A new post has been established so that carers assessments are undertaken in Tim Camau Bach. We have seen an increase in 16–18-year-olds who are vulnerable, needing high-cost placements and are neuro diverse. Two new expert social work posts are being appointed to help manage these young people through Children's Services into Adults, managing risk and costs better. A key priority in 2024/25 for this workstream will be to consult with families on the proposed policy change for allocation of resources to support disabled children and their families.

6. Workforce and Business Enablers

Good progress has been made in this area. Staffing in the Social Work teams has stabilised and the retention of Social Workers is now very good. Social work staff regraded into progression scheme with newly qualified and experienced social workers now paid in line with the top 3 authorities in Wales. Our grow our own Social Workers initiative is on target to deliver 31 new Social Workers over the next 3 years. The file audit plan for the year is in place and will be monitored. A new electronic system (Eclipse) has been rolled out in adults will be implemented live in Children's Services from February 2025. We are confident in this system having avoided the failure of the national WCCIS system. 'Go live' date for migration from CareFirst to Eclipse set for February 2025.

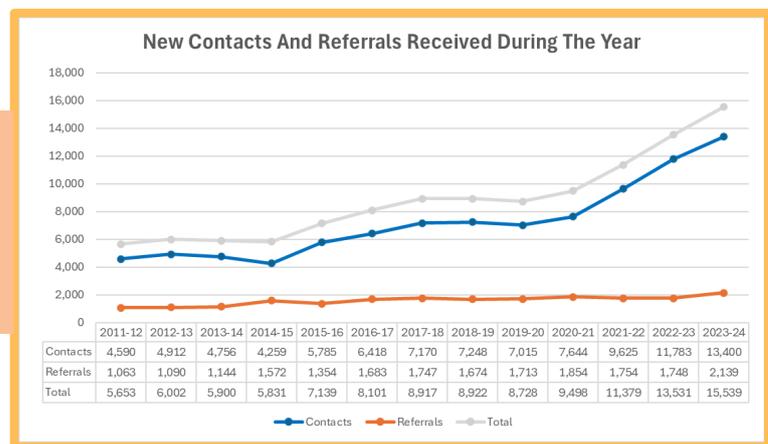
The implementation of Eclipse and the centralising of data analytics and system support in 2024 in a single service across children's, adults and housing will bring together the data available to managers from a range of sources to enable them to better manage performance with live data. This will improve further following migration to Eclipse and establishment of new performance team across adult and children's social care.

As our newly qualified staff gain experience, further work will be needed to then reduce the number of children’s cases being held by Team Managers, Assistant Team Managers and Child and Family Practitioners. This is a priority for us. Service delivery have continued to function well throughout this period of challenge and change and this is set out in the next sections.

Early Help and Assessment

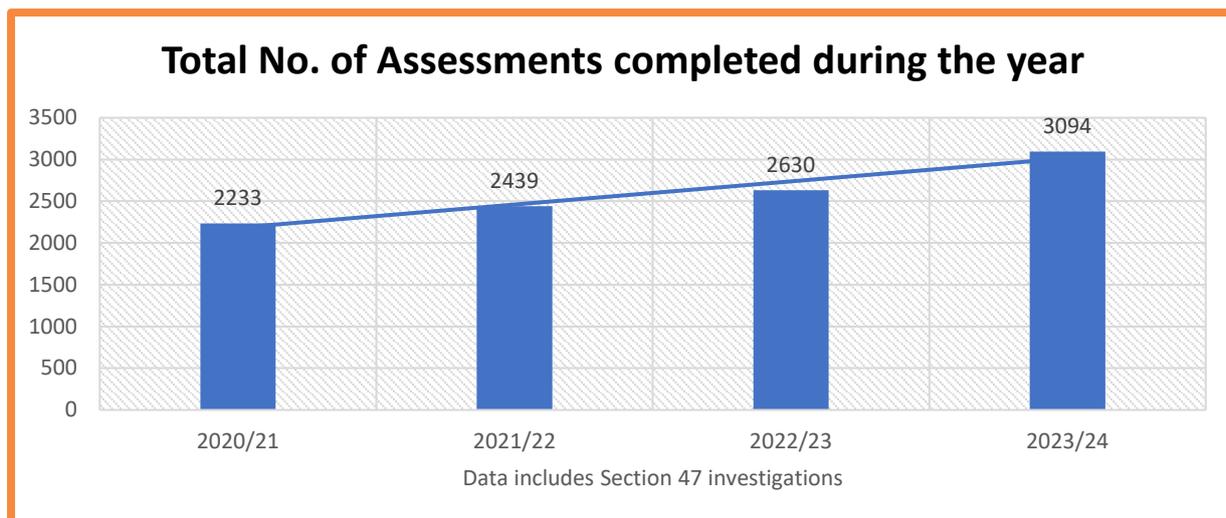
Since the Covid pandemic we have seen unprecedented pressures on the service where families have struggled following the pandemic and cost of living crisis. As a result, we have seen increased demand on services and complexity of cases. Since 2019/20 there has been a 68% increase in the number of contacts and referrals received via our ‘front-door’ Central Referral Team (CRT). This increase coupled with the difficulty in recruiting social workers has all added to the challenges faced by teams in 2023, albeit the service is now largely fully staffed following workforce initiatives in 2024.

The graph illustrates the demand in the services contacts and referrals



Since 2019 the number of Strategy meetings/discussions have also increased along with the number of assessments.





The number of assessments completed, and the number of child protection strategy meetings has also continued to rise. 63% were completed within 42 working days (result is not comparable with previous years due to changes in collection and reporting requirements). Whilst every effort is made to complete within timescales, it is the quality of assessments which is most important, and children’s services has developed a quality framework to ensure they are outcome focused, co-produced and evidences the voice of the child. Assessments are also reliant on input from family and other professionals which can also lead to the assessment falling outside of timescales. There has been excellent progress in 2024 reducing the number of re-referrals significantly indicating that we are meeting needs. Ensuring we better capture the voice of the child in assessments is an area for improvement.

Assessments are audited monthly by senior management to ensure that the plans formulated by the assessments are developed in partnership with families to set outcomes which are achievable for families. In addition, Senior Managers ensure assessments include direct work with children and record the child’s wishes and feelings in respect of their lived experiences and the support they are receiving.

The assessments are audited to ensure they reflect the five principles of the Social Services Well Being Act Wales, which are that families have a voice and control over intervention, that the focus is on wellbeing, work is undertaken in partnership with families to co-produce assessments and plans and has a multi-agency approach. Also, to ensure families are provided with early intervention and preventative support to prevent problems escalating. Auditing allows Managers to highlight what improvements can be made and any training needs for the service and when good practice is identified feedback provided, which helps workers feel valued and assists them develop future practice.

Support and Safeguarding

Children and families’ services continue to embed the **relationship-based approach** into social work using systemic approaches to improve partnership working with families. This allows improved engagement through assessment and in the provision of support which in turn improves the well-being of children. The approach is also underpinned by Signs of Safety which enables the department to set goals in

partnership with families which achieves better engagement and improves outcomes for children. The systemic approach continues to be introduced to other teams, such as the child assessment teams and the adoption service with the aim of encouraging partnership working between families and the social work teams. Feedback from families highlight these approaches help them feel valued and listened to, which is the main principle of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 as well as one of Carmarthenshire's core values.

