



Director's Annual Report

2021 / 22

Social Services, Health & Housing



Building Safe and Resilient Communities

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Foreword



Social care, the wider public sector, and the nation have faced one of the biggest health care challenges in a century. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has led to significant loss of life, tested how we all work together, and pushed our services to their limits. It has added further strain to a stretched social care system, with increased demands on an already tight budget. There will be long-lasting implications for citizens and services.

Our citizens and their carers have often had to face their day-to-day challenges in a way that shows incredible spirit but that can be tiring, challenging and lonely. The pandemic has made already existing inequalities worse, with the greatest health and financial impacts felt by the most disadvantaged, such that inequalities have widened.

Yet, in these times of uncertainty, intense difficulty and grief, our communities have come together. They have shown how resilient and supportive they can be, responding to calls for help and reaching out to vulnerable people across our neighbourhoods. Care workers have displayed their dedication and strength, working throughout the pandemic as the frontline of support to our residents. The voluntary and independent sectors have shown ingenuity, ensuring people were offered the care and support they needed. We have discovered new and better ways of working.

As we look ahead, we embrace the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 - *Recover, Reset, Renew* – which sets out how we will approach the post-pandemic recovery in the short, medium and longer term.

Neath Port Talbot has diverse, strong and vibrant communities, which have demonstrated that by working together we can overcome the most difficult situations and achieve so much. We want to continue to use the wealth of knowledge and expertise in our communities to ensure our services meet vulnerable people's needs both now and in the future.

We remain ambitious but realistic. Only by continuing to work together can we ensure that the needs of our most vulnerable residents continue to be met, with people treated with dignity and empathy, accessing services that are person centred, efficient and sustainable.

Andrew Jarrett
Director of Social Services, Health & Housing

Director's Summary of Performance

Last year 2,406 adults had a service and care plan (compared to 2,675 the previous year), while those aged 65+ receiving a service fell to 1,803 (2,037), as the pandemic affected staff availability and the number of people wanting to go into care homes. However, as we have moved out of lockdown these are returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Remodelling Adult Services to bring care and support services closer to communities remains a key priority as we move towards a place-based model of service delivery. To that end, we increased the number of Local Area Coordinators from six to fourteen in the last year and are recruiting for additional staff this year as part of our Early Intervention and Prevention work.

We strongly believe that children's needs are best met by their own families if this can be safely supported. I am pleased to report that the number of Children Looked After continues to fall, standing at 268 at the end of March 2022, down from 294 in the previous year.

More than 99% of children's assessments were completed within the target 42 days from point of referral.

The number of carers assessments undertaken was around 170 – a comparable level to the previous year, but we expect this number to start rising again as more people come forward post-pandemic.

We had a programme of participation and engagement events, aimed at improving the wellbeing of children and young people during this difficult year; as we published a strengths-based model of practice outlining how Children's Services will work with stakeholders to improve individual's outcomes.

We made progress in remodelling Adult Social Care, with three network area teams set up to mirror the Health Board's GP clusters. And our Commissioning Unit provided intense support to care homes, domiciliary care and other service providers, along with 44 focused monitoring visits in the year.

And partnership working remains important to us; working closely with colleagues in Swansea Council and the Health Board we have developed processes to enable people to be assessed outside of hospital, enabling discharges to take place in a more timely way where possible.

How are People Shaping our Services?

This is about how we find out what people think about our services so we can build on good practice.

While we are slowly moving towards the ‘new normal’, we continued to feel the effects of the pandemic during the last year. As such, although much work continued to be conducted remotely online, we have maintained contact with those who access and provide services using whatever practicable means possible.

Community Engagement

The Planning and Engagement Officer worked on a number of initiatives and supported various groups to promote community engagement so that individuals’ voices can be heard, including:

- Delivering training across the directorate on Coproduction, with ongoing training planned to staff and elected members, as well as a Regional group to continue development of coproduction across the region
- Promoted the Let’s Talk campaign; over the summer we asked people living and working in Neath Port Talbot what matters to them now and in the future. This helped to shape the Council’s Corporate Plan 2022-27, called ‘Recover, Reset, Renew’
- Facilitated Q&A session with the Director and members of Your Voice around learning disability developments within the borough
- In partnership with members of Your Voice, helped the group in securing funding to develop a support group running out of St Paul’s Community Centre every Friday afternoon and identified training opportunities
- Worked with the Marauders group to secure funding for walking clothing to enable individuals to partake in community walks across the borough
- Supported the Veterans REORG group in securing funding to purchase a unit to enable the group to store and deliver support to HM Forces veterans through Men’s Shed activities, and emotional wellbeing through the Veterans support network
- Worked with GROW Training to secure funding to deliver six confidence building courses throughout the borough

As part of NPT Children’s Services commitment to children’s rights, the Engagement & Participation Officer supported the Children’s Rights Unit to deliver training to foster carers. The workshop introduced the UNCRC (United

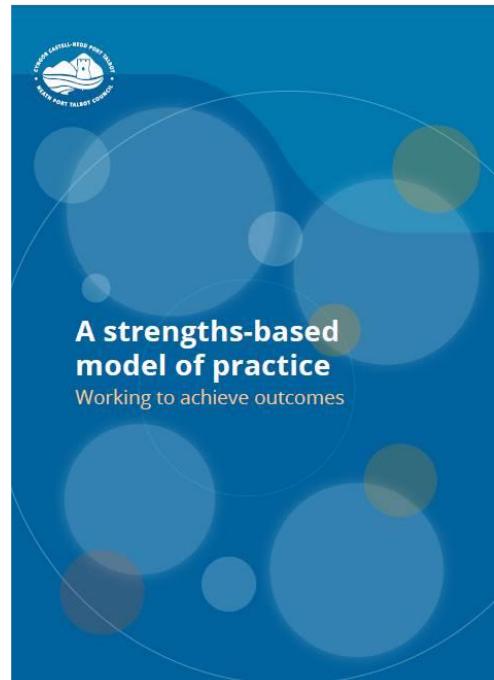
Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and the efforts we are making to enable children and young people to access their rights. A working group has been established to incorporate a rights based approach to our services and plan how to embed Children's Rights in our day to day work.

A number of surveys were also undertaken across adult and children's service areas with the view to improving service delivery.

Quality Standard 1 - Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

This is about how we work in partnership to help people achieve positive outcomes.

During the year Children's Services published its strengths-based model of practice¹ that outlines how the service will work together with families, carers, professionals and communities in order to make a difference to people's wellbeing. The model focuses on building relationships and trust with people, and developing a shared understanding of what a good life can look like. The service has been applying this way of working since 2017 but has recently partnered up with Social Care Wales to produce a document that explains the model, including: its vision, its ten key principles of practice and how the service aims to work collaboratively.



¹ <https://www.npt.gov.uk/33290>

Improvements in this way of working have been highlighted by a recent survey of children and families across Neath Port Talbot regarding the service they are receiving:



The Common Commissioning Unit (CCU) continued to maintain regular contact with our commissioned services to understand the Covid-related and other pressures and impact experienced by them during the year in which the effects of the pandemic were still being felt. Services received ongoing support to continue delivering high quality services whilst facing staff shortages and other challenges.

CCU supported Children's Services to develop and commence new services to support children, young people and their families to achieve a range of personal outcomes, including various wellbeing support programmes. And we progressed the development of new schemes for adults with complex needs.

Our review of commissioned Children's Services contracts is ongoing and included consultation with a range of stakeholders including children, young people and their families. In some instances we identified the need for wider service pathway reviews, such as the youth homelessness pathway, which is currently underway and will be completed during 2022/23 by a multi-disciplinary working group.

We maintained our programme of annual consultations with children and families relating to short breaks services to continue our development and improvement of these service models on an ongoing basis.

Learning from the impact the pandemic has had on the emotional health and wellbeing of our children, young people and their families during the year, Children's Services invested in a number of wellbeing support programmes. These included a range of outdoor activities and practical learning workshops which were designed to create opportunities for young people to socialise, have fun and to develop a range of personal development skills.



In addition we have strengthened our development of outcome focused practice by having a dedicated post, whose role is to work with teams across Adults and Children' Services, to assist with the development drive to deliver outcome focused practice across the service. As part of this we have also rolled out further training to members of teams, which has been well received and has served to reinvigorate outcome focused practice within the service.

Children and young people with complex/additional learning needs have been proactive in helping to shape services and have a voice. To support Commissioning, the Engagement & Participation Officer organised consultations with children and young people and Carers/Parents to give their views on services. Consultations centred round respite care and upcoming contracts put out to tender. With the support of Ysgol Maes Y Coed and Action for Children two coffee mornings were held, questionnaires posted to families and children consulted in school and in Park House residential respite service.

