

# Public Document Pack



County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

Monday, 6 November 2023

## Notice of Meeting

### Joint Select Committee

#### (People and Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committees)

**Tuesday, 14th November, 2023 at 10.00 am,  
Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK and remote attendance.**

Please note that a pre meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting for members of the joint committee

### AGENDA

Item No.	Item	Pages
1.	Election of Chair	
2.	Appointment of Vice-Chair	
3.	Apologies for Absence	
4.	Declarations of Interest	
5.	Public Open Forum	
	<b>Scrutiny Committee Public Open Forum ~ Guidance</b>	
	Our Scrutiny Committee meetings are live streamed and a link to the live stream will be available on the meeting page of the Monmouthshire County Council <a href="#">website</a>	
	If you would like to share your thoughts on any proposals being discussed by Scrutiny Committees, you can submit your representation in advance <a href="#">via this form</a>	
	Please share your views by uploading a video or audio file (maximum of	

4 minutes) or;  
Please submit a written representation (via Microsoft Word, maximum of 500 words)

You will need to register for a [My Monmouthshire account](#) in order to submit the representation or use your log in, if you have registered previously.

The deadline for submitting representations to the Council is 5pm three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

If representations received exceed 30 minutes, a selection of these based on theme will be shared at the Scrutiny Committee meeting. All representations received will be made available to councillors prior to the meeting.

If you would like to attend one of our meetings to speak under the Public Open Forum at the meeting, you will need to give three working days' notice by contacting [Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk).

The amount of time afforded to each member of the public to speak is at the chair's discretion, but to enable us to accommodate multiple speakers, we ask that contributions be no longer than 3 minutes.

If you would like to suggest future topics for scrutiny by one of our Scrutiny Committees, please do so by emailing [Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

- |           |  |          |
|-----------|--|----------|
| <b>6.</b> | <b>Safeguarding Performance report</b>   | 1 - 48   |
|           | To scrutinise the performance of the service area.   |          |
| <b>7.</b> | <b>Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health Annual Report</b>                        | 49 - 152 |
|           | To conduct pre-decision scrutiny on the report and scrutinise the performance of the service area. |          |
| <b>8.</b> | <b>Next Meetings:</b>  |          |
|           | Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee: 22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023 at 10.00am             |          |
|           | People Scrutiny Committee: 19 <sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 10.00am                               |          |

**Paul Matthews**

**Chief Executive**



MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Jill Bond	West End;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Fay Bromfield	Llangybi Fawr;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Rachel Buckler	Devauden;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor John Crook	Magor East with Undy;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Christopher Edwards	St. Kingsmark;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Catherine Fookes	Town;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Simon Howarth	Llanelly Hill;	Independent Group
County Councillor Meirion Howells	Llanbadoc & Usk;	Independent
County Councillor Penny Jones	Raglan;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Alistair Neill	Gobion Fawr;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Paul Pavia	Mount Pleasant;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Maureen Powell	Pen Y Fal;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Sue Riley	Bulwark and Thornwell;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Maria Stevens	Severn;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Jackie Strong	Caldicot Cross;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Peter Strong	Rogiet;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Ann Webb	St Arvans;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Laura Wright	Grofield;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru

## Public Information

### Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

**Watch this meeting online** This meeting can be viewed online either live or following the meeting by visiting [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk) or by visiting our Youtube page by searching MonmouthshireCC.

### Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.



# Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

## Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

## Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

## Our Values

**Openness.** We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

**Fairness.** We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

**Flexibility.** We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

**Teamwork.** We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

**Kindness:** We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

## Monmouthshire Scrutiny Committee Guide

### Role of the Pre-meeting

1. Why is the Committee scrutinising this? (background, key issues)
2. What is the Committee's role and what outcome do Members want to achieve?
3. Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this?
  - Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead
  - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member

### Questions for the Meeting

#### Scrutinising Performance

1. How does performance compare with previous years? Is it better/worse? Why?
2. How does performance compare with other councils/other service providers? Is it better/worse? Why?
3. How does performance compare with set targets? Is it better/worse? Why?
4. How were performance targets set? Are they challenging enough/realistic?
5. How do service users/the public/partners view the performance of the service?
6. Have there been any recent audit and inspections? What were the findings?
7. How does the service contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives?
8. Is improvement/decline in performance linked to an increase/reduction in resource? What capacity is there to improve?

#### Scrutinising Policy

1. Who does the policy affect ~ directly and indirectly? Who will benefit most/least?
2. What is the view of service users/stakeholders? Do they believe it will achieve the desired outcome?
3. What is the view of the community as a whole - the 'taxpayer' perspective?
4. What methods were used to consult with stakeholders? Did the process enable all those with a stake to have their say?
5. What practice and options have been considered in developing/reviewing this policy? What evidence is there to inform what works?
6. Does this policy align to our corporate objectives, as defined in our corporate plan?
7. Have all relevant sustainable development, equalities and safeguarding implications been taken into consideration? For example, what are *the procedures that need to be in place to protect children*?
8. How much will this cost to implement and what funding source has been identified?
9. How will performance of the policy be measured and the impact evaluated.

### Questions for the Committee to conclude...

Do we have the necessary information to form conclusions/make recommendations to the executive, council, other partners? If not, do we need to:

- (i) Investigate the issue in more detail?
- (ii) Obtain further information from other witnesses – Executive Member, independent expert, members of the local community, service users, regulatory bodies...
- (iii) Agree further actions to be undertaken within a timescale/future monitoring report...

### General Questions....

#### Empowering Communities

- How are we involving local communities and empowering them to design and deliver services to suit local need?
- Do we have regular discussions with communities about service priorities and what level of service the council can afford to provide in the future?

### *Service Demands*

- How will policy and legislative change affect how the council operates?
- Have we considered the demographics of our council and how this will impact on service delivery and funding in the future?

### *Financial Planning*

- Do we have robust medium and long-term financial plans in place?
- Are we linking budgets to plans and outcomes and reporting effectively on these?

### *Making savings and generating income*

- Do we have the right structures in place to ensure that our efficiency, improvement and transformational approaches are working together to maximise savings?
- How are we maximising income? Have we compared other council's policies to maximise income and fully considered the implications on service users?
- Do we have a workforce plan that takes into account capacity, costs, and skills of the actual versus desired workforce?



## Canllawiau Fforwm Agored Cyhoeddus

Bydd y Pwyllgor Craffu Dethol Cymunedau Cryf yn cael ei gynnal yn rhithwir ac yn cael ei ffrydio'n fyw. Bydd dolen i ffrwd fyw'r cyfarfod ar gael ar dudalen gyfarfod gwefan Cyngor Sir Fynwy yma:

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=4614>

Rydym wedi arwain y ffordd o ran dychwelyd i gyfarfodydd cwbl fyw ond mae cyfyngiadau'r dechnoleg yn ei gwneud yn anodd cynnal fforwm agored cyhoeddus confensiynol. Byddwn yn defnyddio'r un dull â phroses siarad cyhoeddus pwyllgor cynllunio'r awdurdodau i alluogi'r rhai sy'n dymuno siarad ar y pwnc i fynegi eu barn i'r pwyllgor. Gwahoddir preswylwyr i rannu eu barn ar y cynigion a gallant eu cyflwyno i'r pwyllgor yn un o'r ffyrdd canlynol:

### Fideo

Gallwch recordio fideo gyda sain nad yw'n fwy na 4 munud o hyd a fydd yn cael ei chwarae i bawb sy'n cymryd rhan a'r cynghorwyr yn y pwyllgor wrth ystyried yr eitem berthnasol.

### Sain

Gallwch gofnodi ffeil sain yn unig nad yw'n fwy na 4 munud o hyd a fydd yn cael ei chwarae i bawb sy'n cymryd rhan a'r cynghorwyr yn y pwyllgor wrth ystyried yr eitem berthnasol.

### Sylwadau Ysgrifenedig

Os nad ydych yn gallu defnyddio'r opsiynau uchod neu os nad ydych yn dymuno defnyddio'r opsiynau uchod, gallwch gyflwyno sylwadau ysgrifenedig i'r cyngor a fydd yn cael eu darllen i'r pwyllgor wrth ystyried yr eitem berthnasol. Rhaid i sylwadau ysgrifenedig fod nid yn fwy na 500 gair.

Gallwch gyflwyno cynrychiolaeth i ni drwy ddefnyddio'r ddolen ganlynol:

[https://iweb.itsvision.com/portal/f?p=customer:category\\_link:::::CUID,LANG:A8FACFF3E01C14610361E05361401A8C0F7AE41B,EN&P\\_LANG=en](https://iweb.itsvision.com/portal/f?p=customer:category_link:::::CUID,LANG:A8FACFF3E01C14610361E05361401A8C0F7AE41B,EN&P_LANG=en). Bydd angen i chi gofrestru ar gyfer cyfrif Fy Sir Fynwy er mwyn cyflwyno'r ymateb neu ddefnyddio eich manylion mewngofnodi os ydych wedi cofrestru o'r blaen.

Mae'r ffurflen gyflwyno wedi'i sefydlu i adlewyrchu proses ein pwyllgorau cynllunio ac felly gellir anwybyddu unrhyw gyfeiriad at geisiadau cynllunio. Gellir disodli unrhyw gyfeiriad neu gais am wybodaeth i geisiadau cynllunio gyda'r geiriad 'Pwyllgor Craffu Dethol'.

Os bydd y cyflwyniad fideo yn fwy nag awr o hyd, bydd fideos yn cael eu rhannu fesul thema (ni chaiff eu chwarae'n gyfan gwbl), er y bydd yr holl gynrychiolaethau a dderbynnir ar gael i gynghorwyr cyn y pwyllgor.

# Nodau a Gwerthoedd Cyngor Sir Fynwy

## Cymunedau Cynaliadwy a Chryf

### Canlyniadau y gweithiwn i'w cyflawni

#### Neb yn cael ei adael ar ôl

- Gall pobl hŷn fyw bywyd da
- Pobl â mynediad i dai addas a fforddiadwy
- Pobl â mynediad a symudedd da

#### Pobl yn hyderus, galluog ac yn cymryd rhan

- Camddefnyddio alcohol a chyffuriau ddim yn effeithio ar fywydau pobl
- Teuluoedd yn cael eu cefnogi
- Pobl yn teimlo'n ddiogel

#### Ein sir yn ffynnu

- Busnes a menter
- Pobl â mynediad i ddysgu ymarferol a hyblyg
- Pobl yn diogelu ac yn cyfoethogi'r amgylchedd

### Ein blaenoriaethau

- Ysgolion
- Diogelu pobl agored i niwed
- Cefnogi busnes a chreu swyddi
- Cynnal gwasanaethau sy'n hygyrch yn lleol

### Ein gwerthoedd

- **Bod yn agored:** anelwn fod yn agored ac onest i ddatblygu perthnasoedd ymddiriedus
- **Tegwch:** anelwn ddarparu dewis teg, cyfleoedd a phrofiadau a dod yn sefydliad a adeiladwyd ar barch un at y llall.
- **Hyblygrwydd:** anelwn fod yn hyblyg yn ein syniadau a'n gweithredoedd i ddod yn sefydliad effeithlon ac effeithiol.
- **Gwaith tîm:** anelwn gydweithio i rannu ein llwyddiannau a'n methiannau drwy adeiladu ar ein cryfderau a chefnogi ein gilydd i gyflawni ein nodau.

## Canllawiau Pwyllgorau Craffu Sir Fynwy

### Rôl y Rhag-gyfarfod

4. Pam mae'r Pwyllgor yn craffu ar hyn? (cefndir, materion allweddol)
5. Beth yw rôl y Pwyllgor a pha ganlyniad y mae Aelodau am eu cyflawni?
6. A oes digon o wybodaeth i gyflawni hyn? Os na, pwy allai ddarparu hyn?
  - Cytuno ar y drefn holi a pha Aelodau fydd yn arwain
  - Cytuno ar gwestiynau i swyddogion a chwestiynau i'r Aelod Cabinet

### Cwestiynau ar gyfer y Cyfarfod

#### Craffu ar Berfformiad

9. Sut mae perfformiad yn cymharu â blynyddoedd blaenorol? A yw'n well neu'n waeth? Pam?
10. Sut mae perfformiad yn cymharu â pherfformiad cynghorau eraill/darparwyr gwasanaethau eraill? A yw'n well neu'n waeth? Pam?
11. Sut mae perfformiad yn cymharu â thargedau penodol? A yw'n well neu'n waeth? Pam?
12. Sut y pennwyd targedau perfformiad? Ydyn nhw'n ddigon heriol/realistig?
13. Sut mae defnyddwyr gwasanaeth/y cyhoedd/partneriaid yn gweld perfformiad y gwasanaeth?
14. A fu unrhyw archwiliadau ac arolygiadau diweddar? Beth oedd y canfyddiadau?
15. Sut mae'r gwasanaeth yn cyfrannu at gyflawni amcanion corfforaethol?
16. A yw'r gwelliant/dirywiad o ran perfformiad yn gysylltiedig â chynnydd/gostyngiad mewn adnoddau? Pa gapasiti sydd i wella?

#### Craffu ar Bolisiau

10. Ar bwy mae'r polisi'n effeithio ~ yn uniongyrchol ac yn anuniongyrchol? Pwy fydd yn elwa fwyaf/lleiaf?
11. Beth yw barn defnyddwyr gwasanaeth/rhanddeiliaid? A ydynt yn credu y bydd yn cyflawni'r canlyniad a ddymunir?
12. Beth yw barn y gymuned gyfan - safbwynt y 'trethdalwr'?
13. Pa ddulliau a ddefnyddiwyd i ymgynghori â rhanddeiliaid? A wnaeth y broses alluogi pawb sydd â buddiant i ddweud eu dweud?
14. Pa arferion a dewisiadau a ystyriwyd wrth ddatblygu/adolygu'r polisi hwn? Pa dystiolaeth sydd ar gael i lywio'r hyn sy'n gweithio?
15. A yw'r polisi hwn yn cyd-fynd â'n hamcanion corfforaethol, fel y'u diffinnir yn ein cynllun corfforaethol?
16. A ystyriwyd yr holl oblygiadau datblygu cynaliadwy, cydraddoldeb a diogelu perthnasol? Er enghraifft, beth yw'r *gweithdrefnau y mae angen eu rhoi ar waith i amddiffyn plant*?
17. Faint fydd y gost hon i'w gweithredu a pha ffynhonnell ariannu sydd wedi'i nodi?
18. Sut bydd perfformiad y polisi'n cael ei fesur a'r effaith yn cael ei gwerthuso.

### Cwestiynau i'r Pwyllgor, i orffen ...

A oes gennym y wybodaeth angenrheidiol i ffurfio casgliadau/gwneud argymhellion i'r weithrediaeth, y Cyngor, partneriaid eraill? Os nac oes, a oes angen i ni:

- (iv) Ymchwilio i'r mater yn fanylach?
- (v) Cael rhagor o wybodaeth oddi wrth dystion eraill – Aelod Gweithredol, arbenigwr annibynnol, aelodau o'r gymuned leol, defnyddwyr gwasanaethau, cyrff rheoleiddio ...
- (vi) Cytuno ar gamau pellach i'w cymryd o fewn amserlen/adroddiad monitro yn y dyfodol...







monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

**1. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is:

- To evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council’s key safeguarding priorities during 2022 / 2023, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2023 - 2024.
- To inform Members about the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire and the work that is in progress to support the Council’s aims in protecting children and adults at risk from harm and abuse.
- To inform Members about the progress made towards meeting the standards in the Council’s Corporate Safeguarding Policy approved by Council in July 2017, amended July 2022.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

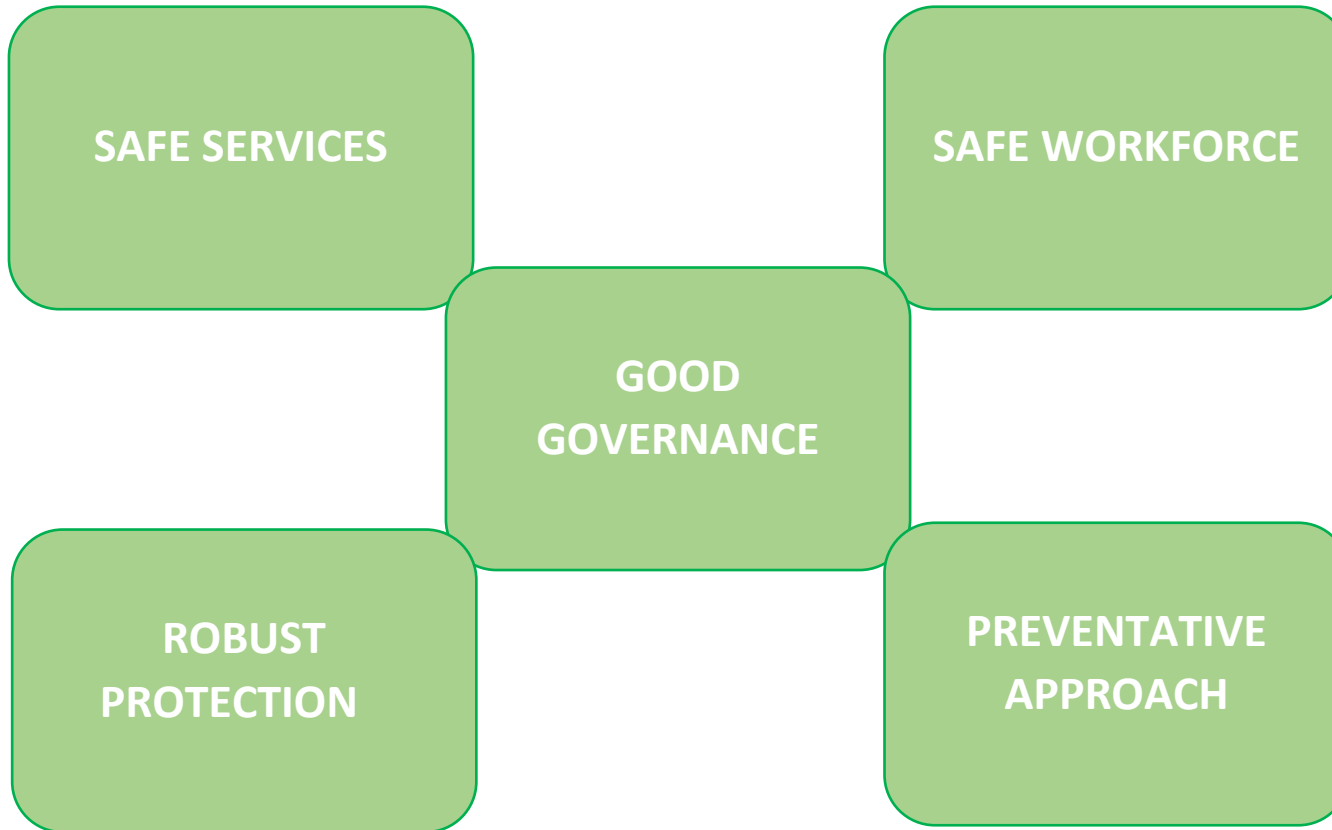
- For members to scrutinise the Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report and Activity prior to its presentation at Council in November 2023.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

Monmouthshire County Council’s Corporate Safeguarding Policy, which covers duties for both children and adults at risk in line with the Social Services and Well Being [Wales] Act [2014] and Wales Safeguarding Procedures, has helped to inform this evaluation report. The analysis reflects progress against priority areas set out within the policy and draws on data and information regarding both children and adults at risk.