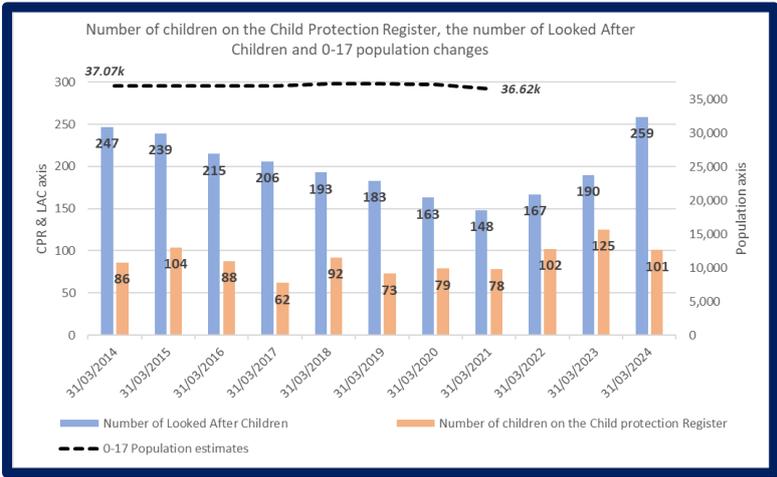
Early intervention is the key to our practice through the involvement of preventative services such as Integrated Family Support Team (IFST) and Edge of Care Team supporting the childcare teams providing intensive support. We are developing our preventative services to ensure the right help is available at the right time to support families within their local community.

The number of children on the **child protection register** has remained steady, whilst the number of **children looked after** has seen a sharp increase in 2023/24 before stabilising from April to September 2024. Whilst every effort is made to maintain children at home with their families for as long as possible, recent times have been challenging for families increasing the risks in relation to abuse and neglect. Registrations and de-registrations are subject to multi-disciplinary case conferences and robust safeguarding plans. During 2023/24 more than 90% of initial child protection conferences were held within statutory timescales.

Of those children who were added to the Child Protection Register during the year (144 children) the number who were previously on the register in the last 12 months was low at 6.9% (10 children). We continue to hold internal threshold meetings to consider whether we are consistently applying the threshold for S47 investigations, care and support assessments and early help, and ensure we are meeting our national safeguarding standards by considering our data as a management group each quarter.

As an authority we maintain the lowest children looked after population in Wales. A strategic programme has been developed to ensure the sufficient supply of placements for children in care in Carmarthenshire. The re-alignment of children and family services senior management team's responsibilities brings our intervention services together with our accommodation services which will form the basis of the next stage in the development of this work.

In 2022 the Home Office introduced a mandatory National Transfer Scheme and since this time we have seen a steep rise in the number of **unaccompanied asylum-seeking children** who now account for an average of 12% of our looked after children population. Numbers in the first half of 2024 have now stabilised as the impact of our transformation work has an impact.



The graph illustrates the number of Children on the Child Protection Register and Looked After (No. looked after includes UASC)

Family Support and Resources

The education stability of children looked after remains excellent with only 3 children (2.1%) needing to move school during the year. Hard work is undertaken with social workers, schools, foster carers, and other professionals to maintain children within their original school and community. Due to the rurality of Carmarthenshire however, to achieve this it often means higher transport costs that we have developed with an in-house service and new investment. The number of children looked after on 31st March who experienced 3 or more placement moves during the year has risen slightly to 8.5% (22 children). Our target of 6.8% has not been achieved this year, however, the department has experienced a significant rise in the number of children looked after on 31st March (259- Including 31 UASC allocated by the home office) compared to 190 last year.

There continues to be a shortage of foster carers both locally and nationally which impacts on placement stability. This impacted on our ability to meet Children’s needs and at times reduced the quality of placements we can provide. A fundamental review of fostering was completed, and work is now underway to increase the range and type of placements for children looked after through the department’s residential strategy and fostering service transformation. This work is yet to have a full impact and was not completed in time to prevent an inspection by the CIW that highlighted some known weaknesses in the service. An action plan has been agreed along with a Marketing and Recruitment Strategy. New financial payments systems are being developed merging with established systems in adults. There is on-going co-production with Foster Wales to plan a link with Foster Wales’s newly appointed marketing manager. The recent national foster carer recruitment campaign has received significant media attention. Carmarthenshire Fostering representatives contribute to the national ‘big welcome’ initiative and attend planning sessions relating to the development of technology ‘app’.

Our in-house Supported Lodgings scheme which supports young people post 16 has continued to develop with 7 providers now established to offer placements. There is a need to develop further placements to increase the offer and link the support with the overall capacity for placements across the department.

Strategic plan and investment in relation to developing a residential care offer is ongoing. Two properties have been developed and a third to be identified. Hafan (Carmarthen) aim to provide high level care to 4 young people where alternatives would be hospital admission/in-patient or secure environments. Provision in Llanelli being sourced, aims to provide a home to vulnerable young people who are not able to reside with family.

Mid & West Wales Regional Adoption Service (MWWAS) continues to strive to develop its practice and over the last few months has been focusing on the Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) framework having placed a child with WEP carers. It has also been noted MWW has developed its practice around contact by achieving several placements where children have continued to have ongoing direct contact with birth parents and siblings. MWWAS continues to find adoptive placements within the region for children from the region. However, there is a general decline in enquiries in Wales from people who would like to adopt, and the number is down again this year. MWW uses social media platforms and its own webpage to recruit adopters from the region. A new Marketing Recruitment Officer has been appointed and working alongside National Adoption Service the focus is on recruitment of adopters especially for sibling groups.

Celebrating Success (children looked after and care experienced): Again, this year our young people achieved academically with a number gaining excellent results in GCSE's, vocational courses, A-Levels and Degrees. Their success isn't just limited to the classroom; at the celebrating success day this year we were proud to celebrate the amazing sporting achievements and passions of our young people, their creativity and artistry, musical talents, kindness, and generosity. It is always a pleasure to help our young care leavers when they need us but this year many of them took the time to help us by giving their time to sit in on senior management interview panels. One of our care leavers designed our celebrating success invites and several young people shared their views and experiences of life growing up in care with the aim to help improve the lives of other young care experienced children. Their kindness and generosity didn't stop there as many also supported their own communities by attending litter picks, regular visits to Many Tears' animal sanctuary and worked in charity shops such as the Red Cross.

Complex Needs and Transition

We have continued to see a greater demand for assessment for disabled children. We continue to meet the needs of disabled children and their families through a range of short breaks following an assessment of need. We have increased our offer for short breaks over the last year by offering additional youth clubs at the weekend and after-school clubs and extended our holiday provision across the summer. Other short break opportunities include providing direct payments, overnight short breaks at one of our respite centres and commissioned bespoke support with registered providers to access community activities or provide domiciliary care. We have a long-term residential home for children and young people with autism, learning disability and complex needs (Garreglwyd). Specialist advice, support and information is provided via our Early Help Team/Tim Camau Bach. The service has seen an increase in demand for our services since the Covid pandemic has impacted on families with

disabled children who have sought support resulting in preventive services being oversubscribed. Under the transformation programme we will continue to develop and improve our offer in the next few years.