Supporting Carers

The Council entered into an agreement with NPT Carers Service to manage a Carers Creative Short Breaks Service. With Council funding (of more than £140k) and the Carers Service's knowhow, a scheme was set up to provide innovative short breaks for unpaid carers, tailored to their individual circumstances. The scheme was co-produced with carers in order to understand how this funding could be used to make the biggest differences to them and what range of opportunities they would most benefit from. The funding enabled us to offer a range of respite based on individual needs and outcomes of carers. Carers tell us that their role is physically and emotionally draining, which is why we wish to offer a range of creative short breaks to support the health and wellbeing of

carers, enabling them to be partners, parents, sons, daughters, friends and confidants by enabling them to have ‘time off’ from being a carer. Activities and breaks range from overnight hotel break, spa day, coffee shop vouchers, cinema tickets, wellbeing events, art therapy and children’s activities. The scheme has had a successful start, having already supported more than 100 carers in this way between November 2021 and March 2022.

In addition, the service provides support to around 2,500 unpaid carers each year through newsletters, events, sitting service, a volunteer service, and outreach sessions to name a few.

Priorities for 2021-22 - What we said we would do and what we achieved

To deliver the remodelling of Adult Social Care and Health services

- ✓ We have progressed the remodelling of Adult Social Care and Health Services during this year, however the pandemic has delayed certain aspects of the re-modelling. We previously had two Community Network Social Work Teams and a Review Team who undertook reviews of people who lived in care homes, the re-modelling of these teams has now been completed and we now have three Network Social Work Teams whose geographical areas mirror the GP Cluster Areas being implemented across the Health Board footprint. We are in the final stages of re-modelling our Community Resource Team and Community Occupational Therapy Team, to create three Therapy teams, who will be co-located with our Social Work Teams. This will assist with co-ordination and help us to deliver more co-ordinated and seamless services. In addition because the teams will mirror those of the cluster areas, it will help to facilitate closer working with other services, professionals and teams within those geographical areas.

Supportive performance data for this quality standard

PI Reference	PI Description	Apr – Mar 21 (4th QTR) Cumulative	Apr – Mar 22 (4th QTR) Cumulative
New Measure PI24	The percentage of assessments completed for children within 42 days from point of referral	97.70%	99.20%

Quality Standard 2 - Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

This is about how we help people to look after their physical, mental and emotional health.

A range of activities were organised by the Engagement & Participation Officer (EPO) to improve the wellbeing of children and young people during the pandemic, provide opportunities to build relationships with peers and staff, and exercise their children's rights.

Online painting workshops were organised with all resources posted to participants to avoid barriers to them taking part. Gnoll Park was utilised for outdoor scavenger hunts and Easter egg hunts with children who had previously participated in the 'Cost of the School Day' project (to highlight the cost of extra-curricular activities, clubs, transport, food, etc. to families and the effect on enabling participation).

The Junior Safeguarding Board was recognised at the West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board Annual Awards for their commitment to safeguarding and won a community award. As part of our commitment to employing the best staff young people play a key role in the interview process; a young person's interview panel (consisting of one Hillside young person and two care experienced young people) was part of the selection process for the Hillside Manager position in June.

To provide opportunities for children and young people with disabilities the EPO has supported the setting up of a music group in Ysgol Hendrefelin to provide children with disabilities opportunities to enjoy and partake in fun activities and learn to sing. Through links developed by the EPO, *Circus Eruption* (the first integrated youth Circus in the UK which promotes integration, inclusion and participation), attended the group on a fortnightly basis to teach circus skills, with the children performing a show at the end of the term to parents. The group also assists in consultation work when appropriate.

Since first collaborating with Plan UK (the UK's largest Girls' Rights Charity) in November 2020, the Engagement & Participation Officer has established a Girls' Rights Group named 'Hope' to enable care experienced girls aged 11+ to

exercise their rights, improve their wellbeing and have fun. Throughout July and August, the group met weekly and included trips out for afternoon tea, lunch, women's only gym and accessing the new Abbey View Centre. Due to school and college commitments, the group now meet fortnightly, with members focussing on initiatives including Period Dignity and Safe Spaces for girls and women to exercise. The group are presently campaigning



to ensure all foster carers are educated and prepared when a girl or young woman comes to stay in their home. This includes a welcome letter of support for girls from the group and a list of toiletries and other essentials that foster carers could stock. The group environment nurtures honest discussion such as anxieties when going into care and simple ways that these may be eased. Hope have enjoyed wellbeing

sessions in Craig Gwladys Woods (near Cilfrew) with Small Woods Wales Association, trampolining and a Christmas Party. News of the group's great work reached the then Children's Commissioner Sally Holland who attended a group meeting where the girls enjoyed a cheesecake-making masterclass from a chef. The group regularly contribute to the Children's Commissioner for Wales' monthly missions.

To extend opportunities to our children and young people the EPO has forged partnerships with community based organisations. Bulldogs Community Gym have a fun weekly club for care experienced children and young people. Additionally, the EPO has co-ordinated the setting up of a Bike Maintenance Course. A course booklet has been created and approved by Agored Cymru (the awarding body for education and training providers which supports apprenticeships, employability and progression for learners in Wales) to deliver a Level 1 Bike Maintenance Course to our young people and others in the community. The course focusses on basic maintenance and repair of bicycles. Bikes were sourced from the community and tools supplied to ensure young people had all the equipment needed.



A further project has commenced to improve communication between emergency service personnel and children & young people with complex needs. The EPO has co-ordinated initial meetings between the emergency services, Children's Rights Unit and Ysgol

Maes Y Coed and organised a fun ‘Community Heroes’ day in the school. Over 100 children & young people with complex needs met the Police, Ambulance and Fire staff and taught them essential phrases in British Sign Language. Next steps will be to develop a training tool to educate front line staff on how to communicate with children and young people with complex needs in an emergency.



Throughout the October Half Term a number of fun engagement events were organised along with events for ongoing projects. These included three surfing sessions were held with *Surfability* in Caswell Bay. The sessions catered for children with complex needs and included fully adapted surfboards to meet the needs of children with physical disabilities. A further surfing lesson was organised for able-bodied children and young people with *Surf School Wales* on Aberavon Beach.

Adult Social Work Teams

Adult Social Work Teams have moved to hybrid working, spending a mix of time working from home, the community and from their office base. As the risks associated with the pandemic have reduced, face to face visits with people we work with have increased. Managers are also continuing to work in collaboration with regional partners from Swansea Council and the Health Board to develop pathways and processes to streamline hospital discharge planning. During this year we have also increased the number of social work staff who are based in the hospital to help facilitate hospital discharges for those requiring ongoing social care and support.

Commissioning Unit

Ensuring quality care is provided to vulnerable people when they need it is a key purpose of the Common Commissioning Unit (CCU). We have robust processes in place to monitor all care homes and domiciliary care providers within a planned annual monitoring schedule where we ensure all providers are meeting quality standards of care and contract compliance. If there are any concerns that providers are not delivering a quality safe service through our Contracts, we have a procedure where it can be managed through contract management, performance management or escalating concerns process.

For contract management these are low level concerns/improvements that are addressed via a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Our Contract Monitoring Officers work with providers to ensure the agreed actions are completed within the timescales, the provider has met contract compliance, and the QIP completed to our satisfaction. If the QIP is not being adhered to by the provider then they are moved up to a performance management or escalating concerns process if deemed proportionate. These processes are managed via a panel led by the Council, whose members will depend on the concerns being considered, but could include staff from Safeguarding, Environmental Health, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Care Inspectorate Wales, District Nurses etc., which monitors a provider's improvements via a Joint Interagency Monitoring Panel (JIMP).

Those providers that have fallen below acceptable standards receive intense support from the Commissioning Unit and have improved their procedures to achieve a safer quality driven service that meets contract compliance.

The last year has been an exceptional one because of the impact of the pandemic and as a result of this the annual monitoring programme could not be followed. Where usually two homes per month are monitored, during 2021/22 nine care homes received the annual monitoring, while six domiciliary care providers were monitored instead of the usual one per month. In place of physical monitoring visits, the CCU developed a risk assessment process to identify potential risks in commissioned services and worked with other agencies that have close contact with people that use services, such as District Nurses, to identify any potential performance issues.

Although there was a lower than usual number of monitoring visits, the Commissioning Unit has provided intense support to providers and have monitored homes and domiciliary providers in times of crisis including when they were in incident status (such as a Covid outbreak) in order to support them to meet required standards. A total of 44 focussed monitoring visits were undertaken during the year.