- 3.1** 2022-2023 was a period of time which saw the Local Authority move away from the COVID restrictions as the pandemic subsided. As services within the council moved to less restrictions and a “new normal” there was a refocus on disrupted service development. Disrupted services included the commission of Thinqi, training and the development of the core data set.

**THE CORNERSTONES OF SAFEGUARDING IN MONMOUTHSHIRE:**



**3.2** This evaluation report forms an integral part of the continual development of Safeguarding practice across the Council and drives the work of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group. The evaluation report seeks to balance qualitative and quantitative data as well as drawing in other sources of information to support the evaluation.

**3.3** The self-assessment score has been agreed by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] through critical challenge on the basis of evidence reviewed to date. It uses the corporate scoring framework [see Appendix 1] to provide an overall judgement of effectiveness between 1 [major weaknesses] and 6 [excellent / outstanding]. The current self-assessment is set out below:

**SELF ASSESSMENT SCORES:**

CORNERSTONE	April – Sept 2017	Oct 2017 – March 2018	April 2018 – March 2019	April 2019 – March 2020	April 2020 – March 2021	April 2021 – March 2022	April 2022 – March 2023
GOOD GOVERNANCE	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
SAFE WORKFORCE	3	4	3	3	4	4	4
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH	3	4	4	4	5	4	4
ROBUST PROTECTION	4	4	4	3	3	4	4
SAFE SERVICES	2	3	3	3	4	4	4

**3.4** Priority improvement actions arising from the evaluation form the basis of the action plan which is implemented and monitored through the WASG [see Appendix 2]. The review of the previous year’s action plan is at Appendix 3.

**4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:**

Not applicable to this report

#### 5. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Each 'cornerstone' section of the report opens with descriptors of 'what good looks like'. These descriptors provide the basis of how we measure the standard over time using both qualitative and quantitative sources.
- Safeguarding progress is reported on an annual basis to full Council.

#### 6. REASONS:

- Safeguarding vulnerable people is central to the Council and requires strong leadership and governance. An evaluation of Safeguarding within Monmouthshire County Council is, therefore, reported to the Council on an annual basis.

#### 7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no resource implications to this report.

#### 8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS [INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING]:

This report is critically concerned with the effectiveness of Safeguarding in Monmouthshire County Council.

#### 9. CONSULTEES:

Members of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG]  
Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

[Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#)

**11. AUTHOR:**

Head of Children's Services – Diane Corrister  
Safeguarding Service Manager – Kelly Turner

**12. CONTACT DETAILS:**

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**APPENDIX 1**

**THE CORPORATE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK:**

<b>The evaluation score from 1-6</b>	<b>The evaluative context</b>
<b>Level 6 Excellent</b>	<b>Excellent or outstanding</b>
<b>Level 5 Very Good</b>	<b>Good Major strengths</b>
<b>Level 4 Good</b>	<b>Important strengths with some areas for improvement</b>
<b>Level 3 Adequate</b>	<b>Strengths just outweigh weaknesses</b>
<b>Level 2 Weak</b>	<b>Important weaknesses</b>
<b>Level 1 Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Major weakness</b>

**APPENDIX 2**

**THE EVALUATION:**

**1. GOOD GOVERNANCE**

**SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5**

**WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?**

In Monmouthshire County Council we ensure that safeguarding for children and adults at risk is understood as “everyone’s responsibility”. With strong leadership there is a continuous focus on embedding safeguarding culturally across all parts of the Council at a “hearts and minds” level. Safeguarding is supported by robust policies and operating procedures which are embedded within all settings and services. We work effectively with the Gwent Safeguarding Board to ensure good alignment and maximise our resources.

**ANALYSIS**

There is evidence of strong links between the Safeguarding Unit and other Directorates, showing safeguarding is rooted within Monmouthshire’s core business. This is assisted through positive working relationships, regular WASG meetings and discussions showing how safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, with an on-going commitment to training and implementing safeguarding priority actions.

There has been a change in political leadership for the council which led to a change in Social Care Leader from Cllr Penny Jones to Cllr Tudor Thomas; however, safeguarding has remained a key priority for the whole council.

For these reasons our self-assessment score remains at 5.

**KEY STRENGTHS:**

- Safeguarding Audit Framework Evaluation has been completed and has identified areas for further improvement.
- Continuous positive relationships between Safeguarding Unit and Directorates through WASG and ongoing advice and guidance.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- SAFEs roll out 2023 – 2025.
- Regional SAFE to be implemented and points from previous roll out to be built upon for better efficiency.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Committed participation from Monmouthshire Safeguarding Unit in Safeguarding Board Groups and subgroups, this influences and shapes regional plans, which impact upon local practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporate Safeguarding Policy to reviewed when updates arise i.e. the National Safeguarding Training Framework 2023/4 and Modern Day Slavery Statement.</li> <li>- Data set for WASG used as a meaningful tool in WASG to identify key themes.</li> <li>- Council election which took place on 05.05.22 meant change in Social Care Leader to labour member Tudor Thomas. Consideration for further training and understanding of safeguarding priorities.</li> </ul>
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**PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:**

**SAFEGUARDING AUDIT FRAMEWORK EVALUATION [SAFE]:**

The Safeguarding Audit Framework Evaluation [SAFE] is as self-assessment tool, related to safeguarding standards, which requires each service area to consider their own practices and procedures within their relevant setting.

SAFE roll out 2021-2023 has been completed.

Once a SAFE has been received by the Safeguarding Unit, the document is reviewed and returned with suggestions prior to arranging a quality assurance review with the Designated Safeguarding Lead [DSL] / Owner of the SAFE. All SAFEs completed, with oversight from the Safeguarding Unit have been completed to a good standard, with appropriate action plans in place to mitigate risk.

For this programme 101 SAFE requests were sent out across the council per rolling programme, this includes 35 schools, 1 PRS, and 26 early learning settings.

#### Analysis of 2021-23 SAFE role completion

- There were initial challenges in identifying service structures / diagrams, to inform which teams sit in which service area. There needs to be clearer identification of safeguarding lead / point of contact / which service requires SAFE, and who is Nil return. It is anticipated with SharePoint roll out details of clear Service Area information may assist for next round of SAFE. Those who returned with Nil return were reviewed by the Safeguarding Unit and it agreed this was an appropriate response.
- The gradual distribution of SAFE completion to service areas helped with focus and organisation, however, not all directorates submitted to timescales making it harder to stick to plan.
- Where the Safeguarding Unit offered face to face / Team meetings with individual services / DSL's SAFEs were completed jointly and to a high standard.
- People and Governance Directorate completed a joint SAFE covering- People Services (HR, Systems & Support), Training, Legal, Democratic Services, Emergency Planning, Culture. This went well and there should be consideration for any other opportunities for other directorates do this jointly and productively.
- Plans for next roll out include a further review of the system with greater responsibility on directorate leads to manage SAFEs with the support of the safeguarding unit and implementation of new Regional SAFE.

#### **SAFEGUARDING CORPORATE POLICY:**

The Safeguarding Corporate Policy was updated during this period, to include recognition of new legislation within the Wales Safeguarding Policy and inclusion of current contact details for the Safeguarding Unit. The formatting of the document was made more user friendly to signpost to guidance / policies via hyperlinks. The Corporate Policy was presented at Full Council October 2022 and agreed. This will be reviewed in 3 years time.

**GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD [GSB]:**

Monmouthshire is rooted into the Gwent Safeguarding Board and plays a significant role in regional safeguarding developments. There is prominent representation of Monmouthshire on the Gwent Safeguarding board with Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer Social Care & Health being co-chair of the Board and Diane Corrister, Head of Childrens Services, and Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adults Services representing Monmouthshire.

The Gwent Safeguarding Board [GSB] is supported in their work by a number of subgroups that manage the core business and other more specific pieces of work, which deliver on the strategic priorities set by the Board each year. Members of the Safeguarding Unit continue to be represented on all groups / subgroups to deliver the specified outcomes and in addition maintain good links into the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [VAWDASV] Board.

**WHOLE AUTHORITY SAFEGUARDING GROUP [WASG]**

The Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] has continued to meet on a digital platform. The group continues to ensure that corporate Safeguarding has oversight at a senior level. All Directorate Leads are invited to participate at bimonthly meetings. These meetings identify safeguarding concerns and themes so that the council can take a strategic and coordinated approach.

**CORE DATA SET:**

The Data set was agreed by WASG, this is the data which informs the Authority of their progress against their safeguarding priorities.

**2. SAFE WORKFORCE****SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4****WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?**

We ensure that safe recruitment and human resource practices operate effectively and are embedded across the Council for the whole workforce [paid and unpaid]. We ensure that individuals working with children and adults at risk are suitable for the role they are employed to do and are focused on outcomes for people. The whole workforce is clear about their duty to report concerns and to keep children and adults at risk safe.

**ANALYSIS**

The score remains at 4 as we have continued strong arrangements regarding Monmouthshire’s safe recruitment and an appropriately trained workforce. Under the Corporate Safeguarding Policy, Safe Recruitment remains a priority where there are good processes and systems in place, which are continually reviewed and monitored to ensure that safe recruitment practice is followed. There is a clear process in place to respond to and manage any concerns raised about professionals / practitioners working with children or adults at risk (known as practitioner concerns).

Digital approaches to support training continue to be developed and there is ongoing commitment to this with the launch of Thingi. This means people in the council have the right level of safeguarding training, which is regularly updated. A workforce that is trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of safeguarding concerns and know how to respond helps keep our citizens safe.

We have retained the score at 4 because the new learning management system that will assist with safeguarding training is at an early stage of implementation.

**KEY STRENGTHS:**

- Continuous priority given to safe recruitment practice.
- SWAY E-learning has provided a strong Level 1 training forum across Directorates with continued quality assurance and support from the Safeguarding Unit.
- Thingi has been launched within the social care directorate, although very much in its infancy needs to be embedded within the council.
- As part of the Practitioner Concerns process, ongoing review of the person’s employment status is undertaken, eg redeployment, suspension or reassigned other duties.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- “Thingi” to be embedded within all areas of the council.
- National Training Standards to be considered from a Monmouthshire perspective. Consideration to adopt this national framework.
- Regional Safeguarding Leads will continue to meet to review the Practitioner Concerns process and review the effectiveness of the “outcomes” of the process.
- Gwent Safeguarding Board have developed guidance around Practitioner Concerns and are looking to develop guidance for employers and for those who are vulnerable to having allegations made against them.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater improvement in communication with Adult Safeguarding Team Manager and Child Protection Co-ordinator regarding advice / threshold / actions / referrals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gwent Safeguarding Board has identified that the Safer Recruitment Policy is due for review during this next period so a Task &amp; Finish group will be set up, which will include the Child Protection Co-ordinator.</li> </ul>
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**PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:**

**TRAINING:**

There remains a high priority within the Council for safe recruitment practices. A system has been devised for this information to be centrally stored within the Corporate Training Unit, however, there remains a commitment to further develop this. Monmouthshire is working on implementing a system “Thinqi” across the organisation, which would automatically record training attendance via TEAMS/Outlook/Booking system and is being overseen by HR and the Data Systems Team.

Thinqi is a learning management system that Monmouthshire County Council have commissioned and will be migrating to during 23-24. Thinqi is a platform that will support the delivery and monitoring of safeguarding training moving forward. Each employee will be need to complete mandatory safeguarding training that is appropriate and relevant to their role. This learning will be available in a variety of formats including e-learning, face to face training sessions, practice exchange, case reviews and digital learnings such as podcasts, webinars and videos to ensure there is an opportunity for all people to engage in learning that is suited to their learning style and requirements. Compliance with the required learning will be monitored and managed via Thinqi and working with all teams to optimise safeguarding in Monmouthshire.

The Safeguarding Policy shows the levels of current training required; however, this has not been revised as the National Training Standards were being drawn up after a regional multi agency period of consultation. October 2022 saw the launch of the new Welsh National Safeguarding Training Standards. The aim of these standards is to ensure people are safeguarded in our communities through the delivery of appropriate safeguarding training that is consistent across Wales. Monmouthshire County Council will be working over the next financial year to consider how they may wish to adopt this training framework to support safeguarding locally.

Level 1 safeguarding training is predominantly undertaken via a Sway, with quality assurance and support being offered by the Safeguarding Unit. Some service areas require face to face Level 1 safeguarding training for their workforce, which is delivered in this format when required to ensure support is given to all learners and optimise safeguarding in our communities.

Mon Life and individual schools undertake their own Level 1 Safeguarding Training. Level 1 is hugely successful and remains the primary training. Current SWAY E learning arrangements have provided a robust platform to implement this training council wide, and this is well received, meaning less face-to-face sessions are needed. Safeguarding Level 2 is delivered by a representative from the Safeguarding Unit alongside a co-trainer from other Directorates. This has been delivered on a digital platform, however, plans are in place to move this back face to face when possible.

#### **DISCLOSURE BARRING SERVICE [DBS]:**

Monmouthshire has a DBS digital system which encourages staff to set up an account that sends an automatic reminder to renew checks. This provides a more streamline and robust mechanism for regular updates in staff DBS checks, avoiding any delay to checks being undertaken. In the unlikely event of a DBS lapse occurring, the Service Manager within the Safeguarding Unit undertakes a Risk Assessment which is completed within 5 days, with further sign off from Head of Service. [Follow up checks are only undertaken for those posts where it is a requirement of professional registration to practice.]

People Services have reported a fast turnover of DBS checks, which means that new staff are able to enter their posts quickly, all of which supports a more efficient workforce ensuring appropriate services are continually offered. There was a slight delay in DBS checks being completed following the influx of DBS applications for Ukrainian hosts, but this settled down and is no longer causing any delays for Monmouthshire.

#### **PRACTITIONER CONCERNS / ALLEGATIONS:**

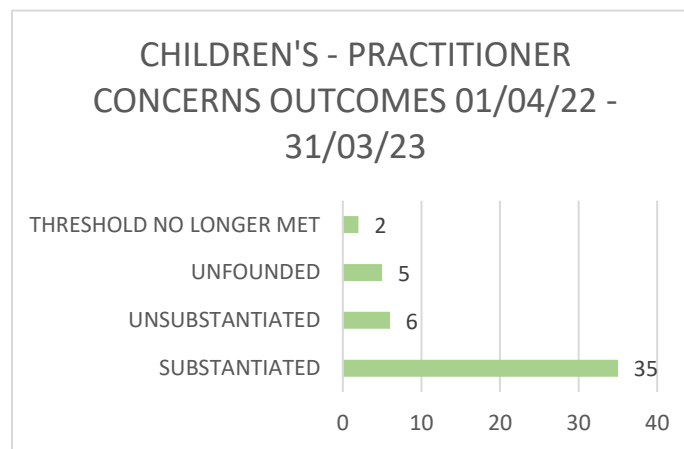
Monmouthshire's Safeguarding Unit has overall responsibility for the management of the Practitioner Concerns / People in a Position of Trust process. These procedures set out arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns about those whose work, either in a paid or voluntary capacity, which brings them into contact with children or adults at risk. When a case relates to a practitioner within the Health Board setting, Corporate Health Safeguarding will take responsibility for enquiries being undertaken and the completion of actions identified. However, the overall accountability for the process remains with the Lead Officer within the Local Authority.

**PRACTITIONER CONCERNS:**

**Children’s:**

The Practitioner Concerns Process has remained consistent busy throughout this period. There appears greater awareness from practitioners in identifying the need for consideration for this process to be instigated as early as possible to ensure safeguards are implemented at the earliest opportunity. There has been good communication and decision-making regarding risks being identified and the most appropriate investigation is agreed. This has resulted in 73% of cases concluding with the Substantiated outcome.

During 01/04/22 – 31/03/23 the Unit held Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings about **74** practitioners, relating to **105** children following practitioner allegations. During the same period **48** Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings were concluded.



Practitioner Concerns allegation referrals come from a range of referral sources.

**Adults:**

The Practitioner Concerns Process has been reviewed and updated so it is consistent across Adults / Children's services. This includes accuracy of record keeping and consistency in terms of how Practitioner Concerns are approached. This has been achieved through better communication and building links between adult safeguarding and the wider council.

In both Adults and Children's Services, there has been a significant amount of delay around Police investigations impacting on timescales for the conclusion of the Practitioner Concerns process. Whilst the majority of cases are concluded within 1 month, sometimes 2, there has been an occasion where this is longer, with the longest period of time a Police investigation has taken has been **20 months**, followed by **14** months. This has an impact on the wider council workforce as suspensions creates vulnerabilities for resources and financial pressures on services. Within the safeguarding unit there is consistency around discussions regarding suspension being the last option. Consideration around redeployment is explored, along with other financial constraints and the impact on the individual's emotional wellbeing.

Children and adults Practitioner Concerns / Allegations are managed via a tracker, which identifies the status of each case, including what investigation is required, and the outcome of each process. This is reviewed monthly by the Safeguarding Unit with the view to prevent drift, recognising the impacts this has on wider employment issues within the council. The primary cause of drift has been identified due to the length of time police take to conclude criminal investigations. This has been escalated at a local and regional level as the council workforce are impacted upon such delays.

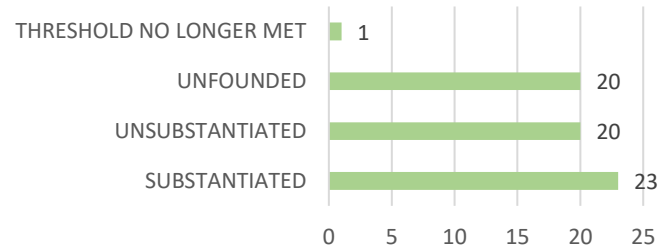
The Safeguarding Unit members work closely together to ensure consistent thresholds and provide resilience between children and adults Practitioner Concerns. Contact logs have been created with Quality Assurance undertaken by the Safeguarding Service Manager. There is more effective communication with agencies to include the conclusion of the process.

Regionally there are ongoing Task and Finish groups taking place to explore and review the effectiveness of the Practitioner Concerns meetings, with an attempt to streamline them nationally.