The 0-25 Disability service have co-produced a Transition Guide with other key stakeholders. This is a dynamic electronic guide which has been completed and will be available via our website and other internet platforms following its launch and is also downloadable.

Autism Code of Practice: We continue to work collaboratively with the Health Board and Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire Local Authorities to ensure a consistent regional approach to the assessment of our compliance. Progress has been made with identified priorities such as ensuring there is a range of autism awareness information, and that staff receive appropriate training. We are improving how we co-produce with autistic people and their parent/carers to inform and deliver the training as well as informing our strategic and operational developments. Priorities identified by People and Work identified Carmarthenshire's information and signposting to access assessment services required some improvements and non-web-based sources of support and information sharing were also required. Work is being undertaken along with a training needs analysis to ensure staff are adequately trained to complete assessments and support autistic individuals and their families. These and other priorities will constitute the Local Autism Action Plan and may be developed further following the second phase of the People and Work assessment which will include service users' views and will be provided to the regional partnership board later this year.

Early Years and Childcare

The Flying Start childcare phased expansion has continued to be rolled out to provide quality funded childcare to more areas across Carmarthenshire. Over 1170 post codes have been added so far and 12 of the identified 13 areas are now fully enrolled into Flying Start. New areas have been targeted ensuring the childcare providers are commissioned to register eligible children for childcare and visits undertaken to potential providers to promote Flying Start Carmarthenshire. Eligible families are informed via targeted postcard mailing shots and then they are invited to complete a self-registration form. This new parent self-registration system has been very successful, and we are pleased to say we have received 332 applications using this system to date. We are working in partnership with childcare providers as we continue to expand inviting them to register their expression of interest to provide Flying Start childcare. Our Flying Start App continues to be a success and has been refined making it easier than ever for our parents to access helpful information and advice as well as see what is happening in their local communities. It has a new post code checker function to make the registration process easier. Our Welsh Language officer has started to work with all childcare providers across Flying Start promoting Welsh Language, culture, and environments. Expansion commissioning and capital subgroup meetings continue to review progress and plan the next steps.

During 2023/24:

- 97% of families with additional social welfare needs linked to poverty, living in a Flying Start area received time specified interventions from the wider Flying Start Team.
- Only 1.5% unauthorised absence at an allocated Flying Start free childcare placement for eligible 2–3-year-olds to prepare for school readiness.
- 78.1% child attendance at an allocated Flying Start free childcare placement for eligible 2-3-year-olds. Pleased to have exceeded target of 75%.

Families First (FF) programme: Nine FF projects are providing essential preventative support for children, young people, and families across the County. The main presenting needs are poverty, homelessness, relationship breakdown, poor emotional well-being, anxiety, challenging children's behaviour, neurodiversity, poor school attendance and young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). A range of interventions, events and activities have been delivered including life-skills, gardening, cooking, safety, well-being packs, hampers, clothing, debt advice and community food banks, to name a few.

During 2023/24:

- 10,461 individuals supported from the FF programme, of which 6234 (60%) were new individuals.
- 653 single agency JAFFs were closed with a forward movement of 611 (94%) on the distance travelled tool.
- 20 cases were stepped up to Social Services, and 70 cases were stepped down from Social Services to the FF programme.

Integrated Children and Education

Carmarthenshire continues to align services for many vulnerable children through the integrated arrangement with education and Children's Services:

Elective Home Education(EHE):

- Carmarthenshire currently has 657 EHE learners (this number fluctuates and tends to be higher at the end of the summer term).
- Staff have worked effectively with families and during 2023/24 79.25% of EHE children received an annual visit.
- 14 young people sat Art GCSE in Summer 2023 with 13 achieving A*-C results.
- Several young people sat a range of others including English Language, mathematics, Chemistry, ICT, Human Biology, environmental Management and all achieved Grade 7-9.
- 13 young people will be sitting exams in Summer 2024.

- The EHE grant provided by WG is used effectively to provide activities and resources to families so that the young people have a more enriched learning experience. These include:
Maths, Science, English, Horticulture, and outdoor learning at the Botanical Gardens of Wales (primary to GCSE), Welsh lessons, Geography group, Bookworms (theatre and language group), Rebel Warriors (well-being, life skills, resilience, self-belief, team building, works with children with anxieties), access to an examination centre, access to accredited essential skills qualifications (ASDAN), access to Twinkl subscription, and funding to allow an EHE group to run the Llyn Llech Owain Home Education group. Parental views were sought via a questionnaire and many commented that the provision on offer was helpful for them as families.

New guidance was published by WG in May 2023 and a handbook for families along with two engagement sessions have been held with WG and EHE families in June 2023. Considering the new guidance our EHE team have strengthened our local procedures to ensure schools, families and learners are clear on their responsibilities when EHE is considered. A change to the 'exit form' allows us to better understand the reasons why parents are choosing EHE and information about the child prior to them becoming EHE.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) – we have gathered information on 'what works' in supporting EBSA to produce a Carmarthenshire 'best practice' training and toolkit for schools and support agencies. The toolkit project is developing the understanding of EBSA across Carmarthenshire secondary schools providing psychological input around EBSA presenting needs. 11 (of 12) secondary schools engaged between January 2023 and March 2024. We are working on increasing awareness within schools and with other agencies through training and consultation support. EBSA good practice days have been run for the past 2 years for all EBSA's and this will continue in the Summer 2024.

Trauma Informed Approach is becoming embedded across our schools as a way of supporting young people and staff's relational and pastoral needs. The Trauma Informed Schools UK (TISUK) diploma training for school staff is co-ordinated by the Educational Psychology Service and supervision 3 times a year to maintain practitioner registration. This course is well received and for more staff to be trained but is reliant on grant funding. Schools are using the approach as a way of appointing an 'emotionally available adult' from within the school to link with the child/young person and family which is making a difference in how supported families are feeling.

Delta Wellbeing -Technology Enabled Care

Llesiant Delta Wellbeing, the council's former Careline service was set up as a Local Authority Trading Company in 2018 and has significantly expanded over the last five years to help address the growing demands within health and social care by developing innovative technology-based solutions and services to support patients leaving hospital as well as in the community – ultimately transforming the way social care is being delivered.

When the company was set up, the aim was to offer an enhanced service to residents in Carmarthenshire, as well as provide increased employment opportunities and reinvest income generated in additional services or to support the council's other social care services. The company has achieved this and more, having become a Centre of Excellence for Technology Enabled Care and increasing its workforce from 47 members of staff to more than 170.

Delta Wellbeing provides a single point of access for health and social care enquiries for adults in Carmarthenshire, working alongside a multi-disciplinary team of professionals within the HomeFirst service. During 2023/24 the team handled 20,456 enquiries with 42% of these resolved at the first point of contact/not requiring further statutory support. This preventative figure has consistently improved year on year from a baseline of around 8% when the service was first set up around six years ago.