Weekly provider forum meetings have been held throughout the year to engage with providers, ensure they are updated on relevant public health guidance, and that we understand the pressures experienced in delivering services in this difficult time.

We also maintained our weekly calls to all providers every Monday to go through how the pandemic was affecting them, looking at statistics around staffing; sickness; Covid positive cases; vaccine take up; providers in incident status etc. We established this at the outset of the pandemic, collating information and sharing with our internal teams and partners, with weekly care home RAG (Red, Amber, Green) meetings held to coordinate any required support from the Council, Health, Environmental Health, CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales) and other colleagues.

Older persons' domiciliary care services are delivered via a Dynamic Purchasing System under a Framework Contract, which allows providers to apply to be added to the Framework through a tender process at any time for the duration of the contract. Once on the Framework providers are able to bid for care packages through a call off system via our dedicated Domiciliary Care Brokerage Team, which operates to match people's needs with an appropriate care package.

Building on the achievement of successful new services launched in 2020/21, Children's Services continued to invest in a wide range of support services available to children, young people and families. The Commissioning Team supported Children's Services with contract arrangements to secure continuity of services with no service disruption during the pandemic.

We also aimed to complete a children's commissioned services 'quality framework' which will be used as a tool to monitor the quality standard of commissioned services. Pressures on staff resources resulted in the commencement but not completion of this tool during the year. The quality framework has been rescheduled to be completed during 2022/23 and is currently on track to meet the timescale.

Mental Health Services

Driving practice in mental health services is the 'Mental Health Concordant'. It applies to people of all ages and its overriding principle is about supporting people when they are at or about to be at a point of mental health crisis. A more detailed longer-term plan for crisis care services will be developed following the publication of the next national mental health strategy in 2022.

A Regional Crisis Care Forum is in place where there is a clear commitment made by organisations to work together to provide better support to people who

experience, or are at risk of experiencing, a mental health crisis or are in a state of emotional dysregulation and require help. The purpose of the Forum is to act as the driving force to deliver local and regional change and improvement. The Forum acts as an implementation group that oversees delivery of actions to implement the National Crisis Care Concordat Action Plan.

Working locally we have been promoting the Sanctuary Service - the availability and use of non-clinical safe places to go when people are in need. The Sanctuary project was launched in September 2020 to help people tackle a range of mental health problems in a safe secure environment. The Mental Health Sanctuary Service is provided through a collaboration of mental health charities, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Local Authorities, Police, and Ambulance Service. The feedback from questionnaires, face to face interviews and case studies are suggesting that it is meeting the recommendation of the Crisis Care Concordat in Wales (2015) for providing mental health sanctuary services operating out of hours and supporting individuals with social/emotional needs who are in crisis.

Crisis intervention - getting the right support at the right time - is a theme of practice within the Crisis Care Concordat. NPT Council have a well-established Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) rota in place, which deliver on a 24 hours AMHP service. We are currently working on a referral checklist for the AMHP service, as it increasingly has become a default position for those individuals whose mental health presentation/distress is a cause of concern, a risk to themselves and others. A Mental Health Act Assessment must be the last resort when all other attempts (least restrictive guiding principles of the MHA) have been ruled out. Good practice of AMHP practice is shared via a well-established AMHP forum.

Following a Health Inspectorate Wales inspection a number of actions were identified, not least the consideration of appropriate assessment and risk assessment tools in keeping with the principles of the Mental Health Measures Wales, Mental Health Act and Mental Capacity Act. To that end we now have in place compliant assessments that include Mental Health Service Secondary Assessment; Care and Treatment Plan (CTP) Review and a Clinical Risk Assessment and Formulation – the assessment tools are in keeping with the ethos of MHM and are strengths-based, recovery-focused and the person's views being central and at the forefront of the assessment process.

To embed quality CTP in practice and to inform service improvement, we needed to re-establish the programme of CTP. Auditing a percentage of CTPs

against the All-Wales MH Part 2 Audit Tool, the outcome feedback of the review (which is health led) will be shared and scrutinised by the Council's Quality of Practice Strategic Group (QPSG). CTP compliance in Neath Port Talbot is at 94% and we are looking at ways of evidencing the quality of the CTPs to further improve practice.

Neurodiversity and the Delivery of Autism Services

We have an Autism and Neurodiversity Lead who provides a consultative role across Adults and Children's Services and acts as a contact for people with learning disabilities and/or neurodevelopmental conditions. Their details are advertised through various forums, with individuals not previously known to statutory services getting in touch, allowing us to signpost them to the right person or organisation. A service delivery action plan is being developed but the post holder focuses on delivering the four principles in the Statutory Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services:

- Arrangements for autism assessment and diagnosis – strengthened links with Integrated Autism Service
- Arrangements for Accessing Social Care Services via established pathways of enquiries/referrals
- Arrangements for Awareness Raising and Training on Autism. Autism Wales training being finalised for delivery.
- Arrangements for Planning and Monitoring Services and Stakeholder Engagement – links across community settings to include Job Centres, Celtic Leisure, local businesses, local colleges.

Complex Needs Day Services

Day services for people with complex needs are delivered across three sites in Neath Port Talbot, (Trem Y Mor, Brynamlwg and Rhodes House), providing high levels of care from day services staff and enabling individuals to receive support from Health colleagues such as nursing staff, therapists and behavioural support. The service also provides valuable respite care to families and carers, enabling them to take a break from their caring role. The day services reopened on a limited and phased return basis in mid-April 2021 but have increased the availability of support to individuals as risks have reduced throughout the year.

Direct Payments

Direct Payments are offered, following an assessment, to people as an alternative to either in house services or commissioned care, allowing them to employ Personal Assistants (PAs) of their choice. Direct Payments enable people to meet their outcomes and exercise choice and control over the care they receive. Approximately 390 people were being supported with a Direct Payment package at the end of March 2022 versus 410 the previous year, mainly accounted for by changes in individual circumstances due to the pandemic. The in-house Direct Payments Support Service (DPSS) sets up new packages, provides employment guidance and supports with the recruitment of PAs as well as providing a range of other services. The DPSS continued to provide a comprehensive service throughout the year supporting employers and Personal Assistants to work as safely as possible and in line with employment law.

In-house Domiciliary Care and Reablement

The Council's Community Wellbeing Team and Reablement Service delivers domiciliary care to people across the borough. The teams focus largely on providing personal care (washing, dressing, toileting) and supporting people with medication and feeding. Offering both short- and long-term support, the teams use a reablement ethos to support individuals in their own homes to enable them to remain as independent as possible. Regulated by Care Inspectorate Wales, the in-house service delivers care to 122 people, which is approximately 20% of the local domiciliary care market, but plans are in place to increase this share. In addition, the Reablement Team provided short term support to 91 people, and during the year supported 632 discharges, including therapy-only and reablement support.

NPT Safe and Well Service

NPT Safe and Well – a service set up to help people connect with a local volunteer, community group or local service – transferred to Social Services during the year. Initially enabling access to support with food shopping, collecting prescription medication, running daily errands, or arranging for someone to check people are okay, it has also been instrumental in setting up various support groups post-pandemic, including:

- **LGBTQ+ Community** - In February 2022 we opened up the LGBTQ+ Café in St Pauls Centre as a support group for adults, called *Molly's House*, with monthly meetings well attended and over 170 people joining the Facebook

group. Various social events have been held as well as link made with many organisations that can support the group, as well as putting members in touch with their Local Area Coordinators as some of the community felt lonely and isolated.

- **Wellbeing at St Theodores** – The community had become very isolated and groups that existed pre-pandemic had not started back up and some had no plans to restart. With the support from three councillors with their members fund and discussions with the local community we have developed a year of wellbeing projects for people to attend.
- **Parkinson's Group** - We have supported the Parkinson's Society to developed a local group in Port Talbot. Meeting in St Theodores the first Monday of the month, this is very well supported with new people coming each month.
- **Spanish class** – this is a fun holiday language course run by a local Spanish lady. The class is made up of people who have lived in Spain and returned home, and some who just want to pick up the language to go on their holiday. Meeting every second Monday of the month, the class members have developed new friendships which now meet up outside this group to practise their new language skills.
- **Empower Wellbeing** – This group is open to all the community to deliver a light chair-based exercise class. Run by a professional dancer, this group was immediately a big success from week one and has now opened up every Friday as a result of the demand.
- Other successes include a walking group attended by people of all ages who wanted light exercise and build new friendships; a weekly exercise class attended by 35-40 people who now run the group themselves; and Young at Heart, a craft group that meet weekly in Glynneath to support local charities by selling their knitted products.