During 01/04/22 – 31/03/23 the Unit held Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings about **69** practitioners. However these sometimes included multiple-practitioners or service users, or multiple allegations within each occurrence. During the same period, **53** Professional Concern cases were concluded.



ADULTS - PRACTITIONER  
CONCERNS OUTCOMES 01/04/22 -  
31/03/23



**3. PREVENTATIVE APPROACH**

**SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4**

**WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?**

We work with partners to identify emerging issues, risks and challenges to our communities. We demonstrate clear multiagency approaches to developing protocols, processes and practice in how we respond to these issues therefore reducing risks through early intervention and preventative approaches.

**ANALYSIS**

Prevention and partnership working remains a key focus for the Council and there remains a consistent drive for developing these approaches; there continues to be a strong multi agency approach in supporting families and the community to ensure the issues that impact on the vulnerable individuals and communities are addressed. Scoring has remained a 4 due to continued demand pressures across preventative services, nevertheless prevention and partnership collaborations remain strong.

**KEY STRENGTHS:**

- Prevention and partnership working remains a key focus for the Council.
- Modern Day Slavery Statement when agreed will be key to all services throughout Monmouthshire, and there is commitment to this.
- Early Help no longer has a waiting list so preventive services can be put in place when identified.
- LSN’s are engaging with presentations from a varied source, ensuring information is disseminated within Monmouthshire.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Wellbeing Team to continue to support the community in ensuring robust support and effective links with services are provided based on the changing needs of the community.
- Wellbeing Team to evaluate the effectiveness of their support to inform future decisions about the Team.
- The Modern-Day slavery statement needs to be completed and embedded across the council.
- NRM pilot and change in threshold to be understood in greater depth.

**PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:****VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL ABUSE [VAWDASV]**

Monmouthshire remains committed to the prevention of Violence Against Woman and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [VAWDASV]. VAWDASV training is mandatory for all Elected Members and employees of the council, and this is incorporated into their induction with Monmouthshire. All of Monmouthshire County Council must complete Group 1 accessed via the HUB through an external link. The council has remained compliant with this with 171 completing group 1 Mandatory group 1 and 25 completing Ask & Act Training.

Once Resource Link has migrated to Thinqi all staff will be required to re-take the course, and then a refresher will be required every 2 years; Thinqi will prompt when refresher training is due.

**MULTI AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CO-ORDINATION [MARAC]:**

Monmouthshire are committed to supporting those at high risk of Domestic violence by attending (MARAC) Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee. The purpose of these meetings is for multi-agencies to discuss high risk domestic abuse cases and together develop a safety plan. MARAC is held on a fortnightly basis in Monmouthshire on a digital platform which promotes multi-agency attendance. The Chairing role is shared between Social Services and Police, alternating each fortnight. The number of cases discussed per month generally remains around 10-12. Of the 5 Gwent Local Authorities, Monmouthshire has the lowest number of cases discussed within the MARAC arena, which has remained the same for a significant period of time. In Monmouthshire, there are consistent attendees at MARAC and those practitioners are consistent with their thresholds when screening appropriate referrals and formulating appropriate risk management plans.

Cases discussed at MARAC have risen to 159 [from 130 last year]. This increase mirrors an increase in National demand for MARAC, and regionally there are plans develop a MARAC Demand Management Plan.

There have been no Domestic Abuse Homicide Reviews for Monmouthshire during this period.

**MODERN DAY SLAVERY:**

The Modern Day Slavery Protocol has been rolled out to Children's Services and introduced within Adult Teams, however, needs to be rolled out throughout the council. In addition to this training Childrens Services have received external training provided by the Police, which covers Exploitation, Modern Slavery, and the National Referral Mechanism [NRM] process.

**NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM [NRM]:**

The National Referral Mechanism is the UK system for officially recognising victims of trafficking where decisions were previously made by the Home Office. Due to delays in these cases being heard by the Home Office, a pilot was developed, which Monmouthshire has participated in. Monmouthshire continues to be part of a pilot scheme around responding to the NRM, which will continue to at least March 2024. The NRM pilot means that decisions about NRM threshold will be made by local Safeguarding partners, including Children's Services, Police and Health. There have been recent changes regarding the thresholds of decisions and training will be offered to members who sit on the panel to support with such changes. From April 2022 to March 2023, **49 NRM referrals had been submitted throughout Gwent, 10** of which were regarding children from Monmouthshire. All referrals have been processed within the 90 day limit.

**EXPLOITATION:**

**There are 2 types of exploitation identified:**

**Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation**

The Council strives to create an environment where child exploitation is identified and addresses. The Authority is committed to actively working with partners to identify children at risk and prevent this form of abuse.

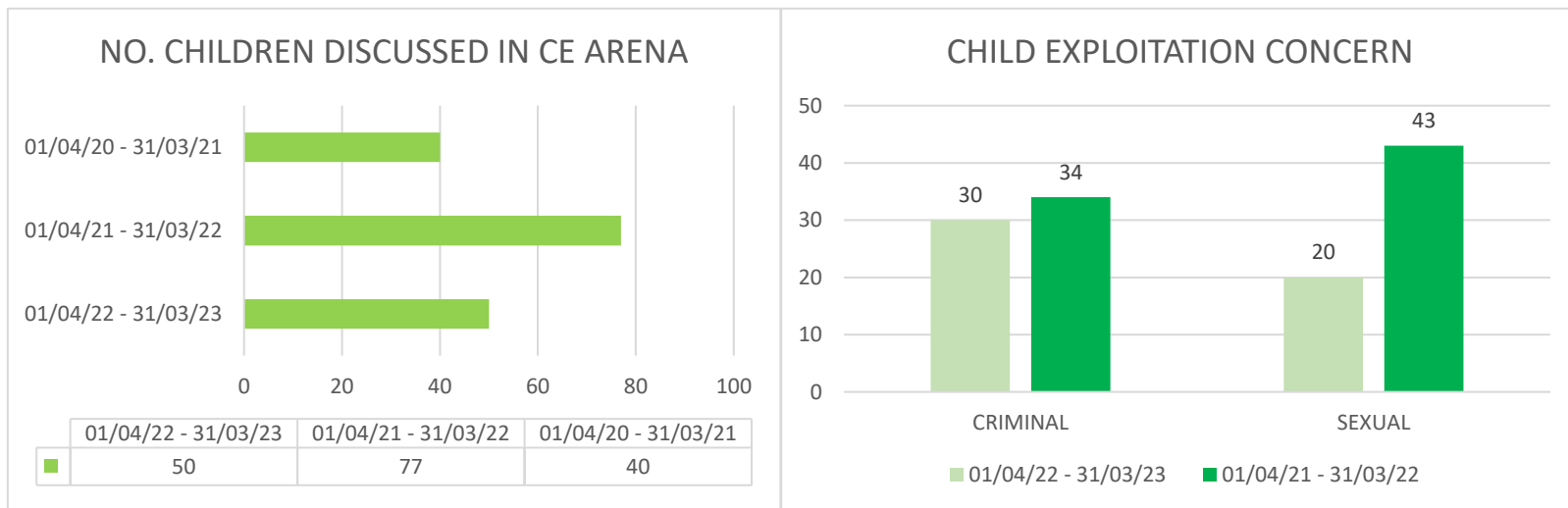
During **01/04/22 – 31/03/23**, 50 children [down from 61 children last year] were subject to Child Exploitation Meetings, where consideration is given for children to become part of a Gwent Police Operation named Quartz.

**Criminal x 30**

**Sexual x 20**

It is not uncommon for children to be at risk from both forms of exploitation, so when categorising these children, the most prominent risk is identified.

What has been noted during this period is that more males are being discussed, which is a change to previous years. Also over half of all children considered are at risk of criminal exploitation rather than sexual.



Although 1 child aged 10 has been discussed in this arena the majority of children are 16 years old. Children can remain open to Operation Quartz until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In addition to this, 8 MCC children were discussed as part of a number of Complex Strategy Meetings.

Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation [MASE] meetings take place every 2 months; these are well attended by partner agencies and continue to take place online via Teams. MASE is a strategic meeting which looks at disruption, perpetrators, places of interest and themes. In March 2023 a further developed MACE framework was implemented. The new framework specifies the information that each Agency should report, so the agenda refocused from primarily focusing on victims with a more balanced input under the VOLT headings. Gwent Police regularly provide the attached information re victims – and this is used by agencies to prepare their reports for MACE.

Monmouthshire Exploitation Group [MEG] continue to be held every quarter and is well represented by key partners from the council. MEG is responsible for identifying and analysing criminal or sexual exploitation across the county, working with partners to explore any emerging themes whereby further investigation, disruption or protection can be addressed through either the Crime & Disorder Group [CAD], Serious Organised Crime group [SOC] or the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation group [MASE]. The Monmouthshire Exploitation Group reports directly to the Public Service Board's Safer Monmouthshire Group and Whole Authority Safeguarding Group, meeting on a quarterly basis. MEG is chaired by the Safeguarding Service Manager, and is attended by Head of Public Protection, Community & Partnerships Manager, Crime & Disorder Officer, Community Cohesion Manager, YOS and St Giles Trust, which is a charity using expertise and real-life past experiences to support people who are hard to engage.

MEG has also enabled the discussion of key locations of concern in the North of the borough, and safeguarding arrangements put in place to reduce harm from those most vulnerable in such locations. Locations of interest have been linked to educational provisions and temporary accommodation, including supported accommodation. Links between vulnerable children and risky adults have been identified through multi-agency information sharing, and then safeguarding plans put in place to proactively safeguard individuals. It should be noted that during this period most children identified of exploitation lived at home.

#### **SAFEGUARDING IN SCHOOLS:**

Monmouthshire has adopted a proactive approach to responding to issues of sexual harassment in schools and has worked with colleagues from other agencies, coordinated by the VAWDASV team, to promote a Whole Education Approach [WEA].

There has been a whole Education Response to VAWDASV Gwent Implementation Guide for Schools 2023- 2024. This document is designed to show how it fits (VAWDASV) and effects all areas of school life in some way.

The 9 key elements set out in the WEA offer a helpful guide and can be used as an action plan to help consider school provision and actions that may be helpful to consider to best support children and young people, staff and the whole community that may be affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

The Safeguarding Lead in Education represents Monmouthshire on the Welsh Government task group that is developing the Peer on Peer sexual harassment in education settings multi-agency action plan. Schools continue to support this area of work. Monmouthshire continues to scope what issues are being raised within the school settings and use the information to provide targeted support where this is required.

A challenging bullying group (CBG) was established last year in Monmouthshire. A challenging Bullying Action Plan is the framework for the work of the group whose aim is to develop best practice in preventing and challenging bullying behaviours.

Resources continue to be coordinated in order to respond to pupil wellbeing issues across schools. There has been an increase in wellbeing concerns being raised by pupils may be related to the last couple of years – we work collaboratively with our partner agencies in order to provide the most appropriate support when concerns are identified.

The SHRN (School Health Research Network) report is evaluated by a task and finish group to identify areas of concern and to inform how we support learners. The report includes areas such as Emotions and Behaviour, School connectedness, Sleep, Friendship and bullying, Sexting, Body image etc so this is a valuable exercise, and has made recommendations to address the issues raised.

Multi Agency Meetings [MAMs] are school based that are attended by Building Stronger Families Team [BSFT], Young Carers, School Based Counselling and other partners across the pre statutory system; they are used to consider what support can be offered to pupils identified as vulnerable.

#### **PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EARLY HELP:**

SPACE Wellbeing and Family Support Panel (Single Point of Access for Children’s Emotional Wellbeing)

Monmouthshire SPACE Well-being and Family Support Panel is a process through which families and the professionals who work with them can seek early help and support on a wide range of issues that impact families. It brings together a range of services provided by Monmouthshire County Council, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and the Third Sector. Support through the panel can be accessed on parenting and family functioning, as well as children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing.

SPACE Well-being and Family Support Panel meets weekly. Its aim is to ensure children and their families get the right help, first time, at the right time. Working together, agencies who attend panel explore ways to provide families with support that suits their individual needs, which may be through a referral to a specific service who will work directly with the child and/or family or specialist staff offering guidance and support to professionals who are already working with the family.

Referral received into the Panel over the year were as follows:

Number of Panel Referrals – 01/04/22 – 31/0/23												
Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	TOTAL
109	153	109	76	63	113	151	108	91	110	134	128	<b>1345</b>

The total number of referrals has dropped by approximately 16% to 1345 from 1603 in 2021/2022. This drop in referrals could be attributed to families being able to return to a more stable routine coming out of the period impacted by the pandemic; as well as the introduction of a CAMHS In-Reach Service which provide consultation and support for schools regarding children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The number of referrals in school holidays naturally decline due to less referrals being submitted. 23% of our total referrals come from education. Whereas 41% of referrals come from GP’s, 16% of referrals are from internal professionals within Monmouthshire, for example, a Social Worker and 11% are self-referrals. There are a small number of referrals from third sector organisations and other health professionals.

There is currently no waiting list for referrals being processed for a Panel discussion. Steps taken to mitigate this is the appointment of an additional SPACE wellbeing Panel Administrator and the introduction of a Bring Back function. The Monmouthshire SPACE Wellbeing and Family



Support Panel facilitate a Bring Back function allowing Panel members to reconsider any referral/family where additional support is identified as being needed. These are then discussed at the next available Panel without the need for a new referral to be generated.

Previously the Panel were supported by the advice line who supported the processing of enquiries. This advice line has now developed into an Integrating Families and Communities Team (InFaCT) that work to help people navigate existing resources and also to come together to support each other and create community responses to local challenges. Our Family and Community Links Coordinators use their knowledge of existing services and their skills in building relationships with people to facilitate community solutions.

### **HOUSING:**

A Rapid Rehousing approach has been adopted by Monmouthshire Council with a 5-year transitional plan to take steps towards a Monmouthshire where homelessness is rare, brief, and unrepeatable. This plan cements previous work to increase the prevention of homelessness, minimise any time spent in temporary accommodation where homelessness cannot be prevented and to provide timely support at of the level and type required for households to maintain settled accommodation.

Prevention officers have been working with households identified as at risk of homelessness to provide support around affordability, property searches and landlord mediation. For the 2022-2023 financial year the overall Housing Options Team achieved a 50% prevention success rate.

This year Monmouthshire Housing Options Team has had the additional resource of a Discretionary Homelessness Prevention Fund. Applications can be made to the fund by both internal and external professionals as well as directly and are awarded where an injection of additional funds are likely to prevent homelessness, such as towards arrears or rent in advance/ deposits.

In a bid to reach households when housing issues are emerging to prevent homelessness the Housing Options and Strategy teams have worked with the Shared Benefits Service to develop a process to identify and refer households at risk of homelessness for further support. The Shared Benefit Service Award Discretionary Housing Payments to households to support with rent and so are often contacted by families at the beginning of their struggles with housing payments.

As part of the Rapid Rehousing plan Monmouthshire has been reaching out to partner agencies to look at ways of engaging with households that are experiencing housing related problems before it reaches a point of crisis. There are current plans to disseminate useful housing advice to every benefit claimant in Monmouthshire through the DWP.

For those where homelessness has not been preventable Monmouthshire Support Services continue to commission support services to meet the needs of vulnerable households. Particular focus has been on the need for specialist young person's provisions during 2022-2023. A new specialist young person's support service 'MOYO' was commissioned and became operational, and the housing team have also opened a young person's only temporary accommodation shared house.

Monmouthshire is also now part of the HMPPS CAS-3 scheme helping ex-offenders to access accommodation on release.

Monmouthshire Letting Service continues to try and attract landlords to lease properties to the council to be used as temporary accommodation for homeless households in B&B. There is work currently being undertaken to launch a campaign aimed at those who have additional properties with plans to unveil this in the early part of the 2023-2024 financial year. In addition to acquiring suitable accommodation through leasing Monmouthshire Housing and Communities team has been given the green light to purchase units of accommodation to use as temporary accommodation and officers are already looking to identify suitable properties.

#### **LOCAL SAFEGUARDING NETWORK:**

The Local Safeguarding Network [LSN] meetings and Safeguarding Practitioner Forums have continued and are a multi-agency mechanism for professional leads to share information regarding safeguarding matters and extend knowledge of safeguarding activity and services across the Council. LSNs are well represented by representatives in all directorates and some members of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group. VAWDASV and voluntary organisations linked to Monmouthshire also attend, and this membership continues to be reviewed and extended where appropriate.

LSNs were held in July 2022, September 2022, January 2023, and March 2023. Presentations included in these sessions were:

- VAWDASV
- Ending Physical Punishment (pre-recorded)
- Missing People presentation

- Understanding medical examinations for child sexual abuse concerns (The CSA Centre) (pre-recorded)
- Adolescent Wellbeing Video & feedback
- Stop Loan Sharks Wales Presentation
- N-Gage Family Service Update

In May 2022 a Practitioner Event was held online, and this included the topics of:

- Mental Health Awareness
- Moral Distress
- NYAS (Children and Young People's rights)
- Professional Curiosity
- Suicide and Self-Harm
- Language that cares
- Recognising and Responding to neglect
- Safer Wales

In November 2022 a Practitioner Event was held online, which included the following topics:

- Parents, Families, and Allies Network (PFAN)
- Forced Marriage and Honour-Based Abuse
- Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum
- Just One click... 'Children, Technology and Online Behaviour'
- National Safe Spaces scheme
- The end of physical punishment in Wales
- Work of the Police Online Investigation Team
- A brief introduction to Technology Facilitated Abuse

**4. ROBUST PROTECTION**

**SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4**

**WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?**

We operate best practice in protecting children and adults at risk and ensure that all concerns about possible abuse or neglect are recognised and responded to appropriately. Multi-agency plans and interventions reduce risks and needs for children and vulnerable adults including those at risk of significant harm.

**ANALYSIS**

This year’s score remains the same at 4, recognising that there are clear safeguarding arrangements in Monmouthshire, which draw upon partner agencies to robustly protect adults and children and appropriately respond to and manage risk. Never-the-less all services are under significant demand pressure which has an impact on the quality and consistency of safeguarding responses.