The CONNECT service continues to make a difference to people's lives; maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of our older and vulnerable residents and helping them to live as independently as possible in their own homes. The project is supporting 2,258 individuals across the county through a detailed assessment of need, the provision of bespoke technology, regular proactive calls and access to a 24/7 community response service. A total of 24,721 proactive calls have been carried out to support individuals suffering loneliness or deteriorating health. The community response team has attended 4,698 call outs to assist residents, with only 6% of these calls needing to be escalated to emergency services, preventing unnecessary ambulance call outs and hospital admissions.

The average response time is 24 minutes, with 94% of calls having an on-site response within 45 mins. The level of frailty and need required has been quite different to what was originally anticipated. Initially, it was intended to predominantly help individuals just starting to notice some decline and wanting some early intervention, with only 5% of clients to be in the highest tier of need. However, it is actually seeing around 23% of clients that are in the highest tier. This has meant that the level of support for these clients has been significantly higher than originally planned, however, the benefit of this is that it is helping to support statutory services in managing demand.

The service has evolved significantly in Carmarthenshire and provides an 'emergency bridging' service for up to seven days to support hospital discharge. A total of 1,082 patients have been discharged from hospital on average four days earlier thanks to the service since it began in December 2021, saving 2,912 bed days at a cost of £1,323,795 to the health service; and providing 6,585 care visits and 83 patient transports, reducing the need for pre-arranged hospital ambulance transport.

In addition, the team is providing out-of-hours social care support for older adults, having dealt with 259 referrals last year, of which 104 were in relation to a breakdown of care which required immediate attention. The responders conducted onsite assessments to determine needs, ensuring the implementation of care and support packages to safeguard individuals from further harm or deterioration.

Without doubt the biggest focus area for the company this past year has been the implementation of its new digital cloud-based alarm receiving, monitoring and response platform, the first of its kind in Wales and launched two years ahead of the analogue switch-off. The company has been planning for the digital switch for the past five years and the new platform, together with the latest digital equipment, will ensure that Delta Wellbeing is at the cutting-edge of digital technology. The use of new digital equipment and systems will benefit our vulnerable communities and support clients as they move to digital phone service before the end of 2025. It will also help us to improve the way that we use the data that we capture and enable a more proactive approach to Technology Enabled Care.

Phase two of Delta Wellbeing's digital transformation strategy is around sharing data across health and care providers to enable a holistic view of an individual, providing greater insight into people's situations, and supporting earlier intervention and enabling more informed decision making for care providers. This will help individuals at the earliest opportunity and reduce the need for more acute health or social care support.

Delta Wellbeing continues to spearhead the development of new technologies in social care and health. As well as the established telehealth programme with Hywel Dda University Health Board for the management of long-term conditions such as COPD and heart failure, the company is developing capacity in the use of satellite technology to provide emergency connectivity for its community responders; and using GPS technology to enable people to remain active and safe in the communities in which they live, working closely with the Digital Infrastructure team as part of the Swansea Bay City Deal. Delta Wellbeing is also supporting the delivery of the Pentre Awel project with development and implementation of technologies to enable independent and assisted living of residents within the health and wellbeing village.

Council Direct Care Provision and Commissioned Care

The Council commissions more than £90M of adult care & support and the commissioned sector provides approximately 89% of the market. Our ambition is to ensure we have a mixed economy of care to meet the current as well as future needs of our population. Both the population needs assessment and the [WWCP-MSR-Final-Feb-2022.pdf](#) highlight the many challenges facing social care services. As demand pressures increase it is critical we ensure we have a vibrant and sustainable market to meet needs.

The market represents a risk to us as the private sector consolidate into larger firms often backed by hedge funds or international markets who monopolise local markets and prices.

The market continues to be fragile and workforce pressures continue. During 2023/24 we experienced a further care home closure with a loss of 22 beds from the market, thus having an in-house service to provide some market stability as well as resilience to mitigate risk when we see market failure is essential as we move forward.

We continue to progress a challenging recommissioning programme of work which has included the refresh of the domiciliary framework which attracted additional providers into the market. The development of micro enterprises within the County is progressing well with over 30 micros now established across Carmarthenshire.

Micros are able to support the commissioned sector and often compliment as well as fill the gaps in response to delivery services in a very rural county. They also provide people with Direct Payments greater choice on how they wish their needs to be met. We aim to strengthen our strategic approach to market shaping and is a key priority for 2024/25.

Managing demand has been highlighted as a key priority and following comprehensive engagement with the third sector we redesigned our approach and strategically aligned our third sector spend. Implementation of new community preventative services is part of a wider community model of care and support, providing the structure and central pathways to support.

The model is designed to build seamless links between services that help people of all ages stay independent within their communities for as long as they are able or wish and if needed to access more formal care and support when the time comes. It should be noted that unpaid carers are included as part of our preventative framework providing information, advice and assistance. Work is ongoing to coproduce and co-design our short break and respite offer for unpaid carers.

We remain committed to expanding the local authorities share of the market in all areas of care.

Advocacy

[Regional Adult Advocacy Strategy 2023-2027](#)

An Independent Professional Advocacy service is available across the counties of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. This service is designed for people with needs for care and support or their carers who are involved in Social Care Assessment, Planning and Review, Safeguarding Processes and is provided by 3 CIPA (3 County Independent Professional Advocacy).



3 CIPA consists of 5 individual providers including:

1. Advocacy West Wales-Eiriolaeth Gorllewin Cymru (takes a lead on the service)
2. Dewis CIL
3. Age Cymru Dyfed
4. Carmarthenshire People First
5. Carers' Trust Crossroads West Wales.

3 CIPA also provides an important single point of contact for advocacy services, which aims to help identify the most appropriate advocacy service, which best meets an

individual's need. There is a wealth of experience in the delivery of quality advocacy services within the partnership which provide a range of other specialist community and statutory advocacy services and other support services across the region.

In conjunction with other 3CIPA partners and the Hope Project (an Age Cymru national project), the 3CIPA advocates have been involved in providing and attending training to advocates across the region and in Wales.

Over the last year this has included but is not limited to the following:

- Advocating the Social Services and Wellbeing Act – delivered by Professor Luke Clements
- Advocacy Principles – Independence and Empowerment
- Reflective Practice in Independent Advocacy
- Professional and Personal Practice Boundaries – Clarity of Purpose
- Record Keeping and Data Protection, Information Sharing and Confidentiality
- Advocacy Specific Autism Awareness Training
- Safeguarding Training including Signs of Safety
- Non-Instructed Advocacy Training
- ASIST Suicide Intervention Training
- Talking Mats and Total Communications Training

In addition, the partners have provided a range of advocacy awareness training to social, health and third sector employees across the region. This training is aimed at supporting referrals from social, health and third sector agencies. This programme will continue through 2024.

Partner organisations attend a full range of forums and networks across the region aimed at seeking feedback on the quality of advocacy provision alongside widening awareness of the available advocacy services in the county and wider region.