Since the start of the pandemic Safe and Well have supported over 1,500 residents with either prescription collection, shopping or befriending / wellbeing calls. Since joining Social Services in July 2021 over 126 residents have been supported in this way, while 38 residents are currently being supported with befriending calls. One of the goals of the Safe and Well service is to provide short-term support for long-term problems, helping people to re-engage into their communities and support one another. We currently have 68 volunteers available to us to support residents in a number of ways in the community, and

we work closely with other organisations that we refer to if we are not able to support individuals directly.

Looking further afield, we supported local churches and organisations with their collections to go to Ukraine at the start of the conflict. We provide support through our volunteers in donation centres and supported the massive effort in collecting and distributing to various venues. We helped a local businessperson to fill and pack a van to take to the Ukrainian borders and, as a result of the number of donations received and the news that NPTCBC would be accepting a number of Ukrainian families, we opened up a centre whereby families could come and choose for themselves what they needed.



Priorities for 2021-22 - What we said we would do and what we achieved

To develop and embed a Discharge to Recover and Assess Model to support people to return home promptly and safely from hospital

- ✓ We have worked closely with colleagues in Swansea Council and Swansea Bay University Health Board to develop a Discharge to Recover and Assess Model across the region. Processes have been developed to enable people to be assessed outside of hospital, enabling discharges to take place in a more timely way for some people. It is however recognised that further work is required to realise the potential of this model of care and recent challenges with the delivery of services, such as domiciliary care, has impacted on the ability to implement the model.

To undertake a review of Operational provision of day services

- ✓ The review of operational day service provision was established with a view to delivering an individual directed model of adult social care that minimises dependency and enables people to live as independently as possible within their own homes and communities. The provision of care and support is outcome focussed and delivered flexibly, reflecting the views of the individual.

- ✓ Day services will be delivered alongside community assets; becoming a more enabling service and working closely with the community. To increase flexibility and get closer to more communities, some services will move from building bases and be provided in different venues. This will be achieved by meeting the needs of adults requiring care and support in a way that is person centred, cost effective, rights-based approach, of high quality and sustainable.
- ✓ A number of people who live in supported living placements also access in-house day services. As a result of our review we intend to work alongside Supported Living providers to offer people who live in supported living placements opportunities to access community resources. This will enable the Local Authority to maximise the capacity of in-house services and make provision for the number of young people predicted to transfer into Adult Services over the next five years who will require a day service.
- ✓ ICF funding has been granted to enhance the Bspoked service from its current training and employment model and develop it to become an independent living hub by creating two new training flats where people can develop daily living and independence skills, and where assessments can be carried out by practitioners. It is anticipated that this will support people to reach their potential and in some cases reduce their need for statutory care and support. Work to develop the Independent Living hub is currently underway.

Supportive performance data for this quality standard

PI Reference	PI Description	Apr – Mar 21 (4th QTR) Cumulative	Apr – Mar 22 (4th QTR) Cumulative
Measure 20a	The percentage of adults who completed a period of Reablement and who have a reduced package of care after completion	21.0%	19.5%
Measure 20b	The percentage of adults who completed a period of Reablement needing no further package of care	28.0%	63.8%
Measure 21	The average length of time in calendar days adults (aged 65+) are supported in residential care homes	794	798
Measure 22	Average age of adults entering residential care homes	83	84
New Measure PI30	The percentage of children seen by a dentist within 3 months of becoming looked after	25.7%	48.8%
New Measure PI31	The percentage of Looked After Children at 31 st March registered with a GP within 10 working days of the start of their placement	96.9%	91.6%

Quality Standard 3 - Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

This is about helping to protect people who might be at risk of abuse, neglect, harm or exploitation.

We continue to work towards streamlining the Adult Safeguarding Pathway to bring consistency across Children's and Adult Services. Over the past year we have trialled a Designated Officer for Safeguarding post to respond to, coordinate and strengthen our response to allegations made against professionals and persons in a position of trust. This post will be evaluated in 2022–23.

In 2021 a Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA), with a specific focus on exploitation, was carried out across NPT, which included the wider partnership (Police, Health, Education, Probation, Youth Justice). The inspection concluded, *'There was evidence of effective partnership working where a child was at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE); systems were well developed to support practitioners across organisations, share information and manage risk to maximise the safety of children.'* (JICPA, 2021 p.3)²

A programme of multi-agency audits stemming from the Safeguarding Board is ongoing following the disruption brought about by the pandemic, as we continue to seek to improve our safeguarding practice.

All staff work to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019), and we will continue to develop our approach to respond to harm outside the family across 2022–23, specifically our response to Criminal Exploitation.



The Junior Safeguarding Board (JSB) attended an event in Port Eynon where the young people put the finishing touches to the *Equali-Tea* Resource Pack. The event included beach art, human hungry hippos, BBQ and consultation. The resource was signed off by JSB members and sent to print. *Equali-Tea*, a discussion forum for the LGBTQIA+ community, was launched during National



² <https://careinspectorate.wales/joint-inspectorate-review-child-protection-arrangements-jicpa-neath-port-talbot-2021>

Safeguarding Week via social media platforms and delivered to Secondary Schools and community groups across NPT and Swansea. Feedback from the resource will be collated, presented to young people and used to plan 2022.

Continuing Health Care (CHC)

As part of the work under the Transforming Complex Care Programme, partners including NPT have committed to developing a joint working protocol for the implementation of *Continuing NHS Healthcare – The National Framework for Implementation in Wales* (April 2022). The joint working protocol applies to adults with complex needs who may have continuing healthcare needs as set out in the guidance. The same process will be used to determine if joint funding applies, where CHC is not recommended, or if full social care funding applies. The protocol is for Learning Disability, younger adults, and Mental Health clients where s117 (care and support after leaving hospital) does not apply. Once agreed (expected June 2022) it will be a working protocol that we will keep under review to ensure that it meets the objectives of timely assessment, shared decision pathway based on national guidance, arrangement for assessing eligibility and response to continuing health care through a clear defined pathway with a workable dispute process in place.

Hillside Secure Children's Home

Hillside Secure Children's Home is a unique environment which provides care and support for some of the most vulnerable and complex young people in our society that cannot be met in other settings; as such Hillside is a national resource for Wales. Hillside believes that all children deserve a safe, stable, happy, nurturing environment to grow up in. Its aim is to provide the children with the best care possible for them to feel safe and to give them the childhood they deserve.

Hillside was successful in applying for funding from Welsh Government to start a series of major refurbishments, which commenced in the last year. These changes will modernise the home significantly resulting in an improved environment to nurture the children, and include a complete refurbishment of each home/bedroom as well as the gardens the children have access to.

Recently, priority has been given to training all staff in the Trauma Recovery Model (TRM) ensuring that all employees at Hillside have an understanding of trauma, child development and attachment. It has been very important for all

of the staff in Hillside to be a part of this training, to highlight the vulnerabilities and complexities of the children that are homed here.

Embedding the TRM encourages staff to build relationships within a therapeutic method, mediating the effect of trauma, helping the children grow and develop in a joyful environment. Hillside have made changes to their visiting procedures which will improve the quality of contact the children have with family members such as allowing pets to visit. This change in process has a significant effect on improving outcomes for children due to the valuable relationships children have with their family pets.

Hillside is subject to regular monitoring and review and the latest inspection by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in February 2022 was very positive, acknowledging the amount of work that had taken place:

- ✓ “*Plans are now very different and are in the voice of the child*”
- ✓ “*The care and support observed in the home was in compliance*”
- ✓ “*Evidence of clear governance structures in place*”
- ✓ “*Clear evidence of the reduction in Interventions and Single Separations*”

The home continues to be overseen by the multi-agency Hillside Development Board whose purpose includes:

- Ensuring the continuous improvement of Hillside
- Challenging the delivery and direction of Hillside
- Ensuring that improvements can be evidenced
- Reporting progress to the Council’s Cabinet Committee for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing
- Engaging with front line staff and young people
- Providing strategic leadership to the development of Hillside

Priorities for 2021-22 - What we said we would do and what we achieved

To ensure a robust, resilient, compassionate and consistent approach to safeguarding practice

- ✓ The Corporate Safeguarding Group has been involved in the development of national best practice guidance for corporate safeguarding practice.
- ✓ As we prepare for the introduction of Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) the Local Authority has been working with regional partners to develop a programme of work to ensure we are ready to go live in 2023 – 24.