**KEY STRENGTHS:**

- The safeguarding Hub evidences how multi-agency working is effective, with positive working relationships and communication across partner agencies.
- Ongoing commitment to improving the quality of practice with key focus on development and training for practitioners.
- MCC continues to monitor and evaluate all processes and protocols to ensure effective safeguarding that is streamlined regionally.
- Adult safeguarding has stabilised through the appointment of permanent management and commitment has been given to undertaking enquires within prescribed timescales.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- The Hub will be evaluated following successful tender. Unfortunately there has been significant delay around this due to commissioning reasons.
- Continued improvement of the Section 126 enquiries being held within time-scale through further discussion with other professionals and agencies, and improvement processes within the safeguarding unit.
- The safeguarding Unit to continue improving Quality Assurance arrangements and identify workshops for practice improvement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased development of Safeguarding understanding across Adult Services.</li> </ul>
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**PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:**

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK:**

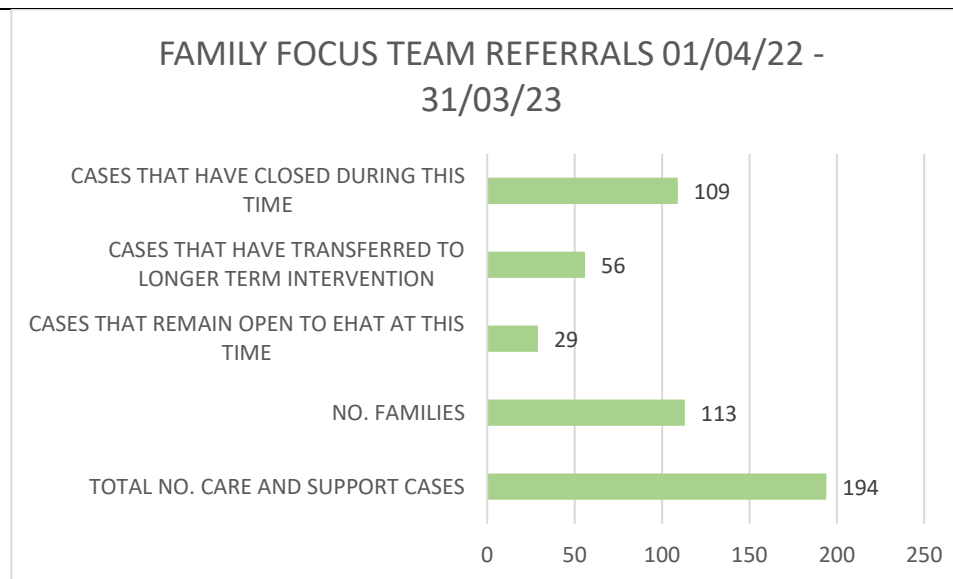
The multi-agency Hub is established and key in making safeguarding decisions with children and adults. The hub at County Hall, Usk enables agencies to physically sit with one other which supports positive working relationships and collaborative working. There is evidence of effective collaborative decisions to safeguard children and adults at risk in a timely manner. Monmouthshire are committing to involving multi-agency at the point of strategy discussions which informs strength based decision making to protect Monmouthshire’s citizens.

Gwent Police are commissioning an external review of the Hub which has been out for tender since Summer 2022. Unfortunately, there is has been delay in commissioning a suitable service and this piece of work remains outstanding. During this period an evaluation of the Llamau Missing Children Team has commenced by Emerald Consultancy to review the current service provision. This service is provided across five Local Authorities, with Monmouthshire having the lowest number of missing children in Gwent.

There have been no adult or child practice reviews held in regard to Monmouthshire cases during this period.

**CHILDREN’S SERVICES:**

The Family Focus team, which sits within Early Help and Assessment team (entry point to Monmouthshire Statutory Services) drive forward the Care and Support Plan [CASP] agenda to provide short term focused intervention to families which prevent children entering the statutory Child Protection processed. The outcomes from this reporting period between 01.04.2022 and 31.03.2023 is shown below:



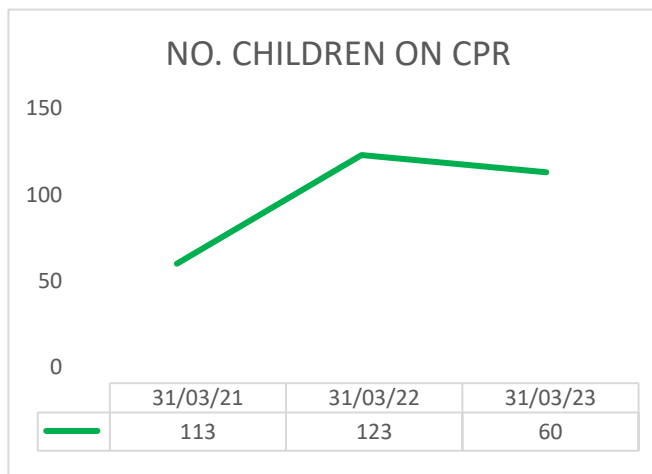
Overall, the current case management of families requiring care and support is relatively positive and whilst there have been some families that have progressed to closure who have been re-referred, not all of these families have necessitated further intervention. It has been possible to reinforce advice and guidance through the IAA process and/or signpost to other services for some of the families.

### CHILD PROTECTION

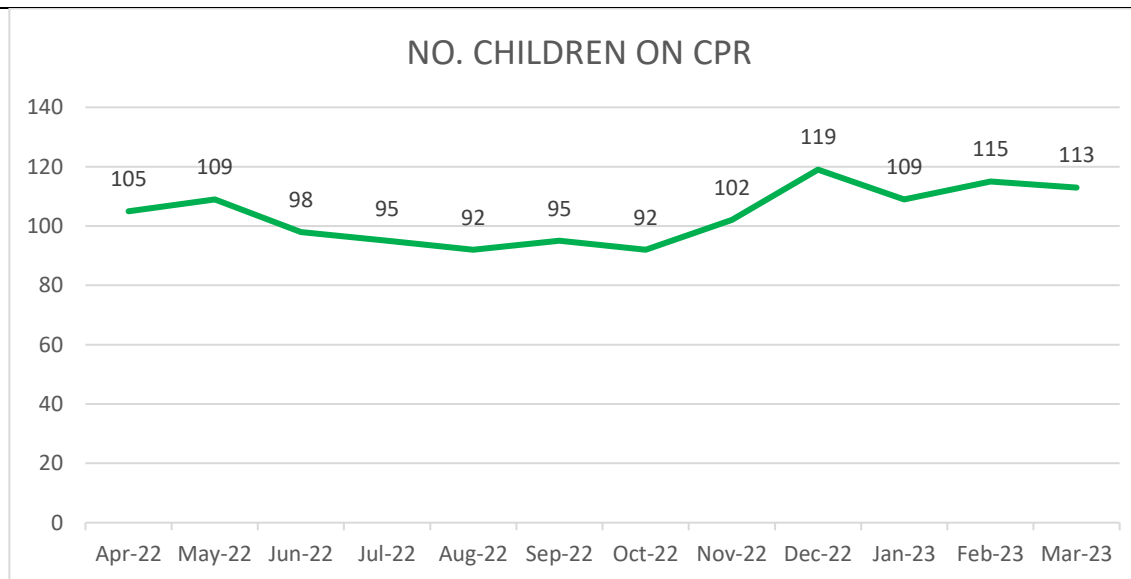
During this period there has been a rise in the number of children on Monmouthshire's Child Protection Register. Quality Assurance processes undertaken by the Child Protection Co-ordinator inform us that the children are remaining on the Child Protection Register longer to ensure the Child Protection Plan is completed in its entirety and the risks to the children have significantly reduced. The expansion of Family Focus longer term support intervention has been invested in in the core Child Protection and Court teams which has supported families and social worker assessments of risk and strengths. There have been no reoccurrences of children being added to the Child Protection Register following de-registration in this

period. The number of the children removed from the Child Protection Register for Care and Support Plans rather than removal for Court Intervention, would suggest that there has been good risk management and decision making.

At year end the number of children on the Child Protection Register was **113** [a slight decrease from previous year end of 123]



However, the following graph will demonstrate the movement of the child protection registration:



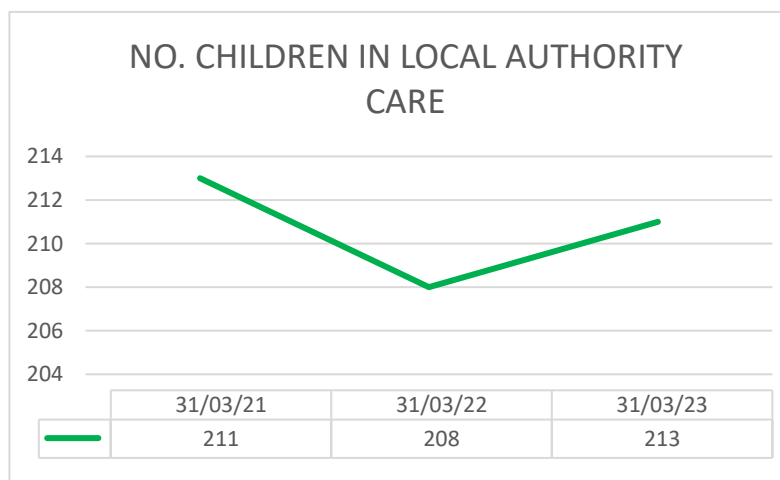
A key risk for the Children Services remains the challenges in recruitment of experienced qualified social workers, the service remains reliant at this point on agency cover. During this review period, data has also highlighted that there have been several cases where there have been changes of Social Worker. Where there has been changes in Social Workers, there have been small periods where statutory visits and core groups have not been completed in timescales. A Data Management Group has been convened, which includes Children Services Leadership Team, Team Managers, Performance Management team, and Workforce Development to address the issues and manage and improved the statutory safeguarding procedures.

A new Chairs Checklist has been devised to support with the quality assurance of Child Protection cases, including the review of reports, statutory obligations i.e., Visits and core groups, quoracy and timescales. This is completed for every review Child Protection Conference and the data shared with Senior Management weekly. There are still cases where review Child Protection Conferences are not taking place due to reports not being completed by the Social Worker on time, resulting in meetings having to be rescheduled [and out of timescales].



The Chairs Checklist will continue to capture data around the number of meetings having to be cancelled; to support in the quality assurance of Child Protection cases and the impact of teams and the service. This will highlight strengths in the teams as well as any barriers which can then be highlighted to Senior Management.

On 31/03/23 the number of children who were in Local Authority Care was **211**; this includes **14** Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]. This was **208** on 31/03/22, and **213** on 31/03/21.



#### CHILDREN'S PLACEMENTS:

A challenge and key risk for Children Services has been the national shortage of foster and residential placements for Children Looked After which are registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Whilst it is recognised that this is as a result market issues beyond the responsibility of Local Authorities this has resulted in Children Services needing to place children in unregulated placements in Local Authority assets and short term lets (Outside Welsh Regulations). A further challenge to Children Services is that regulated care providers cannot provide care within unregulated placements resulting in contracting private nursing agency staff to provide 24 hour oversight in placement and increased Children Services support to ensure safeguarding.

During this period Children Services have worked openly with CIW to advise of the issues of welfare, care planning, efforts to locate registered placements, and multi-agency involvement in weekly updates on each child. Children Services have developed processes to manage these placements and a Service Manager led Placement Pressures meeting which supports Senior Manager oversight, redirection and development of resources, and co-ordination of multiagency support. The need for high level management of OWR placements has resulted in significant financial and resource pressures for Children Services.

There have been 5 cases in total.

#### **ADULT SAFEGUARDING:**

The Adult Safeguarding Team has stabilised since the last evaluation with the successful recruitment of a new team manager. Several system and process changes have been introduced to improve communication, recording while improving efficiency. A significant improvement has been made in the completion of enquiries within the 7-day timescale set within the SSWB Act 2014. The year end performance for 2022/2023 being 86.4%, (361 of 418) of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse compared to 65.5% last year. This demonstrates improvements in collaboration and partnership working across Adult Services and with relevant stakeholders. A new protocol has been introduced in collaboration with Adult Services Teams to ensure priority is given to timely Safeguarding enquiry completion.

The number of referrals made and accepted to Adult Safeguarding has reduced since the last evaluation. This is because the team has become more consistent in its application of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Greater consistency in the application of thresholds outlined in the Gwent Safeguarding Board *Adult Safeguarding Guidance - To Report or Not To Report* has led to a reduction in referrals taken into Safeguarding from 583 in 2021/2022 to 418 in 2022/2023. The reduction accounts for better understanding of the proportionality of responses made to reports that are not necessarily related to abuse and neglect. There is also better recognition that concerns can be managed, addressed and service users safeguarded through improving practice and taking preventative action in response to concerns. Partners and agencies are also reminded that that safeguarding responsibility is ubiquitous to all roles.

Considerable development work has been undertaken by the Adult Safeguarding Team in relation to developing a suite of Safeguarding Practice Exchange topic presentations in collaboration with the Workforce Development Team to address learning needs. These have been based on

responses to a questionnaire sent to Adult Services Teams in early 2022. The first topic for the Practice Exchange - "Section 126 Enquiries" - will be delivered by Adult Safeguarding Coordinators in 6 sessions initially, starting in September 2023.

Work has progressed with key stakeholders in relation to the development of Local Pathways for Modern Day slavery in conjunction with BASWO and Domestic Abuse in conjunction with Gwent Police. There has been further enhanced joint working on cases within the Safeguarding Hub where there are both children and adults at risk. This has resulted in improved working relationships, greater understanding of roles and learning contributing to improved outcomes for victims.

Improvements in the management and response to concerns about Practitioners, (People in a Position of Trust under Part 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures) has also been noted since the last evaluation. Local Authority Designated Officers for Safeguarding are in place for concerns relating to those who work or volunteer with Children and Adults providing timely and proportionate advice to employers and ensuring consistent and timely management of safeguarding concerns.

Further developmental work with colleagues in Housing and Gwent Police will be required over the next 12 months to improve responses to adults who are the victims of 'mate crime' and exploitation where alcohol and other substances are a factor. This is attributed to a rising number of referrals of younger adults where multiple agencies share concerns and consideration of the issues is considered by a variety of forum including Housing Intervention Panel, Section 115 Meetings under of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as well as Safeguarding. This will form part of the workstream for Monmouthshire Exploitation Group, moving forward.

The use of WCCIS has been introduced in Mental Health and Learning Disability Teams in Adult Services through Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, whose staff are part of those teams and all work undertaken by them is now recorded on this system. Access to WCCIS to Safeguarding has not been granted which does hamper access to information to inform decision making. The Team is reliant on 3<sup>rd</sup> parties who do have access to check the system for information. However, this is not ideal. This has been escalated to the Safeguarding Service Manager for discussion with the GWASB. Monmouthshire Safeguarding Team is now the only Adult Safeguarding Team in Gwent without access to WCCIS which does make application of the Safeguarding process more protracted that necessary.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out a performance evaluation inspection of Adult Services in July 2022. The purpose of the inspection was to review Monmouthshire’s performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation. The inspection notes “the local authority responds to immediate safeguarding concerns. Through reading social care records, we saw evidence of professionals in the safeguarding team working effectively with colleagues from the local health board and police, as well as wider local authority teams, to protect adults at risk. Whilst we found evidence of improvement in the time taken to undertake enquiries, there remains delay in some situations. The local authority needs to continue to work with partners to embed the threshold for safeguarding concerns as well as the need for enquires to be completed in line with statutory guidance”

**5. SAFE SERVICES – delivered through commissioning arrangements, grants, partnerships and volunteering**

**SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4**

**WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?**

We use our influence to ensure that services operating in Monmouthshire, including commissioned and those outside the direct control of the Council, do so in ways which promote the welfare and safety of children and adults at risk.

**ANALYSIS**

There are clear operating processes in place within Social Care and Health to ensure a robust approach for all social care commissioning for children and adults. There is good evidence of safeguarding embedded within all areas of the Council, which includes Licensing and Public Protection and Passenger Transport Units. Schools, and other parts of the Council working with children / adults at risk, indicate there are secure arrangements for contracted services. The Safe Services score remains at 4 to recognise these positives along with the strengthened working relationships between Safeguarding and Commissioning for both adults and children.

**KEY STRENGTHS:**

- The SAFE process 2021-23 has completed with evidence of robust safeguarding arrangements in all areas of the council.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Safe roll out 2023-25 to commence.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commissioning and the Safeguarding Unit have positive relationship.</li> <li>- There are regular safeguarding meetings with individual directorates to offer ongoing advice and guidance.</li> <li>- The Wellbeing Team has offered significant support to communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority, so that directorates can be their own lead with their own SAFE.</li> <li>- Safeguarding Unit to promote that Directorates have more autonomy in completing their individual SAFEs with advice and guidance to be sought from the Safeguarding Unit where necessary.</li> <li>- Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.</li> <li>- Evaluation of the Wellbeing Team.</li> </ul>
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**PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:**

Social Care and Health have clear operating processes in place, which ensures a robust approach for all Social Care commission for Children and Adults. This is evidenced by progress with completion of the rolling SAFE programme.

**COMMISSIONING:**

Children’s Services

Monmouthshire’s standard quality assurance monitoring process continued during the 22-23 year for residential and supported accommodation placements, this includes an annual monitoring visit to all in county providers (for those new in placement this occurs between 6-12 months after placement start date) with additional follow up visits as needed. For those children placed out of area desktop monitoring is carried out for all providers, starting from 6 months after placement start date, this is revisited 6 monthly from end of process and physical visits will occur as needed on a risk assessed basis.

No children’s providers were in Provider Performance Monitoring or Escalating Concerns processes led by Monmouthshire during this period.

Adult’s Services

Monmouthshire’s standard quality assurance monitoring process continued during the 22-23 year for all commissioned Adult Social Care placements, for in county placements this includes an annual monitoring visit and two relationship visits per year (if needed, dependent on provider

size) with additional follow up visits as needed. In most circumstances, out of county providers are monitored via their host authority; in exceptional circumstances where no one from the host authority is placed we will liaise accordingly to plan monitoring.

During the 22-23 period Monmouthshire had:

- 1 older adult nursing home being managed via the Escalating Concerns process from 21-22, this was ended in June 22, and they were then supported via Provider Performance until September 22
- 1 younger adult nursing home being managed via Provider Performance starting March 23.

Safeguarding vulnerable people is one of the Councils main corporate priorities, public procurement has an essential role to play in ensuring all relevant safeguarding checks have been embedded within the tender process and that safeguarding policies, procedures and training are integral for the duration of the contract. The aim of the Council and the procurement function will be to work with our suppliers and contractors to actively safeguard and promote the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults across their organisations and supply chains.

As part of these commitments the Council's Safeguarding and Procurement teams are developing a Modern Slavery Statement that will support the Council to meet equality, fair work, and safeguarding obligations. Work is ongoing in relation to this.

#### **SAFEGUARDING UNIT:**

The Safeguarding Unit has good links with all directorates in the council offering advice and guidance. There are particularly strong links with the Public Transport Unit and leisure services, with regular meetings to explore any safeguarding enquiries.

The Safeguarding Unit has a prompt approach to DBS risk assessments being undertaken for all areas of the council and schools.