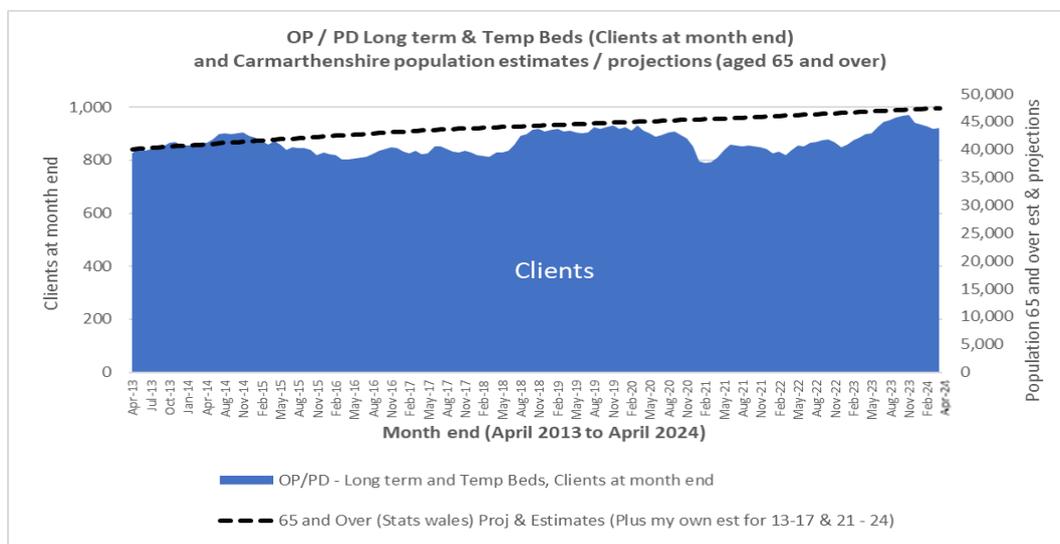
Residential Care

We continue to maintain our in-house residential care provision to support residents in Carmarthenshire, with 7 residential homes for older people and people with physical disabilities operated in-house. We have continued to remodel this provision to help meet some of the market gaps identified in the Market Stability Report and this will be an ongoing journey over the forthcoming years. The continued investment in Ty Pili-Pala, a wing of Llys Y Bryn Care Home, as a 14-bedded step-down unit is proving hugely beneficial to those leaving hospital in reducing their long-term care needs. Alongside this, we have a programme of refurbishment in place of our in-house provision to allow us to enhance the offer to our residents.

Recruitment has improved dramatically in 2024, but we continue to proactively market our vacancies to fill gaps as and when they emerge.

Alongside our investment in our current provision, we have started to develop our thinking surrounding our long-term strategy for bed-based care. We know that we have a significant demographic challenge in terms of our ageing population and consequent increase in demand for bed-based care as our older population with more complex needs increases. Without investment, we also know that we will not be able to meet the needs that emerge from that demographic challenge.

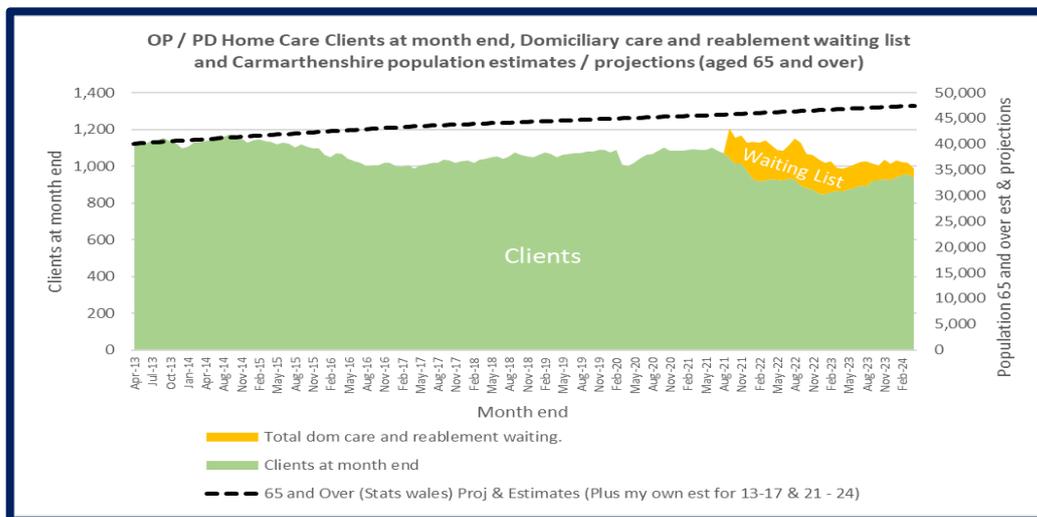
We have therefore started to progress our plans to meet this challenge which include the redevelopment of a former residential home in the County with 60 new beds as well as scoping plans for a nursing home as part of the Pentre Awel development in Llanelli with a 72 bedded home.



In parallel to this, we have confirmed that as a Local Authority we are able to run a nursing home (as opposed to residential care only). As a result, we are now exploring the delivery options available to do this as the ability to offer nursing care would be a significant asset in managing more complex needs of an ageing population.

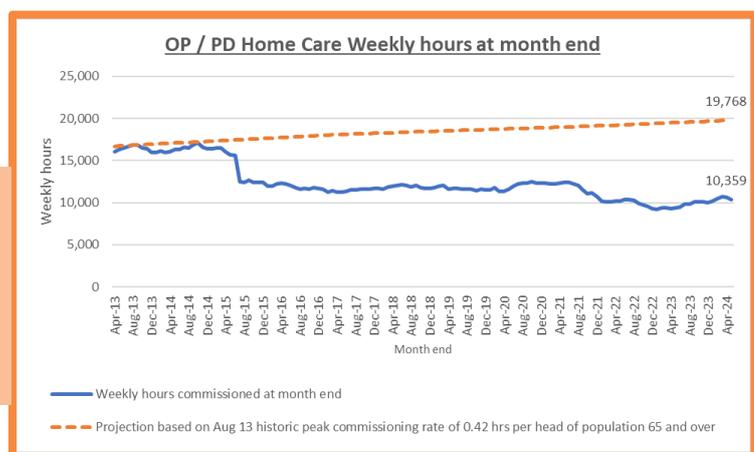
In Children’s Residential Care, we have continued to maintain our existing provision whilst progressing our plans to address the Welsh Government mandate to Eliminate private sector children’s homes by 2026. In response to this we have opened 2 new children’s homes in the County and are in the process of developing a further home. This will allow us to bring those children that require support closer to home and also help us to manage cost. This is a key priority for our transformation programme in 2024/25.