- ✓ Quality Assurance for Adult Services continues to be overseen by the Quality Practice Strategic Group (Local Authority) and the Safeguarding Board. The audit programme specific to Adult at Risk (AAR) was disrupted as a result of COVID but this is now on track with S126 enquiries and Case conferences next in line to be audited.
- ✓ Practitioners across Children and Adult Services are working closely to develop a seamless transition between services when a child turns 18. Traditional transitional pathways focused on those with complex disabilities, the focus now is to extend these transitional pathways to those who are exploited.
- ✓ Our Quality Assurance (QA) framework and programme of work is now well embedded across Social Care. Our approach to QA will be further strengthened in 2022–23 as we seek to elicit the views of children, adults, parents, survivors, carers and communities through different methods of engagement.
- ✓ We are incredibly proud of the work we have done with parents across NPT and beyond to develop a Parent Advocacy network and model of practice. We are aiming to launch Parent Advocacy in 2022–23.
- ✓ We continue working with partners to review our response to Domestic Violence and Abuse across Children’s and Adult Services in NPT.
- ✓ Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is now well embedded across Children’s Services and has been well received by those families who have accessed this service.
- ✓ We have made it our goal to make *NPT the safest place in Wales to live*.
- ✓ We strive to enhance the learning culture across Social Care in NPT and will continue to influence regional and national agendas in respect of safeguarding practice.

Supportive performance data for this quality standard

PI Reference	PI Description	Apr – Mar 21 (4th QTR) Cumulative	Apr – Mar 22 (4th QTR) Cumulative
New Measure PI27	The percentage of re-registrations of children on the local authority Child Protection Register	7.40%	11.60%
New Measure PI28	The average length of time (in days) for all children who were on the Child Protection Register during the year	257.7 days	278.1 days

Quality Standard 4 - Encouraging and Supporting People to Learn, Develop and Participate in Society

This looks at how we help people to learn and interact with other people so they can be part of their communities.

Growing Together - Feelgood Fridays

Skewen Feelgood Fridays Project brings women together on a weekly basis to alleviate isolation and loneliness, improve health and wellbeing both physical and emotional, create new friendships and provide a natural mutual supportive environment. The project aims to increase individuals' confidence and self-esteem by positive sessions and make the attendees feel good about themselves. A programme of activities focusing on fun and positivity was designed



through feedback and workshops from women living in the area. The ultimate aim of the project is to use natural community support at an early stage preventing individuals needing statutory support services in the future.

The project is being developed and run by local volunteers working alongside the Local Area

Coordinator, delivering weekly session with a rolling programme of activities focusing on health, learning and social opportunities.

Community Connecting Team

The Community Connecting Team (CCT) provide community based opportunities to vulnerable people from the age of 16 years' old living in Neath Port Talbot. During the coronavirus pandemic the services delivered by CCT were paused; several of the staff were redeployed to a new team which was developed to support the in house domiciliary care team (CWT) and supported people to prepare meals, collect shopping and prescriptions etc. Other staff were redeployed to the Test, Trace and Protect Service. As risks reduced, the team started to reinstate local activities for the people they work with to support them to become active members of their community.

Community Independence Service

The Community Independence Service (CIS) provides one to one housing-related support to help vulnerable people aged 16+ to manage and maintain their homes, tenancies and personal circumstances in order to live as independently as possible. CIS aims to build people's confidence and independence by offering support including around budgeting and debt management; planning and preparing healthy meals; weekly shopping; assistance at key medical appointments; ensuring homes are kept safe and clean and in line with tenancy agreements; and encouragement to take part in social activities in the local community. During the pandemic several of the staff were redeployed to support the in house Domiciliary care team (CWT) and supported people to prepare meals, collect shopping and prescriptions etc., while other staff were redeployed to the Test, Trace and Protect Service. During 2021/22 the face to face services provided by CIS which had stopped due to the coronavirus pandemic were reinstated.

Community Occupational Therapy Service (COTS)

The Community Occupational Therapy Service aims to maintain, promote and restore independence for people of all ages, so that they are able to live more productive and enjoyable lives. The service offers an assessment and planning service and aims to enable people to live as independently as possible by providing advice, aids and equipment. The team also undertake manual handling assessments to support the in house and external domiciliary care market. The team work closely with Social Services and Health colleagues to provide a comprehensive service to aid people's independence and to minimise risks. In 2021/22 the team provided a service to 1466 people, a thirteen per cent increase on the previous year.

Bspoked

Bspoked provides work and training opportunities for adults with a range of disabilities, focusing on what each individual is interested in and what they'd like to achieve from the service. The purpose is to create an environment which prepares and provides service users with the skills to develop their potential, and to support their progression to paid or voluntary employment or community based activities. As we slowly emerged from the pandemic, paused services were restarted during 2021/22 on a phased return basis. During the pandemic staff also engaged successfully with people who attend Bspoked in alternative ways, including online quizzes and events.

Plans were made during 2021/22 to develop two independent living flats where people can be supported by staff to develop and build on existing skills. The newly created areas will include the two training flats each with a kitchen, bathroom, living room and bedroom (although these areas will not provide accommodation for people to live in). Funding was sought from the Integrated Care Fund to support this project and consultation events were held to seek peoples' views.

Respite at Trem Y Mor

Overnight respite care for Adults with Learning and Physical Disabilities is provided in the Local Authority's respite unit at Trem Y Mor, a 16 bedded unit located near Aberavon seafront. This facility reopened for respite provision on a phased return in May 2021, although had remained open throughout the pandemic to provide care to a small number of residents who required longer term care whilst waiting for permanent accommodation to be arranged. This service provides valuable respite care for families and carers enabling them to take a break from their caring roles.

Neath Local Area Coordinator (LAC) Cluster Events

To date the Neath LAC Cluster have coordinated two cross cluster engagement events bringing individuals from across the area together, with the aim of making new connections, build new friendships, discuss common issues and gain confidence.

'Time to Talk' Event

The annual Time to Talk Day is the nation's biggest mental health conversation. Run by *Mind* and *Time to Change Wales*, it is a day to bring people together to talk and listen. The event, held this year at The Bloom Inn, Skewen, was a great success creating a safe place for people to chat about their lives and experiences.



'Mix and Mingle' Event



The Mix and Mingle Event took place in Neath Rugby Club and was based on feedback from participants at the initial event. A number of activities took place, people were able to meet, have fun and gain a positive boost from the experience, as well as gather information and advice.

Skewen Community Garden

After identifying the need for a Community Garden through local engagement, a committee was elected to work alongside the Local Area Coordinator to look at land and opportunities. Working with Coedfranc Town Council the group were able to lease a plot of land in Skewen Park. Many meetings took place to have a clear vision and develop a project plan.



The purpose of the garden is to promote social inclusion and encourage many individuals living in and around the Skewen area to be involved. It aims to provide an inclusive and safe area for the community, while promoting education, physical and mental health and positive wellbeing through horticulture, forging new friendships and learning new skills.



This will help to build a more resilient community by connecting people to each other, boosting individual wellbeing and helping to combat loneliness. As the garden develops through the active participation of the community, sharing skills and experiences will strengthen relationships and make individuals feel valued members of the group and the wider community. The group secured funding through NPT Seed Fund and are currently working through Phase 1 of the development. The committee are recruiting volunteers, have 471 members on the Facebook group, held a very positive launch and activity event and are linking with a number of community groups and local schools.

Priorities for 2021-22 - What we said we would do and what we achieved

Development of Early Intervention and Prevention Services

Progress in development of this important service area has included:

- ✓ Recruitment of a Principal Officer for Early Intervention, Prevention and Community Support Services to lead on these services
- ✓ Establishment and administration of seed funding opportunities for new and innovative community projects. 34 new projects were funded via this framework between September 2021 and March 2022
- ✓ Establishment of the Community Falls Service, using digital technology to provide early intervention to people in order to reduce risk of falls whilst increasing independence and wellbeing -
 - ARMED (Advanced Risk Modelling for Early Detection) falls pilot.
 - Falls Response pilot within the Afan Cluster.
- ✓ Increased the establishment of Local Area Coordinators across the borough, in line with the Adult Services redesign to a place-based model of delivery.
- ✓ Establishment and promotion of Safe and Well volunteering provision within Adult Services. The team were key to supporting residents affected by the COVID pandemic
- ✓ Contribution to the Regional Carers Strategy and Volunteering Strategy.

Supportive performance data for this quality standard

PI Reference	PI Description	Apr – Mar 21 (4th QTR) Cumulative	Apr – Mar 22 (4th QTR) Cumulative
New Measure PI32	The percentage of children looked after at 31 March who has experienced one or more change of school, during a period or periods of being looked after, which were not due to transitional arrangements, in the 12 months to 31 March.	3.90%	5.30%

Quality Standard 5 - Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

This is about helping people to achieve healthy relationships at home and with the people they are close to.