There is evidence of Safeguarding embedded in Licensing services and the Public Protection Unit; Good partnership working is shown within the Responsible Authority meetings which are attended by the Child Protection Coordinator. Licensing report that they continue to complete DBS checks every 6 months for drivers, rather than 3 years, which also include operators who have access to book records or dispatch vehicles. Licensing

also ensures drivers conduct safeguarding training and also refresher training at the end of their 3 yearly licences so they can progress with a renewal application.

### **VOLUNTEERING:**

The Wellbeing Team continues to support Monmouthshire communities, with an evaluation process currently underway, running parallel to the development of the LINKS Data Management and Evaluation System. It is anticipated that by March 2024, the Wellbeing Team will have access to comprehensive and actionable data that will enable them to conduct a thorough evaluation of the project.

LINKS will enable deeper understanding of emerging trends, the attainment of individual outcomes, the measurement of success across various suppliers and wellbeing opportunities, as well as the identification of any gaps in service provision. Consequently, the system will equip to the Community and Wellbeing team to make better informed data driven decisions.

In descending order, the highest proportion of support requests related to Connecting with others, cost of living, Ukrainian specific support, housing support, and mental health. The Wellbeing team received 371 support request and made 476 links (referrals) into 121 different preventative, early intervention and wellbeing opportunities in 2022-23

Members of the Wellbeing Team are subject to comprehensive and robust training which includes:

- Technical and compliance related courses including health and safety, food hygiene and risk assessment.
- Wellbeing specific courses such as Mental Health Awareness, safe manual handling and out and about training
- Leadership Training to support volunteer leader to support their teams
- Community development training

The training is aimed at creating a resilient community sector equipped to provide preventative and early intervention wellbeing opportunities as the demographic of 'Monmouthshire evolves and as new local and global factors impact on communities.

**LICENSING:**

There is evidence of safeguarding embedded within Licensing services and Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) Licensing & Regulatory (L&R) Committee are trained and competent in making decisions about suitability of taxi drivers, etc.

Responsible Authority meetings continue, to review any licensed premises with safety issues, and well attended. DBS checks are now required every 6 months for drivers, rather than 3 years. This will also include operators who have access to book records or dispatch vehicles. This was implemented October 2021, and continues. Drivers also have to have safeguarding training which needs to be updated every 3 years when they reapply for their licence. New Members in the L&R Committee in May 2022 (due to change in administration) were also trained in decision making regarding cases brought before them, e.g. 'fit and proper' test for taxi drivers.



**APPENDIX 3 - SAFEGUARDING CURRENT ACTIVITY PLAN [2022 – 2023]:**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>RAG RATING</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>GOOD GOVERNANCE</b>				
Complete SAFE process [2021 – 2023]	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		
Development / implementation of core data set for WASG including comparative data	Safeguarding Unit WASG	March 2023		
Review Corporate Safeguarding Policy to be ratified and disseminated	Safeguarding Unit	Dec 2022		
<b>SAFE WORKFORCE</b>				
Ongoing development of 'Thingy' to ensure training records are centrally managed	Systems and Data Team	March 2023		Ongoing
Training Policy needs to look at mandatory training and consider other areas that need to be recorded, including VAWDSV, Prevent and GDPR	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		
Continued development for the delivery of Level 1 training	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront	Systems and Data Team	March 2023		Ongoing
To further aid the efficiency and management of Practitioner Concerns, a model is being developed on Flo / Plant to ensure appropriate safeguards are put in place. This will be GDPR compliant	Safeguarding Unit Performance Team	December 2022		

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>RAG RATING</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Regional Safeguarding Leads will continue to meet to review the Practitioner Concerns process and review the effectiveness of the “outcomes” of the process	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2023		Ongoing Nationally
Training to be developed around understanding of Practitioner Concerns, for those who are employers and those who are at greater risk of being discussed in the arena, eg Education, Foster Carers and Health professionals	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2023		Ongoing Regionally
<b>PREVENTATIVE APPROACH</b>				
Development of VAWDASV refresher course for all staff and to be rolled out across the Council	Training Unit	March 2023		Ongoing with Thinqi
There will continue to be promotion of all mandatory training across the Local Authority to be completed by staff members	Training Unit Workforce Development Team	March 2023		Ongoing with Thinqi
Further exploration around the waiting time for the Early Help Panel	Service Manager, Wellbeing and Family Support	March 2023		
Remainder of Directorates to be included in Modern Day Slavery training	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		
Wellbeing Team to continue to develop to support the community in ensuring robust support and effective links with services are provided based on the changing needs of the community	Wellbeing Team	March 2023		

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>RAG RATING</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Wellbeing Team to evaluate the effectiveness of their support to inform future decisions about the Team	Wellbeing Team	March 2023		
<b>ROBUST PROTECTION</b>				
The Hub will be evaluated following successful tender at the end of Summer 2022, which is being commissioned by Gwent Police	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Police	March 2023		Tender application is still ongoing
Continue to expand the Hub to include further agencies	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		
Continued improvement of the Section 126 enquiries being held within time-scale through further discussion with other professionals and agencies, such as Health	Safeguarding Unit [Adult] Health Safeguarding	March 2023		
Review of chair’s checklist to consider timeliness of core group meetings and statutory visits for children on the Child Protection Register; to ensure effective quality assurance	Safeguarding Unit	December 2022		
Bi-annual workshops to be held to review the effectiveness of practice and processes, which will include all Children’s Services teams and the Safeguarding Unit	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		
<b>SAFE SERVICES</b>				
To further strengthen the working relationship between Safeguarding and Commissioning for both Children and Adults and also include better attendance at meetings.	Safeguarding Unit Commissioning	March 2023		

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING	NOTES
Commissioning to review services on provider list and provider feedback.	Commissioning	March 2023		Ongoing
Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		Ongoing
Continued support to Directorates to ensure the SAFE process is completed to a high standard and considers Safeguarding aspects until the end of roll out in 2023.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		Ongoing
Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.	Safeguarding Unit All Directorates	March 2023		Ongoing

**APPENDIX 4 - SAFEGUARDING PROPOSED ACTIVITY PLAN [2023 – 2024]:**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<b>GOOD GOVERNANCE</b>		
Regional SAFE roll out 2023 – 2025.	All Directorates	March 2025
Corporate Safeguarding Policy to reviewed when updates arise i.e. the National Safeguarding Training Framework 2023/4 and Modern Day Slavery Statement.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Data set for WASG to be used as a meaningful tool in WASG to identify key themes.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Consideration for further training and understanding of safeguarding priorities for all elected members.	Training Unit	March 2024
<b>SAFE WORKFORCE</b>		
Ongoing development of ‘Thinqi’ to ensure training records are centrally managed	Systems and Data Team	March 2024
Training Policy needs to look at mandatory training and consider other areas that need to be recorded, including VAWDSV, Prevent and GDPR	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront	Systems and Data Team	March 2024
Regional Safeguarding Leads will continue to meet to review the Practitioner Concerns process and review the effectiveness of the “outcomes” of the process	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2024
Training to be developed around understanding of Practitioner Concerns, for those who are employers and those who are at greater risk of being discussed in the arena, eg Education, Foster Carers and Health professionals	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2024
Training Standards to be considered from a Monmouthshire perspective. Consideration to adopt this national framework.	Safeguarding Unit WASG Training Unit	March 2024

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
Safer Recruitment Policy to be reviewed; Task & Finish Group to be identified, to include the Child Protection Co-ordinator.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
<b>PREVENTATIVE APPROACH</b>		
Development of VAWDASV refresher course for all staff and to be rolled out across the Council.	Training Unit	March 2024
There will continue to be promotion of all mandatory training across the Local Authority to be completed by staff members.	Training Unit Workforce Development Team	March 2024
Remainder of Directorates to be included in Modern Day Slavery training.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Wellbeing Team to continue to support the community in ensuring robust support and effective links with services are provided based on the changing needs of the community.	Wellbeing Team	March 2024
Wellbeing Team to evaluate the effectiveness of their support to inform future decisions about the Team.	Wellbeing Team	March 2024
The Modern-Day slavery statement needs to be completed and embedded across the council.	Procurement Safeguarding Unit to offer advice and guidance	March 2024
NRM pilot and change in threshold to be understood in greater depth.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
<b>ROBUST PROTECTION</b>		
The Hub will be evaluated following successful tender, which is being commissioned by Gwent Police	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Police	March 2024
Continue to expand the Hub to include further agencies.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Continued improvement of the Section 126 enquiries being held within time-scale through further discussion with other professionals and agencies, such as Health.	Safeguarding Unit [Adult] Health Safeguarding	March 2024
Safeguarding Unit to continue improving Quality Assurance arrangements and identify workshops for practice improvement.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
Increased development of Safeguarding understanding across Adult Services.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
<b>SAFE SERVICES</b>		
To further strengthen the working relationship between Safeguarding and Commissioning for both Children and Adults and also include better attendance at meetings.	Safeguarding Unit Commissioning	March 2024
Commissioning to review services on provider list and provider feedback.	Commissioning	March 2024
Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Safeguarding Unit to promote that Directorates have more autonomy in completing their individual SAFEs with advice and guidance to be sought from the Safeguarding Unit where necessary.	Safeguarding Unit All Directorates	March 2024
Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.	Safeguarding Unit All Directorates	March 2024
Evaluation of the Wellbeing Team.	Wellbeing Team	March 2024

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**SUBJECT: ANNUAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2022/2023, SOCIAL CARE, SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH**

**MEETING: Joint People and Performance Overview Committee**

**DATE: 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**



## Social Care & Health: Director's Report 2022/23

The report reflects the activity within Social Care and Health between the period  
April 2022 – March 2023.

[Go to this Sway](#)

## **1. PURPOSE:**

1.1 To present to joint scrutiny committee the Annual Report 2022/23 from the Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

2.1 For the joint committee to receive and scrutinise the Annual Report 2022/23 prior to its presentation at Council on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

## **3. KEY ISSUES:**

3.1 Preparing and publishing an annual report of the Statutory Director of Social Services is a requirement under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014). The report is required to show how social care in Monmouthshire meets the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. There is currently no standardised format for the report, although a standard format is expected to be issued by Welsh Government for next year.

3.2 This is the second Director's Report for the current Chief Officer for Social Care Safeguarding and Health. The report is presented using a SAWY format and is intended to be accessible to a wide range of people. It allows for interactive elements and for material to be presented in a variety of styles.

3.3 The overall purpose of the report is:

- To evaluate progress against our social care priorities during the year
- To provide Members and residents with an evaluation of social care and health services, looking at how we are making a difference in people's lives and our performance against key metrics
- To provide an analysis of the ways in which the current operating context is impacting on services and to identify key risks and challenges
- To inform Members and residents about how our services meet the standards and requirements under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014)
- To set out actions and priorities for 2023 – 2024.

3.4 The report has been developed with involvement from the service and includes contributions from the workforce and the people who use services. Evidence of performance, analysis and case material are combined to provide an extensive report covering many aspects of Social Services. The report relies on honest self-evaluation drawing on a range of both qualitative and quantitative data, triangulated where possible through external sources including direct feedback from people.

3.5 The report reflects the financial year from April 2022 to March 2023.

3.6 The report sets out the context in which we are working and provides analysis, commentary and evidence of work across many areas of the directorate. It provides an opportunity to reflect on what we are doing well as well as highlighting challenges, risk and areas where we need to change, develop or improve.

3.7 The report is set out in 9 sections.

- Section 1 - Basis of the Report
- Section 2 - Progress against the priorities from 2021 - 2022
- Section 3 - Overview of Children's Services
- Section 4 - Overview of Adults' Services
- Section 5 - Carers Service
- Section 6 - Complaints and Compliments
- Section 7 - More Than Just Words
- Section 8 – Workforce
- Section 9 – Next Steps, Key Challenges and Priorities

#### **4. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)**

4.1 The report provides an appraisal of performance and identifies future priorities. The report identifies the contribution of social services in Monmouthshire to the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

4.2 The report provides analysis of performance and priorities related to safeguarding and corporate parenting.

#### **5. OPTION APPRAISAL:**

N/A

#### **6. EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

6.1 The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the performance of Social Care & Health Services in 2022/23. The report draws on a range of evidence, including the performance indicators from the measurement framework under the Social Services and Well-being Act, alongside case material and qualitative evidence.

#### **7. REASONS:**

7.1 It is a legal requirement to publish an Annual Report.

7.2 To ensure that elected members are provided with the Chief Officer's evaluation of the performance and impact of Social Services in 2022/23; and are informed about the future priorities identified to deliver good quality and sustainable social care in Monmouthshire.

#### **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

8.1 The Annual Report sets out the financial context of social care and health and the outturn positions for 2023 for Children's and Adults' Services. The report identifies the financial context and the challenges of financial sustainability for the coming year and beyond in meeting the costs of social care services against the backdrop of reducing budgets and increasing demand for care and support.

## **9. CONSULTEES:**

**Cllr Ian Chandler, Lead Member for Social Care and Health Directorate**

**Senior Leadership Team**

**Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services**

**Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adults' Services**

**Claire Robins, Transformation Service Manager**

**Tyrone Stokes, Directorate Finance Manager**

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## **11. AUTHOR:**

**Jane Rodgers**

Chief Officer, Social Care safeguarding and Health.

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# ***Social Care & Health: Director's Report 2022/23***

## **Foreword**

This report reflects the activity within Social Care and Health between the period April 2022 – March 2023. It is my second annual report as a Chief Officer having come into post in October 2021.

I have collated the report with the assistance of many contributors and I am extremely grateful for input from the various teams and services within the Social Care and Health directorate.

The overall purpose of the report is:

- To evaluate progress against our social care priorities during the year
- To provide Members and residents with an evaluation of social care and health services, looking at how we are making a difference in peoples lives and our performance against key metrics
- To provide an analysis of the ways in which the current operating context is impacting on services and to identify key risks and challenges
- To inform Members and residents about how our services meet the standards and requirements under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014)
- To set out actions and priorities for 2023 – 2024



Whilst the report relates to the period April 2022 – March 2023 I have not stuck rigidly to this and where it feels relevant and pertinent I have referred to the current position or used more recent information, as 6 months can be a long time in social care, especially given the current climate.

The report contains:

Section 1 - Basis of the Report

Section 2 - Progress against the priorities from 2021 - 2022

Section 3 - Overview of Children's Services

Section 4 - Overview of Adults' Services

Section 5 - Carers Service

Section 6 - Complaints and Compliments

Section 7 - More Than Words

Section 8 - Workforce

Section 9 - Next Steps, Key Challenges and Priorities

The value-base of the Social Care and Health Directorate aligns to Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (referred to as the SSWBA) where putting individual people at the centre of what we do and practising with care and compassion is what really counts. Supporting citizens to live their own best lives has been the mantra for Monmouthshire Social Care and Health over many years, and is still at the heart of what we do.



Most readers of this report will be aware of the acute and deep-rooted challenges across the health and social care sector. With ever increasing demand and still further tightening of available resources, there are certainly no easy solutions.

Nevertheless, maintaining good quality services to people who need care and support remains our ambition. Whilst my intention within this report is to lay out the reality of the situation, I also seek to describe the ways in which the service is attempting to tackle the challenges we face. The Council as a whole, and the residents of Monmouthshire, are critical partners in how these challenges are addressed as we seek to understand where and how our social care and health system can be re-balanced, making difficult decisions about what we can and can't do and deciding on the best use of finite resources to balance short and long term sustainability.

At the centre of all of this, is the social care workforce. It is the workforce who carry the reality of how the various pressure points and challenges within the wider system impacts the citizens they encounter day to day, some of whom are the most vulnerable within the county. I am only too aware of the extent to which this can take both an emotional and physical toll on people. I am continually grateful for the resilience and resourcefulness of the workforce - their on-going commitment, heartfelt motivation, professionalism and dedication to serving people is the linchpin of the service and a true inspiration.

In many ways, this report is a celebration of the workforce and an expression of my heartfelt gratitude for everything they do.



## 1. Basis for the report

Social Care and Health operates within the legal framework set out within the SSWBA around the four key principles of:

- Voice and control
- Prevention
- Well-being
- Partnership

Preparing and publishing an annual report that charts our progress in delivering against the principles and quality standards of the SSWBA is a statutory requirement.

The report forms an integral part of the continual development of social care and health practice. Understanding our performance is central to evaluation and helps us consider whether we are effective and efficient in how we do things. It is an opportunity to take stock, reflect and re-calibrate; to celebrate achievements, as well as being honest about some of our very real areas of challenge and concern. Equally, evaluating through the lens of people who are in receipt of services, helps us understand at a deeper level whether our involvement in their lives is making a positive difference to their overall wellbeing. As much as possible I have tried to apply this lens within the report.

The six quality standards inform our operational activity and set out the ways in which we should be providing services and orientating social care practice. The quality standards are provided in this stack.



- Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes
- Working with people and partners to protect and promote physical and mental health and emotional well-being
- Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships
- Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society
- Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs
- Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm

In terms of how we evidence our progress and performance, we are guided by the revised code of practice in relation to the performance and improvement of social services in Wales set under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 which commenced in April 2020. The code of practice sets a revised performance and improvement framework for social services which contains three component parts; measuring activity and performance, understanding experience and outcomes and using evidence to inform improvement.

2022/23 is the third year of reporting metrics under the measuring activity and performance part of the framework. As there are over a hundred metrics within the framework, the most relevant metrics collated in 2022/23 have been included to support the analysis within this report.

Of course, metrics alone do not tell the story of the performance of social services. To supplement these, we have combined some of them to create performance measures to further understand how well services are performing and included some of our own locally derived performance data used by our services. Evidence and case material we have included in the report will supplement this analysis to further understand the experience and outcomes of service users.

How we measure and evidence our performance will continue to be developed in 2023/24, including further development of the remaining two parts of the performance and improvement framework.

Although the SSWBA is the primary legislative framework, the report is written within a wider statutory and policy context including:

- Programme for Government



- The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA)
- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- A Healthier Wales June 2018
- Strategic Programme for Primary Care Nov 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- “More than Just Words (Welsh language) Strategy” (Mwyna Geiriau),

At a more local level, social care is delivered in the context of the Council's previous corporate plan (2018 - 2022) particularly Goal A '*Best Start in Life*' and Goal D '*Lifelong Wellbeing*' and the current Community and Corporate plan (2022 - 2028) particularly '*A Safe Place to Live*' and '*A Connected Place Where People Care*'.

I have deliberately provided information and description within the report, as I am aware that in Social Care we do not often have opportunity to show-case what we do. I have attempted to balance descriptive passages with honest self-evaluation using a range of methods drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data, triangulated where possible through external sources including direct feedback from people.