We continue to manage demand well in homecare and have reduced waiting times back to pre- pandemic levels. Improvements in assessment and delivery provision has meant the service has remained viable and meets those most in need well. This is illustrated in the graph below:

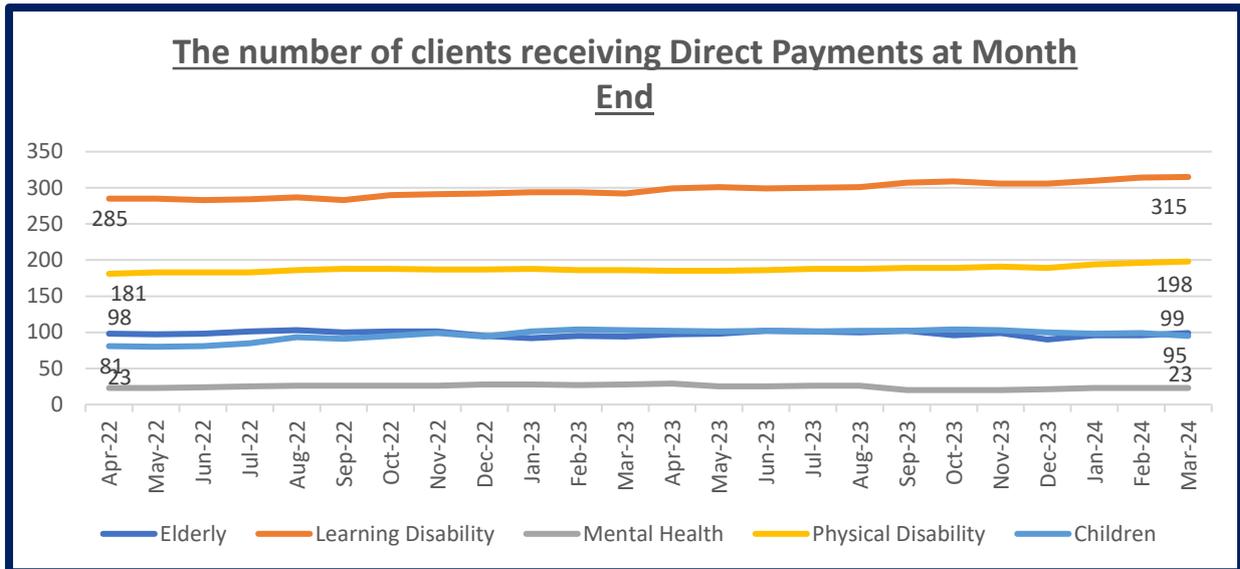


Weekly hours of homecare provided have stabilised despite a growing population and we now provide care at a scale for our population in Wales but significantly lower than ten years ago. This is illustrated below:

The graph shows the number of hours commissioned for Home Care.



Direct payment provision is stable for most client groups and our in-house administration has been reviewed favourably. Adults with a disability who benefit from these payments has continued to slowly rise as we move away from more traditional models. This is illustrated in the graph overleaf:



Addressing the removal of excessive profit from children’s care is a priority area and substantial investment has been agreed corporately to make this happen. This has enabled Children’s Services to have an ambitious programme to open a further 2 residential units. We anticipate full registration of our first in September 2024. This will rebalance the sector and enable us to eliminate the use of accommodation operating without registration and the use of the private sector altogether by 2026.

What People Say

Awards

Carmarthenshire County Council Home Care Service have been successful in The Great British Care Awards Welsh heat in the category of coproduction, for its work in developing integrated intermediate care team with HDUHB.



Great British Care Awards 2024 ~ Nationals

Putting People First Award – WINNER

Carmarthenshire Council Homecare service and HDUHB have introduced an innovating approach to Intermediate Care (IC), which brings together all the pillars of IC into one truly integrated health and social care MDT called Home First.



Butler Trust Award

Congratulations to Gill Adams from Carmarthenshire County Council, who has been presented with the Butler Trust Award by HRH The Princess Royal (Princess Anne) at a ceremony in London.



In receiving the Butler Trust Award 2023/24 in April 2024, Gill has been recognised for her unstinting dedication to youth justice for many years and her wider role as Principal Manager of Youth Support Service in Carmarthenshire. The [Butler Trust Awards](#) are the only UK-wide awards specifically for people working in custodial and community justice settings and are often described as the Oscars for the sector.

[Nominated by her colleagues](#), Gill is credited as a truly inspiring leader who is both compassionate and passionate about what she does to enrich the lives of young people and enable them to fulfil their true potential. She has a national profile as one of the longest-serving Youth Offending Team (YOT) managers in the UK and served as chair of the Welsh YOT managers group for many years and on the Youth Justice Blueprint Panel Board for Wales, National Hwb Doeth Board and the National Court User Group & Principal Youth Officers Group.

Within her role as Principal Manager of the County Council's Youth Support Service, which includes Youth Justice provision, Gill has led the service to be a self-evaluating and learning service that has attained Youth Excellence Awards and the Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales at Gold Level, having progressed systematically through Bronze and Silver.

CIW Inspection Feedback:

November 2023

"People receive high quality care and support to meet their individual needs. Care workers have a good understanding of the needs of people and are enthusiastic about providing the best possible care. Staff told us *"I want my clients to have a smile on their face because they are happy with the care I provide"* and *"I take great pride in my work; I want the best for the people I care for"*.

"People and their relatives speak highly of the care workers and the care they provide. We were told *"the carers are a great help, I don't know what I would do without them, they are kind and company for me, I have a chat with them all"*, *"the carers are all lovely and kind"* and *"the carers are 'spot on', they visit my gran four times a day, they are fantastic, she couldn't be cared for better which is great to know and see"*

People's individual care and support needs are at the centre of those working in the service. Care

Tir Einon, February 2024

A relative told us how much they value the tremendous work undertaken by the service and the positive effect it has on their loved one and them. They said, *"[X] has settled well, and looks forward to his respite stays, he goes off with his little case, and seems to enjoy the break away. It's a little break for him and also for us. Tir Einon is a God send to us as a family."*

The service works closely with a range of health and social care professionals. Professionals involved with people staying in Tir Einon speak very highly of the care and support provided. They told us; *"all care that is provided is of an exceptionally high standard, all individual needs are catered for, all have their own care plans and risk assessments are ready prior to admission so that [manager] and her staff can ensure that they are fully aware of needs and can*

workers speak warmly and knowledgably about those they support.

anticipate any concerns” and I am extremely happy with the service they offer to my service user. My service user smiles when she goes there.

Residential Care – Caemaen

March 2023

“People receive the care and support they need. Care workers have a good understanding of people’s individual needs and choices. Care records provide a good sense of the individual, reflect their current care needs and involve the person and/or their representative. People praise the care workers and the management of the service.”

Residential Care – Awel Tywi

June 2023

“Care staff are well trained, knowledgeable about the people they care and support and this is corroborated by those living in the service and their relatives. People, their relatives and a visiting professional told us they feel the care and support provided is consistently good including *“I am very happy living in Awel Tywi, the carers are great”, “its lovely here”, and “I have absolutely no concerns about my mother living here. The carers are very good, they are kind and patient”.*

Llesiant Delta Wellbeing

May 2023

People receive a time-limited service provided by caring and capable staff. Feedback from people and their relatives reflects the value they put on this service including *“they [care workers] were very accomplished carers. We are more than satisfied with Delta”, “the staff were so suited to the jobs, I am totally in awe of them” and “the service is so reassuring in what was a very stressful and upsetting time”.*

“This is a great place to work, I had a really good (but intense) induction, and I’ve had lots of training”, “I love it, this is the best move I have made. I am really well supported by management, pushed to develop myself and to use my autonomy”, “the manager and RI are very good, they are always there if you need them” and “[manager] is very approachable and supportive along with the team leaders”.