Our social work teams provide routes to care and support for the most vulnerable children, young people and adults in Neath Port Talbot. Their aim is to ensure that the needs of those with disabilities or at risk of harm are met, that they have the best life possible, and they have as much independence as practicable.

Case Study

“Sarah” had needs for care and support due to her learning disability and history of risk taking behaviours. Upon becoming pregnant, it was recommended by children’s services that she move to a mother and baby placement upon the birth in order to safeguard the baby and support Sarah to develop appropriate parenting skills.

The nearest mother and baby placement was in North Wales, which would have meant little or no contact with her Mum. Recognising the importance of Mum’s involvement for Sarah, the allocated adults and children’s social workers worked together to secure a unique arrangement of an adult placement within NPT that would accommodate both Sarah and baby with wraparound support for baby provided by children’s services.

The placement has been a great success; enabling Sarah to develop a strong bond with her baby and develop her competence as a parent alongside her independent living skills. The involvement of her Mum has been integral to this success as well as the support provided by adult’s and children’s carers.

Transition

The transition of young people to adulthood is a key priority area for improvement. To this end our activities and achievements during the year have included:

- The Regional Transition Group has delivered on a regional multi-agency transition policy for children and young people. The objective is that there is a clear, comprehensive and robust process in place to guide the transition of all young people from Children's to Adults services by all partner agencies within the West Glamorgan Region
- A Transition Policy is currently in its pilot phase with mechanisms to review and identify any issues and challenges in practice
- Standard 6 of the Transition Policy is that transition plans be developed in a timely manner with key milestones. A local operational transition group has been established across Children's and Adults Services to share information between key agencies (including Social Services, Health, Education) on those young people identified as possibly requiring a service post-18 years to ensure smooth transition to adulthood. It is a forum for key agencies to agree responsibilities, informing commissioning strategies (mapping exercise) for future accommodation and support needs. It is also an arena for discussion around those young people who have vulnerability and risk to their presentation, to share good practice and to learn from each other

Priorities for 2021-22 - What we said we would do and what we achieved

To further embed outcome focussed practice within children and adults services

- ✓ In partnership with Social Care Wales we published our strengths-based model of practice³ outlining how we will work with all stakeholders to make a difference to people's wellbeing by on building relationships and trust with people, and developing a shared understanding of what a good life can look like. The document shows how the service aims to work collaboratively, and provides ten key principles of practice:
 - Collaborative conversations: the best conversations happen when people feel really listened to
 - Empowering the voice of the person: we make sure that plans and paperwork are written in children's and people's own words, and are easy to understand and follow

³ <https://www.npt.gov.uk/33290>

- Strengths focused: we build on people's strengths, not focus on what they can't do
- Relationship based: we know the best outcomes are achieved when we all work together
- Outcomes focused: we focus on 'what matters most' in children's and people's lives to develop a shared understanding of personal goals
- Whole family focus: addressing all needs and risks with family members
- Strengths/Priority needs/Risks: we must talk about and recognise what we are most worried about, and aim to protect where possible and help people manage and take considered risks to achieve their outcomes
- Transparent: we are open and honest in our work
- Skills/Knowledge: workers have training to help them develop collaborative communication skills and are supported to put them into practice
- Reflection: it is important that we reflect and are always ready to adapt and reconsider the way we are working

Supportive performance data for this quality standard

PI Reference	PI Description	Apr – Mar 21 (4th QTR) Cumulative	Apr – Mar 22 (4th QTR) Cumulative
New Measure PI26	The percentage of Looked After Children returned home from care during the year	35%	Reported annually by Welsh Govt.
New Measure PI33	The percentage of children looked after on 31 March who has had three or more placements during the year.	4.08%	Reported annually by Welsh Govt.

Quality Standard 6 - Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

This is about helping people to improve their income, benefit from a social life and have a suitable place to live.

Quality Assurance Framework

The Council is committed to working closely with service users, their families, service providers, partners and others to ensure services are of good quality and meet individuals' assessed needs. Our new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for the Provision of Learning Disability and Mental Health Supported Living Services – which underwent public consultation during the year - is one way we can better understand and improve the quality of Learning Disability and Mental Health Services, as well as those services for people with complex needs. In line with the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the focus is on independence, choice and control, and our emphasis remains on promoting supported living schemes. As such the objectives of the QAF are to:

- benchmark services so that commissioners, service providers and others may better understand how well support is delivered relative to the outcomes agreed for service users
- encourage continuous improvement and best practice in supported living services
- help identify changes that would make it easier for provider to enable service users to achieve their personal outcomes
- to encourage more collaborative working with providers, service users, their family and others so a multifaceted view of 'quality' may be obtained
- to have a clear sense of what quality means in practical terms in operational services

Tools such as this form a 'social contract' through which we strive to maintain and improve service standards for some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Supported Living Schemes

A number of schemes have been developed aiming to provide good quality care and support while promoting independence. Some of our schemes include:

Scheme 1, Rhos.

This is the Council's first development of a supported living scheme exclusively for individuals who have a Mental Health diagnosis. The scheme was developed in conjunction with First Choice Housing Association and provides accommodation for three individuals together with staff sleep in provision for M&D care who are the support providers. The development was undertaken following a recognition that Mental Health services often default to Residential Care provision with little or no alternative, so this new supported living scheme provides a further option. All three individuals have settled well into the scheme with their individual outcomes being met.

Scheme 2, Neath

This scheme provides accommodation for three individuals who have a learning disability, together with sleep in provision for the Lifeways support provider's staff. Although the scheme was developed in 2020/21 the last of the two remaining residents are due to move in summer 2022 after their move was delayed by the pandemic. All of the residents have / will be transitioning from their family homes, and families have been involved in the development and planning of the scheme.

Scheme 3, Margam

Opened in December 2021 this is the Council's first development of an Extra Care Scheme for individuals with pan-disabilities. This development has highlighted partnership working with Tai Tarian as the landlord of the property together with the support provider MIRAS who has been contracted to undertake the support which has been developed on a targeted basis. The property was originally a development block of six flats in need of major renovation. Following a successful application for grant monies from Welsh Government the development has created five self-contained one-bedroom flats together with one flat for staff to provide an office and sleep in space. In addition to the flats a communal space was developed to provide a meeting / activity hub for the residents. Following the success of the development it is anticipated that further Extra Care Schemes will be developed.

Future schemes

As part of our ongoing promotion of supported living accommodation, the following schemes are also under development:

- ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) scheme – this scheme will provide accommodation for three individuals who have an Autistic Spectrum diagnosis. A property has been identified and will be developed and completed in 2022
- Core and Cluster scheme – this will be the first of its kind for the Local Authority which will provide a supported living unit for two individuals with a physical disability (the ‘Core’) – this will be developed and completed in Autumn 2022, and the ‘Cluster’ which will provide four independent flats of which two will be adapted to meet the needs of those with a physical disability. The support model for the Cluster will be floating support which will be provided by staff from the Core unit
- Specialist Supported Accommodation – this is a development for individuals with a mental health diagnosis that also experience challenges in maintaining tenancies, which will provide independent accommodation on a floating support model. The development is in conjunction with Tai Tarian who own the building and will be the landlord.

Housing Support Grant

The Housing Support Grant (HSG) aims to prevent homelessness and support people to access and/or maintain a stable and suitable home. Neath Port Talbot saw its HSG allocation increase by 32% in 2021/22. This increase allowed the following schemes to be developed:

- Floating Support for individuals on release from custody
- 6 units of supported accommodation for young people to move on from temporary accommodation
- Assertive outreach scheme for homeless individuals with mental health difficulties
- Replaced 3 units of shared accommodation for people with mental health difficulties with 4 units of self-contained accommodation.

Additionally, approximately £200,000 was allocated to support new pilot projects. Local organisations were invited to apply for a one-off grant allocation, for up to 12 months during the period April 2021 to March 2022, with the aim

of preventing or relieving homelessness. Thirteen applications were received and evaluated by a panel consisting of officers from the Commissioning Unit, Housing Options Service, Environmental Health, Community Safety Partnership, Area Planning Board, Neath Port Talbot Youth Service and Neath Port Talbot CVS.