Information sources include:

- Illustrative information directly from teams and services
- Self-assessment and challenge processes within the social care and health leadership team including self-assessment material under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
- Internal documents such as corporate plan, strategic risk assessment, and service business plans
- Internal Quality Assurance reports
- Complaints and compliments and direct feedback from people using social care and health services
- Performance framework data and analysis
- Regulation 73 reports and Quality of Care reports under RISCA
- Contract monitoring and performance reports (commissioned services)
- Regional documents and performance information associated with the Regional Partnership Board and Gwent Safeguarding Board
- Regulatory reports from Care Inspectorate Wales

The report relates to the period April 2022 – March 2023; however, I have not stuck rigidly to this and where it feels relevant and pertinent I have referred to the current position or used more recent information, as 6 months can be a long time in social care, especially given the current climate.

## 2. Progress against the priorities from 2021 - 2022

Last year I set out some key priority areas to focus on in the year ahead. Below, I have provided some headline comments regarding our progress against these.

**Priority: *Continue to develop and implement the workforce strategy for recruiting into the social care and health workforce over the immediate and longer term.***

**Progress:** Workforce planning has remained a strategic focus for the directorate through the year. A number of well received recruitment campaigns have been launched promoting social care as a career of choice. Within children's services recruiting to child protection posts remains challenging and gaps persist. We are working with national partners to address this through limiting the use of agency workers and through overseas recruitment. The recruitment of foster carers remains a key area of focus. Within adults' services specific gaps remain within occupational therapy posts, mental health social work and direct care.

**Priority: *Continue to develop and implement the workforce development plan with emphasis on individual well being and increased opportunities for professional support and development***

**Progress:** Supporting practice learning across the directorate remains a core objective.

This year we have implemented a learning management system across the social care directorate, going live in April 2023. We have developed and delivered a new induction and on-boarding programme for direct care with excellent feedback and continued to support foster carers through core training.

We have taken steps to implement approaches to supporting workforce wellbeing through Connect-5 and the promotion of a range of other wellbeing resources.

Our turnover and sickness rates within the directorate remain higher than we would want them to be. In the context of continued and relentless operational pressure, the overall wellbeing of the workforce remains a cause for concern.

**Priority: *Maintain a strategic and operational focus on preventative services with emphasis on community resilience and targeting the most vulnerable groups and individuals to help reduce demand.***

**Progress:** Following the links made with communities and place directorate a strong partnership approach has remained to ensure good alignment of the Council's resources. The Well being Network in partnership with primary care has remained at the forefront of the work. Community Links workers are embedded within front-facing community venues and this year included specific support to people from Ukraine. Key areas of on-going development include Community Action Networks, participatory budgeting and the development of the well being community hubs.

With the continued high rate of referrals into adult social care, this year we intend to review the connection between the social care 'front-door' and early help.

Within children's services waiting lists for the early help and preventative services have been significantly reduced with a high level of positive outcomes being reported following interventions.

**Priority: *Further develop innovative responses to the challenges within the provider market, specifically through a 'place-based' approach to home care.***

**Progress:** During the last year we have seen some expansion in care service providers following the lifting of restrictions caused by the pandemic. This has enabled us to reduce our hours of unmet need within home care and has minimised waiting times for residential placements. We have made significant progress in increasing the availability of micro-carers in locality areas, and there has been a slight increase in people choosing direct payments.

**Priority: *Re-focus on practice particularly within adult's services including quality assurance processes and management oversight, support of practice, specifically to address issues raised within the CIW Performance Evaluation Inspection July 2022***

**Progress:** We are designing and implementing system development work to support quality assurance processes within 'Flo' the adult data base recording system. We are further reviewing how practice across the system consistently aligns with eligibility criteria and have put a programme in place to support care plan reviews. Demand pressures from new referrals continues to impede progress in some areas.

**Priority: *Work with partners to develop and implement services that will address the insufficiency of placements for children and young people, particularly those with complex needs.***

**Progress:** Sufficiency of placements for children who need to be looked after remains a key risk for the council. Challenge in securing appropriate placements for children has been exacerbated by uncertainty owing to the 'eliminating profit' agenda.

Our prime strategy to address this is the on-going work to recruit and retain in-house Monmouthshire foster carers. Whilst kinship care placements have increased, progress in terms of recruiting in-house foster placements is slow.

This year we have worked in partnership to develop 2 bespoke residential provisions for children with complex needs. We have plans in place regarding increasing our residential provisions utilising the council's existing property base; however, the project time to stand-up a residential provision takes at least a year. We are developing learning and experience in this field within the service.

We have worked in partnership to increase access to 16 plus supported living accommodation including for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (16 plus).

**Priority: *Continue to maintain a strong partnership presence in key forums particularly within the Gwent Safeguarding Board and the Regional Partnership Board.***

**Progress:** Monmouthshire remains well-represented across all key partnerships. Through this we have been able to ensure financial and other resources to support key initiatives this year including the development of the micro-care project; assistive technology and the purchase and refurbishment of a residential children's home.

### 3. CHILDREN'S SERVICE

The primary purpose for Monmouthshire Children's Service is to support children to live safely and happily within their families and communities, building the skills and resilience they need to go on to achieve their full potential as adult citizens.

To achieve this Monmouthshire Children's Service has built a strong identity underpinned by a consolidated set of values aligned to the principles of the SSWBA. These include:

- Keeping children at the centre of everything we do, embracing a single service ethos so that the child's experience is coherent and seamless
- Practice that is values driven, family focused and strengths-based
- Ensuring services are appropriately aligned so they add value to each other
- Recognising the power of early intervention and preventative family support at every tier of need
- Maintaining a strong focus on workforce by proactively supporting practice development and a positive learning culture
- Embracing integrated and multi-disciplinary approaches
- Proactively seeking opportunities for participation and engagement with children, young people and families
- Seeking ways of releasing resources and money from the system to get better longer-term outcomes and increase sustainability.

These values drive our activity and help us ensure that our service development themes and priorities remain as coherent as possible.

<b>Child Centred</b>	Focus on the child's experience of services & using participation to shape & improve services & inform practice
<b>Workforce</b>	Develop practice & support confident & competent practitioners across the service who are passionate about Children's Services
<b>Quality Assurance</b>	Facilitate a culture within Children's Services which promotes transparency, reflection, learning and review to drive continuous improvement towards achieving the best outcomes for children, young people & their families
<b>Services</b>	Ensure that family support services are in place & sufficient at all tiers including services for children who are looked after & care experienced young people  Ensure that all services focus on prevention & de-escalation & build on individual, family & community strengths
<b>Integrated Working</b>	Harness and embrace the power of integrated / partnership working to maximize access to resources and improve outcomes for children, young people and families

In my last report, I described a challenging year for children's services. Unfortunately, this year the picture has remained very much the same. Demand arising from new referrals has remained high with the complexity of presenting needs being an on-going cause for concern. Domestic abuse, family dysfunction, substance misuse and mental health difficulties continue to have a significant impact on the safety and wellbeing of children across the county, with external factors such as the rising cost of living putting even further pressure on vulnerable families.

Supporting the wellbeing of our workforce and difficulties in recruitment, particularly into child protection services, has remained a constant factor requiring considerable investment of time and resource. Shortages within the workforce particularly in critical posts has placed extra pressure on teams and has slowed us down with some aspects of implementing service developments. Recruitment into key posts and reducing the use of agency staff remains a key priority.

One of the most significant challenges for the service this year, was the lack of suitable placements for children, particularly those with complex needs. Good placement options are a crucial component of how we keep children safe and help them recover from any trauma or abuse they may have experienced. Not having placements available is potentially harmful for children, puts additional pressure on resources and is incredibly demoralising for our workforce. This year has seen placement availability become even more competitive as 'for profit' providers respond to the governmental policy drive to eliminate profit from children's social care.

Pressure in this area was the major reason why the service experienced unsustainable financial pressure against the budget over the year. From an original budget of £18,012,000, out turn at year end was £22,180,000 meaning that the budget was overspent by £4,147,000.

Service Area	Original Budget 2022/23	Actual Outturn	Actual (Under) / Overspend @ Outturn
	'000's	'000's	'000's
Children Services	18,012	22,180	4,147

We are developing plans to respond to the challenges laid out through the 'eliminate' agenda, however, progress is not as quick as we would like it to be. Making use of regional resource to further development and implement our placement sufficiency strategy will remain a key priority area over the next year.

Despite the challenges the service continues to develop and has seen some real positives and highlights through the year.

In the previous report I highlighted the launch of the Monmouthshire Children's Services Participation Strategy [Participation-Strategy-v5-003.pdf \(childcomwales.org.uk\)](https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/participation-strategy-v5-003.pdf) Since then, the strategy has been recognised as a model of good practice by the Children's Commissioner for Wales and each team is working on their own Participation Action Plan in line with the strategy.

- Each team is developing work on children's participation in different ways and are sharing their skills and learning across teams, here are some examples of things that have happened or are underway.
- The Children with Disabilities Team ran an event in August to consult with children and young people who use their services on what works well for them and changes they would like to see.
- The Early Help and Assessment Team are reviewing recording so that records are written to the child and reports use the child own voice.
- The BASE team have been working with children who use their service and members of the local community to develop a community garden.

- The Young Carers team launched the Young Carer's Forum with a fun day that was planned by young carers, for young carers and their families.
- The Family Time Service has consulted with children and young people about the kind of resources and activities they would like to see at the centres and is planning on involving children in the design of the new centre in Abergavenny when it is being developed.
- The Family Support and Protection Teams are planning ways of getting feedback on their involvement from children in order to improve the service they offer.
- Young people have also been directly and indirectly involved in the recruitment of staff. In some cases they have sat on interview panels, in others they have provided questions for panels to ask.

And some of our other key highlights.....

- The service has focused on working with families to support their strengths, manage risks and achieve good outcomes. The Family Focus Team was implemented this year to provide targeted bespoke support to families aimed at preventing the need for a child protection intervention.
- Building on what we have learned from previous events, we have run further activity days for children who are looked after together with their social workers. This is because children told us how important it was for them to share experiences with their social workers outside of 'processes' to help develop trusting relationships.
- Capacity has been created to address enable support to be provided to refugee children. This year we have received 10 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children into our service and have supported them into suitable placements that meet their cultural and identity needs.
- We continue to run a comprehensive training and development programme based on core skills including working with risk and using strengths-based approaches. This year the service went live with a much needed training management system THINQI to support practitioners with their professional development.
- Last year we worked with our housing association partners, Pobl, to re-design a supported accommodation option for care leavers and homeless young people that supports progression planning and a pathway to independence. This year we have been able to support several young people to safely leave residential placements via this step-down approach.
- With the easing of COVID restrictions, our partnership with Action for Children has gone from strength to strength. The service provides support, fun, leisure and social activities for children and young people with disabilities while parents and carers have a break from caring responsibilities. This reinforces the long term resilience of families to continue to care for children and young people with disabilities and helps contribute to the child's personal and social development, reducing social isolation and preventing family breakdown.
- In partnership with health and Action for Children we have developed a 2 bed specialist residential children's home for children with complex disabilities.

- While continuing to manage these pressures we have seen the timeliness of some of our key processes remain high, such as: decision on contacts made by the end of the next working day, 97.8%; new assessments completed within statutory timescales, 92.3%; and looked after reviews, 99.0%, completed within statutory timescales.
- This year our Children's Service Christmas Wishes appeal raised over £5,200. This enabled the county's most vulnerable children and young people to receive a Christmas gift they would not otherwise receive. With the current Cost of Living Crisis, more and more people will be struggling to provide a Christmas gift for their children this year, which makes this year's appeal even more important.

Our usual Children's Services Christmas party went down a storm, the singing gets better year on year and Rob's quiz really does bring in the crowds. A very special way to end the year and say Thank you for the amazing work each and everyone does across all teams.









## How we Performed in Children's Service

### Social Care for Children 2022-23

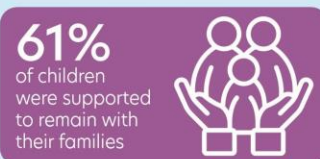
#### About Children's Services



#### Who we Support



#### Supporting People Earlier



#### How we Work



#### What Difference Did we Make?



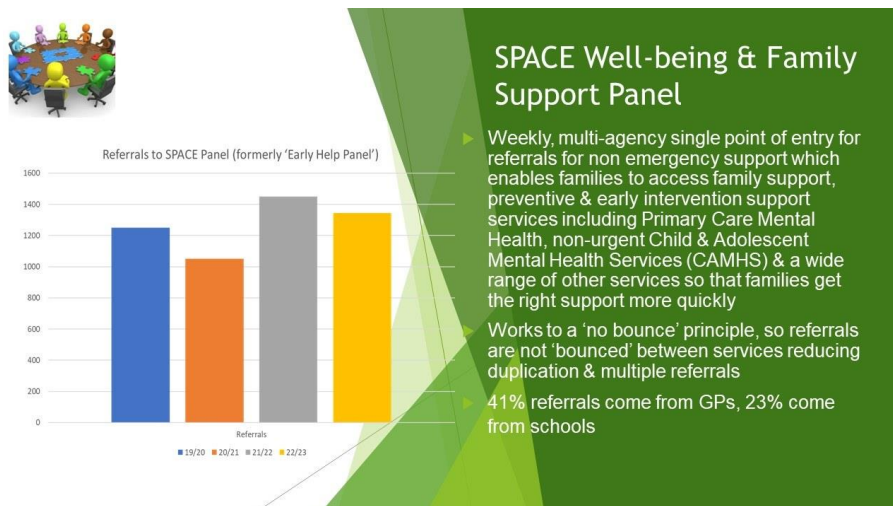
## Prevention and early intervention

Over recent years Children’s Social Services has established a co-ordinated approach to early intervention and prevention providing support to children and families who need it as soon as possible and ensuring that the right help is provided at the right level. Working with families when vulnerabilities first start to emerge allows increased opportunity for families to define their own outcomes. This helps families to achieve and sustain the changes they want to make, addressing problems before they become more entrenched and harder to overcome.

Early help services are the foundation stone for our long term strategy to prevent and reduce the need for children to come into care.

To help support families effectively our multi-agency panel arrangements are well established and provide a co-ordinated approach to referrals. The panels are convened weekly and bring together a wide range of agencies. There is an emphasis on community based services such as School Based Counselling and The Integrated Families and Community Together Team as well as support for particular groups of children such as young carers. Panels also include Primary Care Mental Health and Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). This ensures there is a clear pathway to accessing emotional and mental health support for young people, and is a process that is well used by GP services in particular.

For more information about community based support in children's services follow the slide show.

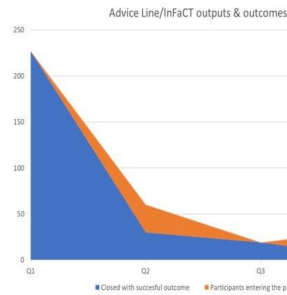


### SPACE Well-being & Family Support Panel

- Weekly, multi-agency single point of entry for referrals for non emergency support which enables families to access family support, preventive & early intervention support services including Primary Care Mental Health, non-urgent Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) & a wide range of other services so that families get the right support more quickly
- Works to a 'no bounce' principle, so referrals are not 'bounced' between services reducing duplication & multiple referrals
- 41% referrals come from GPs, 23% come from schools



## Integrating Families and Community Together 'InFaCT'



- ▶ InFaCT is the new model for delivering and expanding the 'advice line' service. The advice line had been operating (since 2020) as a telephone first point of contact for early intervention. The second half of the year has seen the completion of this transition.
- ▶ InFaCT broadens the advice line concept and operational model to focus support in a more 'place-based' way. This is in line with other initiatives within the county, both for early years and adult focused services.
- ▶ Early outcomes for InFaCT have evidenced the service link/signpost parents to opportunities related to the cost of living (e.g. food vouchers, energy benefits, breakfast clubs) and offering short term emotional and service networking support to families until other agencies come on line more formally (e.g. housing).
- ▶ In the next year this work will continue but will also begin to include the coproduction of new wellbeing opportunities between agencies, children and families e.g. outdoor adventures and pursuits

## Building Strong Families Team (TAF)

- ▶ BSFT is a small team who provide short-term support for families asking for help with the most difficult job in the world, parenting. It may include support with routines & boundaries or managing children's emotions or behaviour.
- ▶ Referrals have continued to increase steadily. 2022/2023 saw changes of staff to the team. In 21/22 the waiting list for this service was 6 to 8 months, with a new management team in place and improved communication processes for families this has now reduced to a maximum of 6 weeks.
- ▶ The team now has a strong family focus providing family based intervention & support

*'I liked that I that I got to talk. I will use the tools to help me to calm down. I was feeling about 4/10 before, I'm now feeling an 8/10!'- Child*



% Families closed with a successful outcome				
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
59.6%	75.53%	84%	84%	98.5%

*'We have seen real fundamental, positive changes of late. I think the well for this family & your part has had an obvious impact, far beyond isolation, we could have managed in Teacher*

*'I found the techniques helpful. Our son has come on leaps & bounds since the intervention has begun, we as a family are very grateful for the support offered & feel that further support is no longer needed. Thankyou.'*  
- Parent

## School & Community Counselling Team

- ▶ Offers 1:1, group & critical incident support to children & young people & teacher & parent consultations to increase impact 'outside' the counselling room
- ▶ Works in the 4 comprehensives & has an alternate provision stream (EHE, EOTAS, PRS), community locations & an online/phone therapy offer
- ▶ This year the team has broadened expertise in from humanistic/existential counselling to include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) & art psychotherapy
- ▶ 379 referrals received in 2022/23
  - ▶ 169 young people supported with counselling & psychotherapy
  - ▶ 1,577 counselling & psychotherapy sessions delivered
  - ▶ Feedback indicates wellbeing improvements from 'moderate' to 'mild/low level' mental health & wellbeing difficulties
  - ▶ 144 young people supported & 798 sessions delivered through the Wellbeing Practitioner team (preventative/early intervention & step-down service)
  - ▶ 80 teaching/other education staff supported in identification & consultation of young people's wellbeing needs.
  - ▶ 86 parents were supported in better understanding & supporting young people's wellbeing needs.

*'Would like to see sofas so that client could relax more, plants in the room and pictures of nature to look at.'* Child

*'Different mindset approaches was good – got more strategies.'* Child

*'Shorter waiting times [needed]'* Child

*'Thank you for everything you have done for me.'* Child

**Monmouthshire Young Carers**

- ▶ Offers 1:1 & group support, advice & social activities to young carers in Monmouthshire.
- ▶ 236 young carers received information & access to activities, support with emotional wellbeing & guidance in relation to their caring role
- ▶ 99 young carers (& 130 family members) came on trips & activities in the year ranging from consultation & rights events, bowling, cinema, pantomime & orienteering
- ▶ 34 young carers received one-to-one support - 91.2% closed with a successful outcome
- ▶ 16 young carers attended the Young Carers Festival
- ▶ 40 group sessions were run in six schools; 2 were run in the community to ensure that all young carers could access support including those not attending school
- ▶ 12 awareness raising sessions run in 6 schools

Young Carers Forum being developed

*“Just to stay the girls really enjoyed the bowling trip today had great fun & food was good too thank you 😊”*  
parent

**YOUNG CARERS FESTIVAL 2022**  
Royal Welsh Showground, Bullth Wells

*“My child has expressed how much it has helped him make new friends and come out of his shell but also to (in a nice way) have a break from me and his caring role.”* Parent

Demand remains high across all early help services and significant effort has been put into reducing waiting times. Volunteers and students are being used to build capacity and resilience, and group work approaches are being used to reach more young people. Through these approaches we have been able to increase capacity and reduce wait times.