Garreglwyd

November 2023

Children receive support and encouragement to lead active lives and make choices. Care staff treat children with dignity and kindness, are positive in their approach and look to build on children’s strengths.

There is a family type atmosphere in the home and children are relaxed and show a sense of belonging.

The service provider commissions an advocacy service, and an advocate visits the service regularly. This means children have been able to develop positive relationships with a person who has become familiar to them and been supported to express their views about important aspects of their care and support plans as a result.

CIW Inspection, Report on Llesiant Delta Wellbeing CONNECT, July 2024

People receive a high-quality time limited service delivered through a dedicated and passionate Responsible Individual (RI), manager and staff team. The manager is well supported by the RI and between them are the driving force in developing and delivering the multi-disciplinary services provided through Delta Wellbeing.

The importance of the role of Delta Wellbeing to the individuals in receipt of the service and their relatives cannot be underestimated. People and their relatives told us of their excellent experiences of the service including.

“Delta is an excellent service it had a massively positive impact on our lives at what was a difficult time for us as a family. The carers were absolutely lovely, there is a real community feel. They respected my parents and their home”, “Delta have been a breath of fresh air. They provide excellent care. They treated [X] with absolute dignity and respect, they really are fantastic”, “the carer was beautiful, she helped me wash and dress and prepared meals for me, I can’t fault her” and “Delta carers were excellent, they were so caring. They really helped to reassure me; it was such a relief. I don’t know what I would have done without them.

Care staff speak passionately about working for Delta Wellbeing and the positive impact on the people they support. Care workers told us.

“I enjoy all aspects of my job, but my favourite part is seeing the impact the service has on everyone we visit. It is such a rewarding job”, “I absolutely love it. I love what we do and helping people in need, it’s so rewarding” and “working as a responder is a very fulfilling role where I am able to use my knowledge and skills to help the most vulnerable”.

MH Inspectorate of Probation – An inspection of Youth justice services March 2024

*Carmarthenshire is the only Youth Justice Service in Wales to get the rating of **outstanding**, we are joint third in England and Wales.*

Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Team (YJT) has received an overall rating of ‘Outstanding’ following an inspection by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation as part of its programme of Youth Justice Service (YJS) inspections. The YJT was rated across three broad areas – the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. The quality of resettlement policy and provision was also inspected, and separately rated as ‘**Outstanding**’.

Martin Jones, Chief Inspector of Probation, said: “There is a high level of care and dedication to the staff, children, and victims accessing the service, which extends from senior leaders to operational staff.”

Staff are motivated, passionate, and their hard work is routinely acknowledged and rewarded. The management board is invested in the YJT; it has continually advocated for the service and proactively supported it in achieving the best outcomes for children, families, and victims.”

The report noted that the YJT is highly respected within the partnership, with strong, vibrant and consistent leadership which has enabled the service to operationalise its vision and strategy effectively. It also praised the mature and cohesive partnership arrangements which enable children and families to access a range of services, including speech, language, and communication therapy, wraparound education support, and specialist intervention for children involved in sexually harmful behaviour.

Mr Jones added: “The YJT’s reparation provision is impressive – the service has worked with the community to identify and deliver meaningful and impactful projects, and children have been able to develop skills as well as engaging in restorative justice.

“It also proactively seeks opportunities to learn and improve the services it provides from the wider sector, including work with police partners in adopting and localising an approach for care-experienced children to avoid unnecessary criminalisation and contact with the justice system.

Summary of Care & Support Survey 2023/24

The Care & Support surveys were conducted in September 2023 and May 2024 targeting service users that had received a Care and Support Plan between April 2023 and March 2024.

Responses included 65 from service users, 54 from carers or representatives expressing the service users' views, and 39 from carers or representatives expressing their own, shown in the graph below:

1	Total Surveys Sent: 780
2	Responses Received: 158
3	Response Rate: Approximately 21%
4	Awareness: 95% of Service Users knew why they had been contacted by Social Care Services.
5	Listening to Views: 94% of Service Users felt their views were listened to.
6	Advice and Information: 94% of Service Users felt they were given the right advice and information when they needed it.
7	Dignity and Respect: 100% of Service Users felt they were treated with dignity and respect.
8	Satisfaction with Care: 93% of Service Users felt happy with the care and support they had.
9	Webpage Visits: 97% of Service Users had not visited the Social Care and Health Webpage.

Examples of positive feedback.

- Thank you to DM (social worker) for her professional input in organising care for my mother. Her input has been excellent.
- It took over 6 months to get my mother transferred from care provided by Swansea Council to Carmarthen Council care when she had to come and live with us from her home in Swansea due to illness/dementia. Everyone I dealt with in the council was lovely, very kind and helpful and I appreciated that there was a long waiting list for care, but it was very hard trying to juggle work while caring for a mother with dementia and a father in hospital after a fall. When a social worker was finally assigned, E, everything was transformed - she has been fantastic, and I can't thank her enough for all her help, care and support since that time.

Compliments

Compliments received
115

Top 3 Teams

24 Carmarthen Long Term

23 In House Domiciliary Care

15 Llanelli Long Term

Complaints

Complaints received
66

54 Stage 1

12 Stage 2

61 Redirect/NFA/On Hold

3 complaints were accepted outside the 12 months timescale.
0 were declined

4 complaints went to the ombudsman
3 Declined
1 Accepted

Stage 1

Nature of Complaint - Top 3

21 Quality of Service

11 Staff Issues

8 Quality of Care

Acknowledged within timescale
98%

Responded to within timescale
55%

Stage 2

Nature of Complaint - Top 3

5 Quality of Care

4 Quality of Service

2 Financial Matters

9 Upheld

6 Not Upheld

On average responded to within
74 working days

Training



11 Training sessions delivered

204 Staff attended

Examples of Compliments:

"You will change lives but not because of your job title but because you want to purely help. You're the first person professionally that I know your input changed my view on myself and others in an inspiring way. You made me see that what doesn't kill you make you so much stronger. In that strength you give the broken hope."

"I Hope the Head of Social Services realises what a gem of a social worker they have in [named social worker]. I couldn't have wished for a better person to look after [my relative's] interests while he was in Glangwili Hospital."

"To the crisis team and everybody involved
Firstly, I'd like to thank each and every one of you for what you do for people like myself. You are all heroes in my opinion for what you all do and the change to people's lives like myself, so thank you so much and happy Xmas as well
[Named social work assistant] well where do I start, I could never have wished for a better social worker, she has gone above and beyond, her commitment, dedication and her personal drive to help and do absolutely everything that she possibly can, for her patients and myself. Her positivity is truly infectious, and she actually listened to me and has worked so hard for me, she has an incredible sense of empathy which I find amazing and told her from the start I don't want pity or sympathy for what I went through, and she has been amazing. We have a fantastic rapport with each other, I would say I've made a new friend I can honestly say that she has definitely 100% LITERALLY SAVED MY LIFE."

"Expected blue badge telephone callback within 5 days - had it back 1 day later,

I wish everything that I dealt with was as efficient and quick a service.