The following proposals were approved and successfully established, with three schemes approved for ongoing funding in 2022/23:

- **Calan DVS Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Recovery Toolkit** - Delivery of the ACE Recovery Toolkit to adults, children and young people who have been affected by domestic violence and abuse (DVA), with the aim of minimising the impact of ACEs and improve their physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Pobl Clarewood Young Persons Outreach Worker** - Early intervention and engagement with young people who are at risk of homelessness through the delivery of an ‘outreach service’, including attendance at drop-ins, emergency accommodation etc.
- **Salvation Army Life Skills Training Manager** - Delivery of life skills training, including budgeting, cooking and healthy lifestyles to homeless individuals accessing the Salvation Army Homelessness Hub, the majority of whom will be homeless, living in temporary accommodation or rough sleeping.
- **Thrive Women’s Aid SWAN Project** - Provision of specialist advocacy and support to women who are sexually exploited.
- **WCADA (Adferiad) Women’s Outreach Engagement Service** - Provision of specialist outreach engagement service for women with complex and co-occurring needs, including mental health and substance misuse.
- **Hafan Cymru** – Floating Support to individuals with complex needs who are struggling to manage their tenancy.
- **Platfform & Tai Tarian** – Mental Health floating support for Tai Tarian tenants.
- **Thrive Dispersed** – Dispersed Refuge for women where a shared refuge accommodation is unsuitable for their individual needs.

HSG Annual Service User Questionnaire

In September 2021, all service users in HSG funded services were invited to complete the Regional Housing Support Service User Questionnaire which looked at the overall satisfaction with the support provided. 31 questionnaires were completed, with 97% indicating they felt better overall as a result of the

support they received. 90% reported feeling safer, 74% were better able to manage their accommodation, 63% were better able to manage their money, and 75% saw an improvement in their physical or mental health. Feedback comments received include:

"I can access the community and visit places of interest, museums, art galleries, motor shows etc."

Learning Disability – Supported Living

"They are someone to talk to when you are down – I am not sure what would have happened to me if I was on my own without support"

Young Persons Supported Accommodation

"My mental health has improved, made friends and neighbours and feel I am more independent and getting back to my normal self."

Mental Health Supported Accommodation

"It is fantastic to have a support worker to listen, understand and to turn to and not be judged and know you are going to be ok and supported"

Generic Floating Support

Homelessness and Housing

We secured over £10.5 million of grant to build new affordable housing in NPT (including nearly £1.1 million of additional in-year funding claimed against underspend in other areas across Wales) and 115 new grant-funded housing association homes were completed during the year. Affordable housing is however delivered by housing associations both with and without grant, sometimes working with private housing developers when planning conditions require them to make an affordable housing contribution. Therefore, the total number of new housing association homes completed during the year is currently estimated to have been at least 120.

Homelessness support was put in place with funding from the Welsh Government, with third sector providers and stakeholders working together to put in additional specialist support and services for people with more complex needs. The latter part of year saw Welsh Government providing additional funding to increase staff in the service to help to meet the additional demand and to provide more support for service users, with 13 new posts in NPT created to respond to the changing landscape and demands. During the year 60.6% (236 of 389) of households were successfully prevented from becoming homeless. However, 2021-22 saw an increase in the number of people presenting having been threatened with eviction from the private rented sector for a variety of reasons. Covid legislation in April 2020 saw a huge increase in presentations, made worse when the suspension on evictions was lifted - many landlords served notice on their tenants due to the lack of action they were able to take up to that point and the uncertainty within the market. The pending implementation of the Renting Homes Act has also seen landlords deciding to sell up due to the expectations on landlords under the Act.

The Homelessness Prevention Officers work closely with these households to prevent homelessness by assessing their situation including their financial circumstances and any other relevant issues. Working closely with all staff within the Prevention Team, they can identify possible support needs and ways of ensuring tenancy sustainment, with all advice, information and assistance provided by the Prevention Team aimed at preventing homelessness.

In October 2021 Local Authorities were tasked to develop a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. Plans would be developed to transition from the current baseline homelessness position, moving away from the use of temporary accommodation to providing more sustainable models of accommodation and support. Rapid Rehousing (RRH) is an intervention designed to help households

quickly exit a homelessness crisis, and to avoid becoming homeless again. It is a housing led solution, but is focused around the needs of the individual – a person centred approach.

The ultimate objective is to offer housing that is safe, affordable, decent, and meets the needs of the individual in terms of location, proximity to family, services, access to transport and facilities such as shops and schools. It does not require people to be “tenancy ready” before they access accommodation, and instead are offered a bespoke package of assistance, tailored to the issues they are facing. In this way people access permanent accommodation, reducing the risk of repeated episodes of homelessness, and the trauma that can cause. This plan outlines Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council’s transition to using the rapid rehousing model to tackle homelessness over the next five years. This follows Welsh Government’s (WG) high level action plan 2021-2026 “**Ending Homelessness in Wales**”⁴ which recognised the significant and increasing pressure on homelessness services, and the urgency of making “a transformational shift required to end homelessness”.

Disabled Facilities Grants

The demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) has returned and has exceeded the available budget. Due to the pandemic there was an underspend in 2020/21 which was carried over into 2021/22; this was also fully committed during the year. A significant increase in demand is also expected in 2022/23 with the removal of the means test for small and medium works.

The delivery of DFGs continues to feel the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Contractors that carry out larger works are still very busy in the private housing market which is causing a significant delay in larger work starting on site, while smaller works such as shower conversions have returned to pre-pandemic levels of delivery. The time taken to deliver a DFG is still a way off the pre-pandemic level of an average of 196 days but is recovering and, at 339 days in 2021/22, is an improvement on 363 days in 2020/21. The number of DFGs completed has improved significantly from 97 in 2020/21 to 202 in 2021/22, albeit slightly less than pre-pandemic (2019/20) figure of 212.

⁴ [Ending homelessness in Wales: a high level action plan 2021 to 2026 \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/ending-homelessness-wales-high-level-action-plan-2021-2026)

Welfare Rights

The Welfare Rights Unit is a specialist section, which deals with helping people to claim the benefits, which they are entitled to. The Unit helps local residents via a self-referral or from Social Services; advice is provided on their benefits entitlement; the Unit offers a public helpline, support with form filling and representation at appeals tribunals, assisted via funding from Communities for Work. The unit has provided a service throughout the COVID pandemic, albeit with its significant challenges due to the lockdown restrictions, with no face-to-face meetings, and appeals tribunals undertaken, in the main, remotely. That said, towards the end of 2021/22 face-to-face appeals had been reinstated and plans are in place to restart the community-based surgeries early in 2022/23.

The Unit works also continues to work in partnership with Macmillan, who provide funding for Macmillan benefit advisors.

Despite the challenges during the year, the Welfare Rights Unit assisted **2,504** people and was successful in obtaining **£6,689,652** in benefits for people within Neath Port Talbot, including over **£266,000** through representation at Appeals. The Unit retains the ***Advice Quality Standard*** through Recognising Excellence Limited; this is a significant achievement for the Unit and means that the people of Neath Port Talbot can be confident in the service and the advice given by the Unit. Of these figures, the Macmillan team opened over **810** cases during 2021/22; this was carried out completely via telephone, given the COVID restrictions and the inability to provide advice clinics at the hospitals bases. Macmillan raised **£2,389,357** in benefits during the period.

Welsh Language

Social Services continued to consolidate arrangements in relation to the Welsh Language throughout the pandemic; Directorate senior officers work with corporate colleagues to promote and support the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards and the development of a Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. Officers attended a Welsh Government Seminar in relation to ***More Than Just Words*** to understand key themes and priorities emerging from recent task group work based on an evaluation of the framework. The Directorate received no Welsh language complaints during the year.

Priorities for 2021-22 - What we said we would do and what we achieved

To support children and young people to live in safe, stable and permanent families and to ensure that only those children who need to be looked after are in care

We recognise that for the majority of children, the right place is to be at home with their families, and Children & Young People's Services continues to deliver and commission a range of early intervention and prevention based support services which can prevent entry into care. For those children who do come into care, the Council takes seriously its responsibility as their Corporate Parent, seeking to ensure that Children Looked After (CLA) are placed in the most appropriate type of placement and to maximise the most appropriate permanence options. The availability of high quality support in local, stable placements is integral to supporting our CLA population (which has been steadily decreasing) to achieve good outcomes.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, our 'business as usual' approach has enabled us to maintain a concerted effort in managing our CLA population, ensuring that the long term care plans for our children and young people continue to be regularly reviewed.