School and Community Counselling has made a 50% reduction in waiting lists and Building Stronger Families has reduced the waiting list from 6 to 8 months to 6 weeks.

The current cost of living crisis is tipping more families into fuel and food poverty. Rising housing, food and energy costs has affected all income groups but particularly impacts low income families and the working poor. Continuing to work with others to provide accessible and coordinated early help support to families remains a key strategic aim for the service.

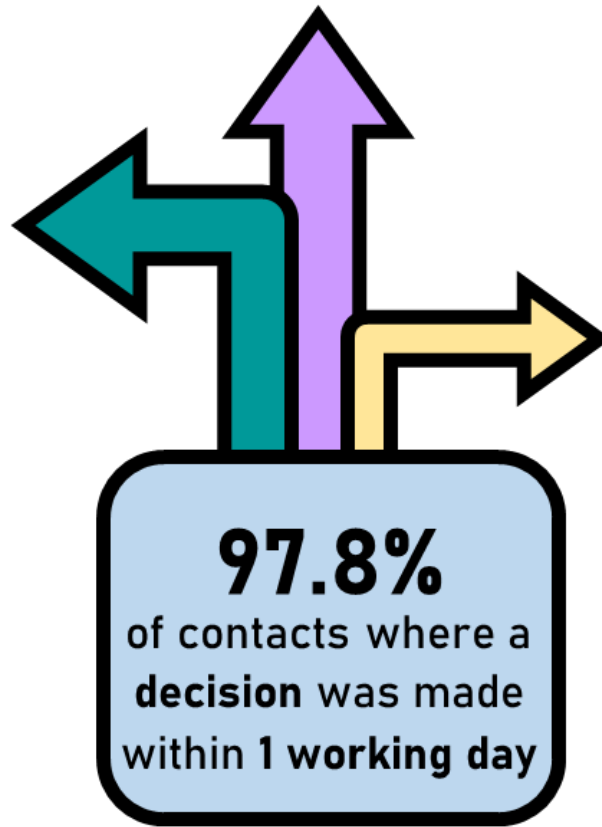
Evaluation and feedback of family support services indicates clear and positive outcomes for families. During 2022/23, out of 80 families, 87.5% reported a positive outcome from the early help intervention.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Prevention and early intervention (Children)</b>				
Local	Percentage of families supported by early help services who report being helped with matter to them (pre statutory services)	84%	84%	87.5%

### **The Front Door**

Concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or young person are made via referrals (known as reports or contacts) into the Early Help and Assessment Team. All reports are screened so that appropriate decisions can be made about how to respond to the information. The number of reports received for children not already in receipt of care and support increased slightly during 2022/23 resulting in a sustained high level of demand. The majority of reports were received from Police and education colleagues. There has been a similar sustained number of reports received for young carers.

Providing appropriate and timely support to meet demand at the 'front-door' of statutory children's services remains challenging and is a pressure area for the service.



Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Front Door (Children)</b>				
CH/001	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year	4329	5776	5825
CH/002	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	2700	3379	3508
CH/003	The number of contacts received by statutory children's social services during the year where a decision was made by the end of the next working day	3042	5769	5698
Local	The percentage of contacts received by statutory children's social services during the year where a decision was made by the end of the next working day	70.3%	99.9%	97.8%
<b>Front Door (Young Carers)</b>				
CA/011	The total number of contacts to statutory social serviced by young carers or professionals contacting the service on their behalf received during the year	143	233	259
CA/012	Of those identified, the number where advice and assistance was provided	61	86	106

A decision on how to progress a report (contact) is expected with 1 working day, and during 2022/23 this happened in 97.8% of reports (contacts).

Within the Early Help and Assessment Team, the safeguarding hub manages the busy day to day process of receiving reports about children and families. The hub supports effective inter-agency liaison to ensure that decisions are based on joined-up information about children and their carers. The hub comprises of social work practitioners who have established, strong networks with schools, health, probation and housing together with a full-time embedded Police Detective Constable to effect timely decision making about undertaking child protection enquiries.

Many reports can be turned around at the front-door of children's services by providing individual information, advice or assistance (IAA) to families. Last year we helped 3,508 families through providing IAA, which represents a slight increase from the previous year. Early help and preventative services are part of the hub arrangements which ensures that when it is safe to do so we have

systems and services in place to support families without the need for statutory social work intervention.

### Assessments

When it appears that child protection enquiries need to be made or it is evident that further support is needed, an assessment is undertaken. During 2022/23, 907 assessments were completed which is a slight increase on the previous year. The number of children requiring care and support following an assessment remained fairly stable although the complexity of presenting needs remains a cause for concern. Often, following an assessment, needs can be met in other ways, such as referring to our Early Help services or an appropriate external agency. In some cases a decision on the best course of action needs further investigation, for example, where child protection procedures are to be followed.



Assessments are usually expected to conclude within 42 working days and during 2022/23 an increasing percentage (92%) did. To ensure the child’s involvement in the assessment process, the child should be seen and was for 98% of assessments.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Assessments (Children)</b>				
CH/006	The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year	828	884	907
CH/007	The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year where:			
CH/007a	Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan	249	264	253
CH/007b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	448	424	493
CH/007c	There were no eligible needs to meet	26	17	16
Local	The percentage of assessments for children completed during the year where there is evidence that the child has been seen	95.1%	96.9%	98.3%
Local	The percentage of new assessments completed for children during the year that were completed within statutory timescales	87.1%	91.2%	92.3%
<b>Assessments (Young Carers)</b>				
CA/014	The total number of young carers needs assessments undertaken during the year	36	40	29
CA/015	The total number of young carers needs assessments undertaken during the year where:			
CA/015a	Needs could be met using a young carer’s support plan or care and support plan	16	18	10
CA/015b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	13	11	11
CA/015c	There were no eligible needs to meet	0	0	1

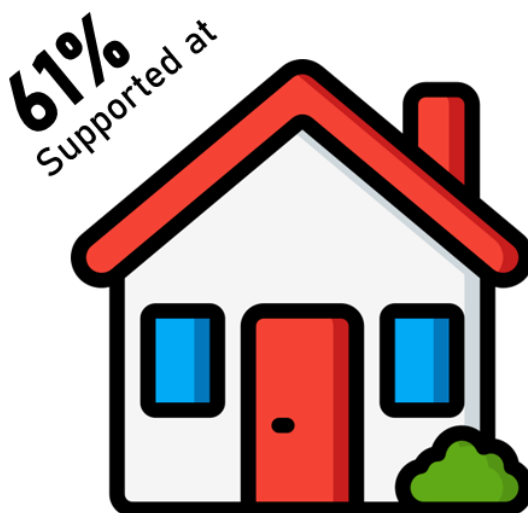
## Care and Support Plans and Reviews

For children who will need further support from an allocated social worker a care and support plan is developed. At the end of the year, 542 children had a care and support plan which detailed how their support was to be provided. Of these, 51 children had a direct payment, allowing their families to choose how their care and support should be delivered. The number of young carers with a care and support plan which includes support for their caring role is largely stable.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Plans (Children)</b>				
CH/015a	The number of children with a care and support plan at 31st March	515	518	542
Local	The percentage of children supported to remain living within their family	58.6%	59.8%	61.1%
CH/016	The total number of children with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31st March	48	54	51
CA/017b	The number of children or young people with a care and support plan who also have carer responsibilities	22	34	32
Local	The percentage of reviews due during the year that were completed within statutory timescales, which were:			
Local	Child protection reviews	94.2%	96.0%	84.0%
Local	Looked after reviews (including pathway plan reviews and pre-adoption reviews)	99.8%	98.6%	99.0%
Local	reviews of children in need of care and support (including children supported by a direct payment)	67.3%	66.3%	65.4%

Children's care plans should be regularly reviewed according to statutory time frames. The timeliness of reviews for Children Looked After and Child Protection reviews remains high, although the timeliness of reviews for children in need of care and support requires improvement.

## Supporting children to live safely at home





Working to support children remain safely at home is one of our key goals within the service. This helps us to reduce the numbers of children who need to come into care, and as long as their needs are met, remaining within their own families and communities secures better outcomes for children. Of the children with a care and support plan, 61% are supported to remain at home.

We have a strong family support service offer which underpins this endeavour and allows us to focus on preventing problems from escalating; supporting families to address risk; and increasing family and individual resilience. Our suite of family support services share a common theory base resting on attachment, strengths based, trauma informed and developmental approaches so parents experience a coherent approach across the service.

Our services include:

- Tailored parenting support and therapeutic parenting
- Helping young people develop strategies to keep safe from exploitation and harm
- Services aimed at facilitating long-term sustainable change for families with complex challenges
- Support for families impacted by domestic abuse or family conflict
- Family Group Conferencing and family mediation
- Counselling and therapeutic support for children
- Services aimed at re-uniting and strengthening families when children have previously been looked after
- Life-story work for children who have been in care and adopted children.

This year Family Mediation received 31 new referrals. In every case that was closed this year, all children remained at home or with family and 83% families reported they were taking forward the advice or had seen improvements in their family relationships.

### Family Group Conference & Mediation Service

Family Group Conferencing	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Referrals	69	112	140	116
FGCs	52	42	21	45
Review FGCs	19	32	40	43
Family Meetings	Not recorded	23	46	47
FGCs resulting in a positive family plan	58	78	69	89

- ▶ Referrals to the FGC service have decreased a little, while the amount of successful FGC conferences and family meetings has increased. Out of the total 116 referrals 92 FGC/Family Meetings were held, with 86% reporting a positive outcomes.
- ▶ Mediation has taken 31 new referrals in 22/23. 7 families did not engage. On all cases at closure children either remained at home or with wider family. 83% reported that they were taking forward mediators advice and /or reporting significant improvement in relationships. During 22/23 there has been changes in Mediation staff therefore at times capacity has been limited.

*'Seeing the family members all together showed the support & understanding the family which supported me to make the decision that the children could return home' – Social Worker*

*'Communication has really improved through mediation, we have spoken a few times in the week & been sending pictures I am now able to put myself in her position & understand why she was having those feelings –Parent*

*'Helped us to make a clear plan & everyone's opinions were heard' Family*

*'The meeting evidenced the effective support network from the family, keeping the child within the family' – Social Worker*

An area we focused on this last year was the development of our 'Family Focus' team. This team sits within the Early Help and Assessment Team and provides an intensive 12 week programme of intervention following an assessment or child protection enquiry, where it is indicated that this might help the family to 'turn around' rather than enter further into the child protection process. We were able to develop the service by realigning some of the roles within the team so that dedicated family support worker time could be made available. The results over the year have been positive, and has shown that a deeper and focused engagement with families at this early stage of statutory support can reduce the need for on-going intervention.

Of the 194 families that Family Focus worked with, following the intervention 109 were closed to the service and 56 transferred for longer term intervention.

Our most intensive interventions are provided through Achieving Change Together and MyST (My Support Team).

Achieving Change Together team works with children who are on the edge of coming into care and provides an intensive intervention (up to 12-18 months) aimed at supporting families to make sustainable change and provide a safe and nurturing parenting environment for their children.

**Achieving Change Together Team - ACTT**

- ▶ Psychologically & systemically informed team working intensively with families with children on the edge of coming into care. Intensive intervention (up to 12-18 months) based on families setting their own goals, relationships, self-efficacy, trauma/attachment informed
  - ▶ ACTT worked with 60 children in 29 families April 2022 - March 2023
  - ▶ Interventions have been completed with 14 families
  - ▶ Interventions have been started with 15 Families
  - ▶ 50 (83%) of the children living in families completing the ACTT intervention have remained in care of their families. Of those, 100% remain at home at 6 months after closure.
  - ▶ 80% have been supported to improve school attendance
  - ▶ 89% of families reported improved confidence and resilience around parenting and 96% of parents have evidenced they are able to de-escalate situations more frequently.
  - ▶ In 2022/23, 17 children working with ACTT have their names taken off the Child Protection Register
  - ▶ 17 children in 6 families supported by ACT have been closed to Children's Services at the end of the intervention and 3 children have come off Care Orders. All these children remain closed to Children's Services and 10 have remained closed for six months.

*'ACT has been invaluable, all I needed was someone to rant to, once I got it off my chest nothing feels as bad.'*  
Parent

*'My daughter has had someone to talk to outside of the family which has been 'invaluable''*  
Parent

*'They are amazing people that have helped me and my children in so many different ways.'*  
Parent

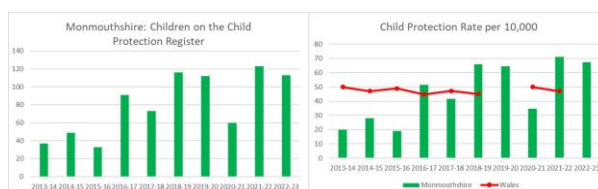
MyST (My Support Team) is a multi-disciplinary team that provides 24 hour attachment and trauma based support to young people and carers in a way that allows a child to learn and develop through a dynamic approach to risk. It is a long-term intervention in place or some of our most vulnerable and complex children. MyST provides individual consultations to help carers and teams understand and care for children who have disrupted attachment and have experienced trauma through adversity, abuse or neglect. This year MyST have supported **some** extremely troubled children remain at home and has **prevented placement breakdowns for # children through intensive therapeutic intervention. [waiting on data]**

### **Safeguarding**

When children are living at home and are at risk of serious harm the children's names are entered onto the Child Protection Register and a Care, Support and Protection Plan is developed. A multi-agency core group is established to implement the plan and monitor the welfare of the children. The purpose of the plan is to reduce the risk of significant harm so that families can safely stay together.

As at the end of the year there were 113 children on the child protection register, a slight decrease since the end of 2021/22.

The rate of 67 children on the child protection register per 10,000 child population in Monmouthshire, exceeds the most recently published Welsh rate from 2021/22. While the number of children on child protection plans fluctuates, the critical issue is that the right children are registered and remain subject to child protection core groups and planning for the right length of time.



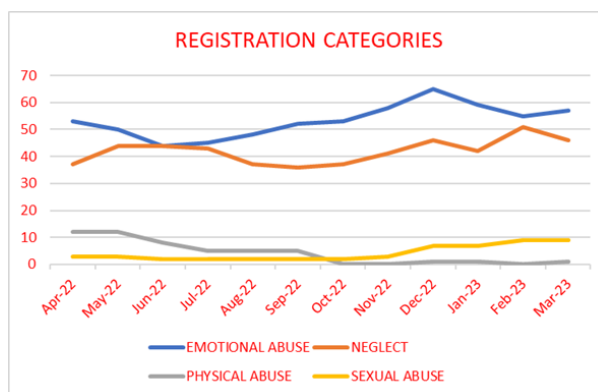
This year saw a slight decrease in volume of required initial conferences so consequently the overall number of children registered.

Following registration at initial conference, an initial core group should take place in 10 working days and did in 87% of cases. Positively, the percentage of initial child protection conferences completed on time also increased.

The timeliness of some child protection processes, such as review conferences and child protection statutory visits, has decreased during the year. Timeliness of reviews of children on the Child Protection Register has decreased this year, in part to ensure the correct people were able to attend conference and that the conference panel was able to consider all views thoroughly. The accurate recording of child protection visits is a focus for 2023/24.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Safeguarding Children</b>				
CH/022	The total number of Section 47 enquiries completed during the year that progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference	113	176	145
Local	The percentage of initial child protection conferences held during the collection year that were held within statutory timescales	42.6%	23.6%	79.3%
CH/027	The total number of initial core group meetings held during the year	78	131	127
CH/028	The total number of initial core group meetings held during the year that were held within statutory timescales	72	120	112
Local	The percentage of initial core group meetings due during the year that were held within statutory timescales	66.7%	76.4%	86.8%
CH/029	The total number of visits to children placed on the child protection register that were due during the year	2115	2161	2566
Local	The percentage of visits to children placed on the child protection register that were due during the year that were completed	-	-	65.0%
Local	The percentage of visits to children placed on the child protection register that were due during the year that were completed within approved timescales	66.6%	58.1%	37.5%
Local	The percentage of children removed (de-registered) from the child protection register during the year who later became looked after	27.3%	18.7%	26.1%

Measure	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual
Number of Children on the Child Protection Register	116	112	60	123	113
The percentage of re-registrations of children on local authority Child Protection Registers (CPR)	3.5%	2.4%	5.6%	0.6%	4.7%
Numerator: Number of re-registrations of children on the CPR during the year	6	3	6	1	6
Denominator: Total number of registrations on CPR during the year	172	126	108	157	129
The average length of time for all children who were on the CPR during the year	260	270	302	215	263
Numerator: The total number of days each child had been on the CPR if they were removed from the CPR during the year	33,794	35,046	49,872	19,537	37,348
Denominator: Number of children who were removed from the CPR during the year	130	130	165	91	142



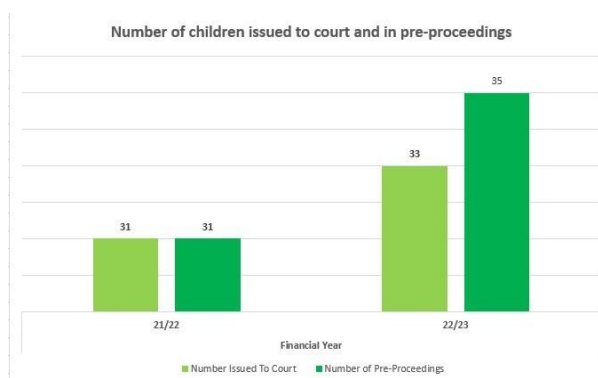
Neglect and Emotional Abuse remain the largest categories of registration for children in Monmouthshire. This slide shows the registration picture over the last 6 months.

The core purpose of a care, support and protection plan is to work with children, parents, carers and wider professionals to reduce risk and the likelihood of significant harm. The focus remains on prevention and on diverting children away from the need for court proceedings. For children where concerns remain high, the service will initiate a pre-proceedings framework where additional intensity of oversight and support is implemented. We use services, such as Achieving Change Together, to help us manage risk. Although it is not always successful, using the pre-proceedings framework represents an intensive, time-limited endeavour to support parents make the changes they need to.