Thankyou very much!"

"Bore da, just isie diolch I chi am yr adroddiad a wnaethoch ar mam. Roeddwn yn ei ddarllen neithiwr ar ol teithio draw ddoe. Mae'r gloch yn fanteisiol iawn, ond mae mam yn cymryd 'chydig o amser I ddo I arfer gyda'r clustffonau. Fe ddaw gydag amser, Diolch unwaith eto"

I find it hard to find the words to thank you all for everything you did for L. The standard of care she had was outstanding and you all loved and laughed with her every day- she loved you all and really appreciated everything that you did. You always cared for her with compassion and sensitivity and as a result she was able to stay in her home maintaining her greatest wish- to pass with privacy and dignity. Thank you

Thank you for your unstinting, diligent and mindful care over the last year. We wish you good health and happiness over the next year!

"SW has been an absolute pleasure to work with and the ways in which she has made our process easier are impossible to count. We are sure that the role is often a thankless one and so we just wanted to highlight her excellence and share it with you." The SW commitment, social skills, compassion, organisation, professionalism and emotional intelligence are second to none and should be highly commended.

My husband and myself can not thank you enough for all the help and guidance the Team have given me these past weeks.

One family member commented our lives have totally changed, my health is better, everything is better. I was rock bottom before they came and at the end of my tether. The carers are light at the end of the tunnel for both myself and my uncle.

Stage 2 Complaints

15 Stage 2 complaints were concluded between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, with 9 upheld and 6 not upheld.

- 7 of these complaints were received within this time frame.
- 8 of these complaints remained outstanding from 2022/23.

Examples of recommendations and actions from complaints concluded in Q4 2023/24 are outlined below:

Recommendation

Care Plan and risk assessment have been updated in conjunction with individual and carer with copy shared with them.



Action

Representative from care agency met with individual and carer. They discussed care plan and risk assessment and made relevant amendments and sent them a copy of the amended care and support plan. Both are happy with the plan, and this is now in place and working well.

Recommendation

The service is currently reviewing its local and regional operational policies, procedures and processes within the scheme.



Action

Meeting held with relevant senior managers to discuss the need for the review and further work to be carried out to scope out the work required. A new Business Manager has also been appointed who will be involved in this review.

Ombudsman Complaints

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st December 4 complaints were escalated to Ombudsman Wales with their decision as follows:

- One declined as it was “not one which [they could] investigate” as it didn’t fall within the social services complaint’s procedure.
- One declined as it was “not one which [they should] investigate” having made initial enquiries about it with CCC.
- One declined because CCC had “not yet had a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond to [their] complaint”, therefore it was premature.
- One where they agreed to investigate certain aspects of the complaint.

2 of these complaints were escalated following a Stage 2 investigation.

Welsh Language

The More than just words Strategic Framework is a policy document that sets out the Welsh Government's vision and actions for improving the provision of Welsh language services in health, social services and social care. The framework was launched with the aim of ensuring that people who speak Welsh can access high-quality, safe and compassionate care in their own language.

The framework is based on three principles: active offer, service planning and workforce development. Active offer means that Welsh speakers are offered the opportunity to use their language without having to ask for it. Service planning means that the needs and preferences of Welsh speakers are considered when designing and delivering services. Workforce development means that staff are supported and encouraged to learn and use Welsh in their work.

The framework also identifies four priority areas for action: mental health, dementia, children and young people, and end of life care. These are areas where the use of Welsh language can have a significant impact on the quality and outcomes of care, as well as the well-being and dignity of service users and their families.

During 2023-24, we have continued to embed the principles of the More than just Words framework in Carmarthenshire, by:

- Undertaking an in-depth analysis of our workforce Welsh Language skills, to ensure that we have a correct and clear understanding. This is our end of year data on the skills we hold within Communities.
- Supported our staff to learn and develop their Welsh language skills. We have worked in partnership with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to offer Work Welsh opportunities, which are tailored to our workforce.

- Worked closely with the Pentre Awel Project Team, to assess the potential impact of the development on the Welsh Language and to create an action plan to ensure that the Welsh language Standards and the principles of More than just Words, are embedded in every element of the work.
- Discussing the next steps in the development of the framework with colleagues from the Welsh Language Policy Unit within the Health, Social Care and the Early Years Directorate at the Welsh Government.

We are able to deliver the active offer at all levels with more than 40% of staff across the department self-assessing as having level 3 and above in Welsh. Llesiant Delta is the only bilingual call centre and IAA open 24 hours a day in Wales.

Management Structure



Next Steps 2024/25

The key actions and measures outlined in the business plan set out how we propose to do this in practice. This year we will focus on strategic objectives:

Children and Families

No	Action
CFS1	Work towards addressing the gaps in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022-27, including promoting and further developing Welsh Medium childcare.
CFS2	Further Implement a strategic programme for residential services including the acquisition, refurbishment, and development of three new children's homes, to meet the range of needs of children looked after in Carmarthenshire.
CFS3	Embed an effective early help service that supports families to make the changes children need so that fewer children progress to a child protection pathway, and children can remain/ return safely home
CFS4	Increase the capacity of the fostering service to manage current and future demand, improve recruitment and retention rates and support for Foster Carers, to ensure a sufficient supply of in-house foster placements to meet the range of needs of children looked after in Carmarthenshire.
CFS5	Introduce a policy for allocating resources to support disabled children and their families which is equitable and transparent.
CFS6	Ensure children and young people can access appropriate education in a setting where they are safe, and their needs are being met.
CFS7	Implement the phased expansion of Flying Start in line with Welsh Government guidance.
CFS8	Implement key priorities in the Maternity and Early Years Operational plan and Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board and Voluntary Sector and move towards an integrated delivery model.
CBS-COM	We will work with children's services to develop commissioning models to contribute to cost reductions.

Adult Social Care and Integrated Services

No	Action
ASC1	Development of a prevention strategy and delivery plan for Adult Social Care
ASC2	Develop a range of accommodation options across population groups.
ASC3	Grow sustainable in-house service provision across population groups
ASC4	Lead on the Corporate safeguarding arrangements to ensure the Council is fulfilling its duties to safeguard children and adults at risk.
No	Action
IS1	Development of a single point of access for Community Services
IS2	CICES Review Implementation
IS3	Re-design of Community Hospitals
IS4	Residential Care Stability/ Gatekeeping
IS5	Technology & Digital Monitoring to Support Frail Elderly & most vulnerable
No	Action
CBS1	We will continue to develop our preventative services & embed our five community well-being hubs.
CBS2	We will continue to support & develop a diverse and vibrant market which includes the development of micro providers, social enterprise and rebalancing the market
CBS3	We will continue to support unpaid carers across the county.
CBS4	We will continue to work with housing and other partners to develop a range of accommodation offers to support people to live well, with models of care & support which has promoting independence & outcomes at its core.
CBS5	We will implement the requirements of the Rebalancing Care and Support statutory requirements for Commissioning
CBS6	Within the Business Support and Commissioning Service, we will analyse the current workforce, and then extending that analysis to identify future workforce requirements, skills and competencies which will be needed to deliver new, different, or improved services