- ✓ A working group has been in place since March 2020 to consider all CLA plans to ensure that only those children who need to be looked after remain so. Fortnightly meetings continued to take place with a core membership. The group analyses all CLA data across the Service. This information has then been put into categories (some of which overlap): Respite/Support Breaks from home; Residential Care; Under 5 year; 5 to 10 years; 11 to 14 years; 15 years plus; Kinship Care; Mainstream Care; Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements; Placement Orders; Out of county placements; Section 76 cases; Placement with Parents (PWP) cases. Cases that have been highlighted for a change of care plan are considered together, and this information is then reviewed every three months to ensure that there is no delay.
- ✓ During the year we have seen **77** children discharged from care. This is an increase on the previous year, with all discharged in a planned way. However, where it is deemed appropriate for children and young people to come into care, they will continue to do so. As a result, we have seen **50** admissions during the year, which was a decrease on the previous year. All those

admitted into care were fully considered in our Admissions Panel chaired by the Head of Service, taking into account the best interests and level of vulnerability of each individual young person.

- ✓ The number of Children and Young People Looked After in Neath Port Talbot has continued to decrease year on year since 2012, falling from 472 in March 2012 to 268 in March 2022.

Supportive performance data for this quality standard

PI Reference	PI Description	Apr – Mar 21 (4th QTR) Cumulative	Apr – Mar 22 (4th QTR) Cumulative
New Measure PI25	The percentage of children supported to live with their family	67.00%	69.70%
New Measure PI34	The percentage of all care leavers who have completed at least 3 months of education, training or employment in the past 12 months since leaving care	44%	63.60%
New Measure PI34	The percentage of all care leavers who have completed at least 3 months of education, training or employment in the past 24 months since leaving care	42%	33.30%
New Measure PI35	The percentage of care leavers who have experienced homelessness during the year	1.90%	3.51%

How We Do What We Do

Our Workforce and How We Support Their Professional Roles

During the pandemic we continued to offer a blended training programme across Adults and Children's Services, which included digital support, sessions to upskill the Home Care workforce, health care related training opportunities such as Stoma and Catheter Care, as well as essential training such as Manual Handling and Safeguarding.

We have supported internal and commissioned services in their response to Covid-19 by continuing the responsive programme to train up volunteers prepared to work in the private care homes as and when necessary and provide training at the right time for agencies recruiting new staff into the sector to ensure they were fit to deliver care and support. This comprised of Manual Handling for Clients (theory and practical), Safeguarding, dementia basic awareness, and Infection Control.

We've continued to deliver essential face to face training for client handling throughout the year alongside e-learning for theory. We also provided expert advice and guidance on Manual Handling issues and concerns and where necessary, provided on-site visits and training in individuals homes.

One Training Officer has worked alongside the Regional Infection, Protection and Control (IP&C) nurse employed across care homes to implement and deliver Infection Control training for care home staff and introduced the IP&C Champions. They have also trained to become a Dementia Care Mapper in supporting commissioned providers with the more complex individuals living with Dementia to avoid placement breakdown.

Wellbeing Workshops have been provided for workers to better understand their mental health by placing an emphasis on developing the mental skills needed to thrive both in work and in life.

The Training Officers have been working regionally to address the implications of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) and preparing the workforce for its introduction in April 2023. This has involved a whole service upskill in Mental Capacity Act (MCA) awareness for care staff and MCA & Best Interests (BIA) training for Social Workers and those involved with carrying out assessments, to ensure there is a consistent baseline knowledge across all staff in preparation for the training around LPS.

The Training Officers have been working closely with Community Occupational Therapists, Health, CWT and commissioned providers in developing knowledge, skills and practice relating to the implementation of Single Handed Care approaches to explore safe and alternative ways of providing client handling care and support in the community with one staff member, as opposed to having two staff to support with these tasks in a bid to support the ever increasing demands on services to provide care in the community and to encourage more timely discharges from hospital and increase flow for our service.

In Children & Young People's Services (CYPS) there has been an emphasis on core skills and an outcome focused care and support approach. Qualified social workers have been provided with training to support their consolidation including, engaging with children and families when significant harm may result in criminal proceedings, court skills, assessment in child protection, risk analysis, direct work and the trauma recovery model, chronology, case note recording, the Public Law Outline, report writing, court skills, assessment in child

protection, risk analysis, care proceedings, and private law. Practice support workers have received a bespoke core skills programme and particular emphasis on supporting parenting.

We have supported Children's Services to raise awareness of the NPT '*Strength Based Model of Practice: Working to achieve outcomes*' as co-produced with Social Care Wales, and developed a large online launch event. We continue to support consultant social workers to deliver refresher training and provide ongoing mentoring within their teams with regard to personal outcomes. Particular focus has been given to linking in co-production, improving case recordings and working with parents and partners and the development of principles and practice guidance to support a consistent approach to outcome focused case recording.

We sit on Social Care Wales' development group developing a national safeguarding framework and consistent training standards for safeguarding in Wales. We have continued to roll out our *Safeguarding Adults and Children from Exploitation* interactive training pack that raises awareness of county lines, criminal and sexual exploitation, trafficking, radicalisation, and hate crime for both adults and children.

To continue to comply with mandatory Welsh Government National Training Framework, the legislation *Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) 2016*; priority groups of frontline staff have received Group 2 and Group 3 Champions training for "Ask and Act".

CYPS - 250 learning opportunities with 2,096 attendances.

Adults – 567 learning opportunities with 3,102 attendances.

The Training Section has provided **1,715 one-to-one** sessions in support of **365** learners to meet the qualification requirements for the registration of the Social Care Workforce. Work has started with the national lead for Wales for Community Healthcare to develop an All Wales Medication Passport/training Framework for safe administration. Online Medication Training has been delivered to 316 staff across the health and social care sector.

Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future

Ongoing public sector pressures have seen reduced resources and increasing demand which, combined with the global pandemic, mean that financial planning remains a challenge for the Council.

Senior officers receive monthly reports, and quarterly reports are prepared for Elected Members. These reports monitor expenditure forecasts against the Social Services budget which helps to identify trends, and highlight cost pressures and savings opportunities. Monitoring supports the budget-setting process for the following year and the Council's ***Medium Term Financial Plan*** (MTFP). The MTFP sets out the Council's financial management approach, including projections, an assessment of key risks and our medium term approach to achieving the Council's key financial and service priorities.

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

The Social Care, Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board continued to hold meetings remotely throughout the pandemic, prioritising the issues, particularly in relation to the COVID response, as required. The Directorate enjoys the advice, support and guidance provided by its Cabinet Members and indeed, the wider Council.

Partnership working is paramount, especially highlighted during the COVID pandemic, ensuring the provision and sustainability of services, and the Directorate continues to enjoy working closely with partners across the health, private and third sectors.

Governance

The Council has adopted the 2016 Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework, developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). To comply with the Framework, the Council must publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively.

Corporate governance responsibilities and processes remained in place throughout the pandemic.

Complaints & Representations

The Social Services Complaints and Representations Procedure is based upon the good practice guidance issued alongside the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representation Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The procedure is available to ensure that everyone who

makes a complaint about social services in Neath Port Talbot has a right to be listened to properly. Their best interests must be safeguarded and promoted. Their views, wishes and feelings must be heard. Their concerns should be resolved quickly and effectively.

The Complaints Team has continued to work remotely throughout 2021-22 as a result of the pandemic; staff have continued to provide a responsive service in supporting complainants in addressing their complaints and their desired outcomes, where appropriate. Face-to-face meetings have been reinstated where requested, in line with the Council's risk assessments.

The Complaints Team dealt with 42 formal Social Services Stage 1 complaints during 2021-22 across Children's Services, Adult Services and Business Management; with a further four Stage 2 complaints; this is a slight increase from the previous year. There were an additional five corporate complaints, relating to support functions. Activity in dealing with complainants on an 'informal' basis is far greater, with the Team being proactive in supporting Managers to achieve satisfactory outcomes for service users, their families and carers. Activity in supporting Teams in addressing 'informal' complaints is increasing and has resource implications on Officers. The Team also recorded/reported on 99 compliments received across Social Services.

Looking Ahead: Our priorities for 2022/23

After a tumultuous two years, the Directorate has identified the following as our key strategic priorities for the coming year:

- To strengthen opportunities for early offers of help, to ensure vulnerable children, their families, and adults in need of support are having access to community based support services at the earliest opportunity.
- To support children and young people to live in safe, stable and permanent families and to ensure that only those children who need to be looked after are in care.
- To further embed participation and engagement across the Directorate, to ensure the voice of vulnerable children and adults are at the forefront of our services.
- To ensure a robust, resilient, compassionate and consistent approach to safeguarding practice across Social Care.

- Support people to live a fulfilling life at home, connected to the community and resources around them, and provide care and support where needed.
- To enhance the support afforded to unpaid carers of adults and the contribution they make to our communities.
- To further develop the local social care market to improve the range and quality of services.
- To continue the use of technology in supporting people to achieve their personal outcomes.
- To continue to develop a robust social care workforce.