The Family Support and Protection team is the central point within the service to hold and manage cases for children on the child protection register or in care proceedings. Last year we strengthened the leadership structure within the team and re-focused our attention on supporting practice in this area. Whilst this has resulted in positive benefit, child protection work remains our most pressured part of the service for recruiting and retaining qualified and experienced social workers.

There has been an increase in the number of children removed from the register this year, 142 in total, of which 26% went on to be looked after. This means that in 74% of cases children's names were removed from the child protection register because the risk of harm had been reduced.

Although this year 2 more children entered a formal legal process than last year, 35 children were held within a pre-proceedings framework.



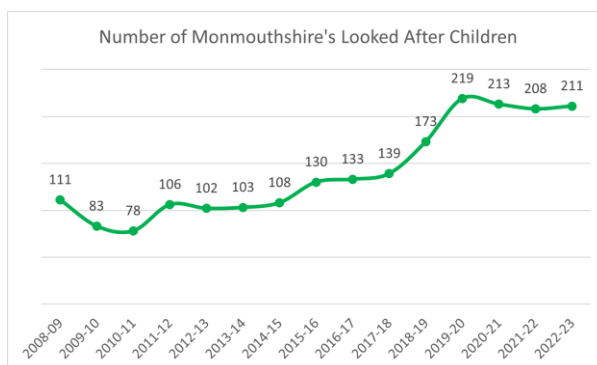
Even when we enter care proceedings our aim remains to find good family based permanent placements without the need for a care order.

## Children who are Looked After

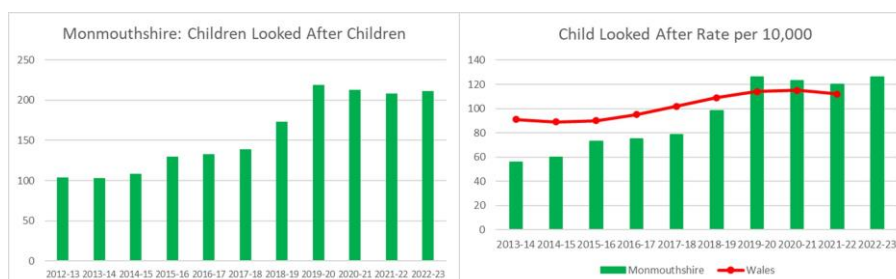
When it is not in a child's best interests to remain living at home, the Local Authority is under a duty to provide them with a looked after child placement. At year end Monmouthshire was supporting 211 children looked after. The number rose sharply in previous years but has recently stabilised as we have continued to embed preventative family support services including those focused on safe rehabilitation. In 2021 - 2022 the rate of children looked after in Monmouthshire remained higher than the average rate of children who are looked after across Wales, and is likely that this will be the case for 2022 - 2023.

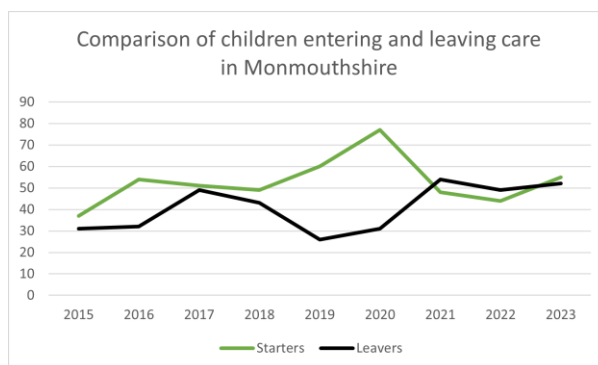
Measure	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual
Number of Looked After Children	173	219	213	208	211
Number of Children Adopted in the Year	3	1	1	9	10
Number of Children Leaving Care with Special Guardianship Orders in the Year	2	8	11	13	9
Percentage of Looked After Children placed with MCC generic/kinship foster carers	37.6%	36.1%	41.3%	41.3%	42.2%
Number of Generic Foster Carers	26	34	38	40	39
The percentage of looked after children who have experienced 1 or more changes of school, during a period or periods of being looked after, which were not due to transitional arrangements, in the year to 31 March	5.3%	12.7%	10.9%	5.4%	10.1%
<i>Numerator: The number of children of compulsory school age looked after at 31 March who have had one or more changes of school, which were not due to transitional arrangements</i>	6	18	15	8	17
<i>Denominator: The number of children of compulsory school age looked after at 31 March</i>	114	142	138	147	169
The percentage of looked after children on 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year	6.9%	7.3%	4.2%	6.7%	7.6%
<i>Numerator: The number of children looked after at 31 March who had three or more separate placements during the year</i>	12	16	9	14	16
<i>Denominator: The total number of children who were looked after at 31 March</i>	173	219	213	208	211

Our year end figure this year showed a slight increase in the number of children who are looked after from 208 to 211. However, the figure of 211 includes 10 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) whilst last year's figure of 208 included 2 UASC. This means that our underlying figure of Monmouthshire children who are looked after continues to decrease (from 206 to 201).



1 - Number of looked after children in Monmouthshire over the years.





During the year 55 children entered care and 52 ceased being looked after.

10 of the 55 children entering care this year were Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).

Monmouthshire has a history of supporting young people who arrive spontaneously in the Local Authority area fleeing oppression, exploitation, or war due to our border placement on the M4. During 2022 the Home Office placed a requirement on all Local Authorities to accommodate and offer care and support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People allocated via the National Transfer Scheme.

During the year 2022 - 2023:

- 10 Unaccompanied Young People seeking Asylum became Looked After in Monmouthshire;
- 7 of these young people were referred by the Home Office National Transfer Scheme;
- 3 young people arrived spontaneously
- All are currently aged between 16 -17 yrs and 9 are male;
- Only 3 young people reside in Monmouthshire the others are in out of county placements.

Currently, children's services does not have sufficient culturally suitable accommodation to provide placements for all of our asylum seeking young people. We are working closely with the Gwent based strategic group, and regional leads to develop our response and have a designated worker within the Long Term Support team to enable access to appropriate services and advocacy as needed. Developing appropriate placements and services for UASC will be a priority area for the coming year.

Looked after children benefit from stability and, where possible, placement and school moves are minimised. The number of children experiencing school moves and the number of children experiencing three or more placements in the year have both increased. In some cases this is a consequence of difficulties in the availability of suitable foster placements.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Children Looked After and Care Leavers</b>				
<b>Children Looked After</b>				
CH/043	The total number of children looked after at 31 March who have experienced three or more placements during the year	9	14	16
CH/044	The total number of children looked after on the 31 March who have experienced one or more changes of school during the year (excluding transitional arrangements, moves associated with adoption or moves home)	15	8	17



## Involving Children in their Care

The Children's Services Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is critical in terms of helping children and young people participate in their Children Looked After Reviews. The small size of the authority enables our IRO service to develop individual relationships with children which is helpful in encouraging them to express their wishes and feelings.

It is an expectation that proper consideration is given to all children over the age of 8 as to whether they should attend their child looked after review, or at least part of it. Above the age of 11, it is an expectation that children will always be invited.

Between April 2022 to September 2022, 108 children were invited to attend their reviews and 96 (89%) attended.

Between October 2022 to March 2023, 124 children were invited to attend their reviews and 99 (80%) attended.

Overall, the number of children who attend when they are invited is consistently positive, and is something we need to maintain.

The IRO also encourages parents to attend children looked after reviews. Attendance of parents at reviews is important in order to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to contribute to the review process. Attendance of parents is consistently high at between 80% - 90%.

To ensure that children's voices are heard we commission the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), as part of our regional arrangements. NYAS is commissioned on a Gwent wide basis to provide advocacy for children and young people.

Over the year there were a total of 210 referrals into service. This comprised of 112 Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) and 98 Welsh Active Offer (WAO) referrals. Although the number of referrals has decreased 7% for WAOs and 18% for IBAs since 2021-2022, this still represents an increasing trend over the past 4 years. Overall the Monmouthshire referral numbers are currently higher than the Pan Gwent contract expectation, with Issue Based Advocacy considerably higher than anticipated within the contract.

The most popular reason why young people requested advocacy support this year continues to be presenting their views and feelings at formal meetings. 67% of the issues identified fall into this category. 10% of issues were around young people requesting advocacy for issues to with their 'contact' arrangements with family members; 6% were issues around access to services, including education and 8% were home/placement related issues. It is also notable that requests for advocacy are lower for children who are looked after than they are for children who are involved in the child protection process or on care and support plans. Areas for improvement this year include continuing to ensure the implementation of the active offer and to ensure that advocacy resources are in place and accessed by unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.

## Supporting Children to Leave Care Safely

The following table shows the number of children and young people ceasing to be looked after between 1st April - 31st March each year during the period 2013 to 2023 and reasons for ceasing using Stats Wales categorisations. Only 8 children this year left care by virtue of the fact that they turned 18.

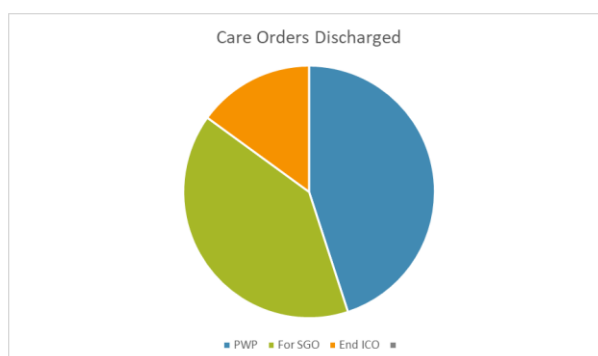
When children come into care there continues to be proactive care and permanency planning to ensure that children remain looked after only for as long as is required to support their individual outcomes; and that where possible and appropriate they have a pathway out of care.

As well as the work that we do regarding preventing the need for children being looked after, progressing children once they are in care is an equally important aspect of our reduction strategy.

Leave Reasons	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
When I'm Ready	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	3	2	6
Adopted	2	9	1	9	8	3	1	1	9	10
Care taken over by another LA in the UK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
Returned home to live with parents	17	13	12	19	24	7	16	17	12	18
SGO	21	3	6	7	1	2	8	11	13	9
Moved into independent living	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transferred to adult social services	1	0	5	0	1	1	0	3	0	1
Ceased for other reason	4	7	7	13	9	9	4	13	13	8
Sentenced to custody	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>52</b>

Monmouthshire Families Together Team (MFT) is a partnership between Barnardos and the Local Authority. It is 3 years since the team was established and it is now an integral part of Family Support Services. The core purpose of the team is to support the discharge of care orders for children who are looked after through a focus on working with children who are 'placed' at home with their parents (PWP) and by increasing permanency in family arrangements through a focus on kinship care and Special Guardianship.

Where Care Orders are in place for children living with their parents or with wider family members (kinship care), the Families Together Team provides intensive, targeted, interventions in an effort to develop parenting capacity to a level that ensures risks are managed and the child's needs can be safely met independent of statutory services.



In the year 2022 - 2023, 20 children's Care Orders have been discharged. 8 Care Orders were replaced with Special Guardianship Orders and 12 Care Orders were discharged for children placed with parents including 3 that were agreed as the outcome of the ongoing care proceedings.

Converting Care Orders to Special Guardianship arrangements is part of our strategy to ensure that children are in the right permanent placement for them, and where possible to reduce the numbers



of children in care. We support carers through undertaking special guardianship assessments, and where required develop a special guardianship support plan, sometimes including life-story work for the child. We review all our special guardianship arrangements on an annual basis, and keep in touch with carers through training, newsletters, and support groups.

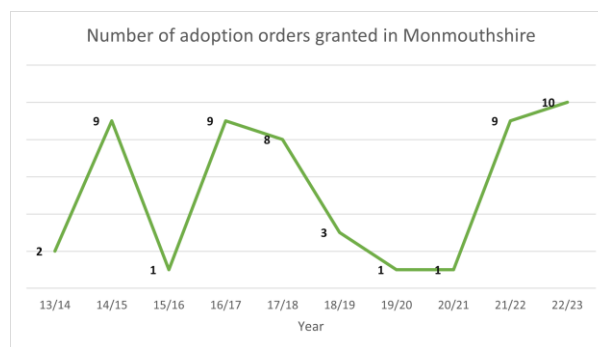


2 - During the year, 9 special guardianship orders were granted.

Families Together has developed a strong active offer of support to include financial support, therapeutic support, mediation, family group conferencing, information advice and assistance, training and peer support.

As of the 31st March 2023 there were 107 children and young people under an SGO known to Monmouthshire (equating to 84 placements).

Our recent positive outcomes for children whose permanency plan was adoption has continued this year. It can often be challenging to find the right adoptive placement for a child. We work with the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and in partnership with Voluntary Adoption Agencies to secure suitable placements and provide support to new parents.



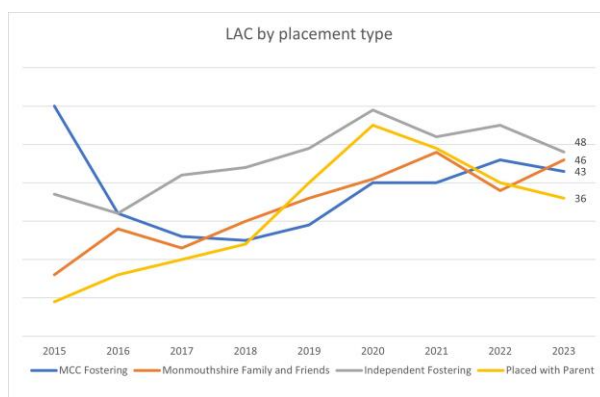
3 - During the year, 10 adoption orders were granted

A particular strength in Monmouthshire is the quality of our life story work that we undertake for children who are on an adoption pathway. Life-story books that are carefully put together by our family support workers help children understand their circumstances and history and are an important part of supporting a positive sense of identify. Monmouthshire books have been described by the regional lead as “exceptional” and are being used in their training as examples of “model” books.

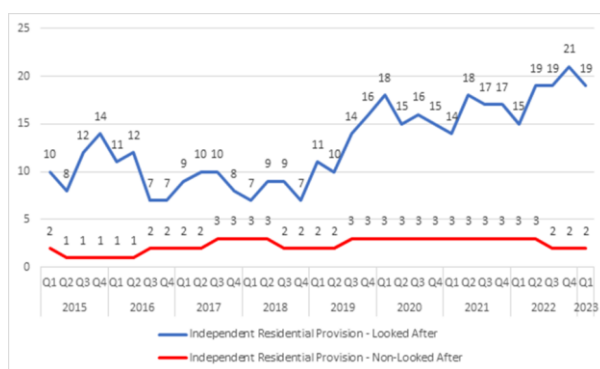
## Placements for children who are looked after

When a child comes into care we always explore family options first. If a family option is not found, children are placed with Monmouthshire in-house Foster Carers unless it is identified that the

assessed needs of the child cannot be met from this provision. This will be either because there are no vacancies or because there are no in-house foster placements that can match the child's needs. In these situations we look to Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA), or residential provision, again depending on the needs of the child.



4 - Number of children looked after by placement type.



5 - The number of residential placements at year end was 19.

Our year end data tells us that:

- Although the ratio of independent foster carers to in-house carers remains narrower than in previous years and the overall use of independent carers is reducing, at least 35 more in-house carers are required to move to a predominantly 'in-house' service.
- 23% live with kinship carers, 23% with IFA carers, 20% with MCC carers, 17% with parents, 9% in residential care and 8% in other types of care
- Foster carers are aged between 33-76, 66% are over 50
- 33% of foster carers live around Abergavenny, 21% in Caldicot, 15% in Chepstow & 5% in Usk
- The work of Monmouthshire Families Together team continues to support a reduction in children on care orders placed at home with their parents.
- We have a relatively high number of kinship foster carers, and are working hard to ensure that they receive the right type and level of support which can often be quite different from 'generic' cares. Kinship Foster Carers play a significant role in providing placements for children and allowing them to remain safely within their family networks and are greatly valued by the service.

- The use of residential placements for children is higher than we would want it to be, with some residential placements being used because of lack of availability of a suitable foster placement.
- Normally speaking it is children with the most complex needs who enter residential care. Sometimes the only placement option available for a child will be out of area, making it harder to support good outcomes.
- The cost of residential placements is extremely high, and represents a significant pressure on the children's services budget

## **PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY**

The Local Authority has a duty to provide sufficient suitable placements for children who are looked after.

Placements should provide a warm and nurturing environment for children and ensure that the child's holistic emotional and physical needs are fully met. We aim to find placements for children that are close to home, school, family and friends to allow essential links and support networks to be maintained.

The lack of placement sufficiency has been an issue of national concern; at a UK level there is simply not enough placements for children who need to be looked after.

Challenges in recruiting foster carers, whilst experienced across the UK, are acutely felt in Monmouthshire in large part due to specific demographic reasons. While Monmouthshire has a solid cohort of stable long-term foster carers, recruitment of new carers seems to be stagnant with number remaining very similar in recent years and even decreasing slightly between 2021/22 and 2022/23. We are particularly short of carers who are able to look after sibling groups, teenagers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children or provide mother and baby placements.

Over the last year, insufficiency of placements has been further exacerbated by increased instability in the provider market for both residential and foster placements following the Welsh Government commitment to eliminate profit from children's social care.

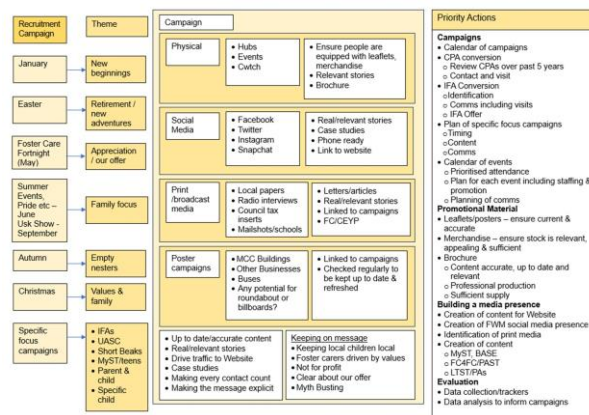
The reality of this is that for some children, particularly those with the most complex needs, it can be extremely difficult to find any placement at all. Frequently, there is little to no choice of placement, which can affect matching decisions. There have been 5 occasions this year when the Local Authority has been required to look after a child without the benefit of a registered placement. This is of extreme concern to the service and presents significant operational, legal and financial risks to the Council.

We are taking steps to address the issue of placement sufficiency in the following ways:

- Working in partnership with Foster Wales the service runs recruitment campaigns throughout the year and works proactively to follow up on any inquiry and keep fostering high in people's awareness.
- We ensure that each child in a residential placement has an appropriate progression plan to return to family based or supported living whenever possible so that there is flow through provision.

- Working with housing colleagues we have increased our supported accommodation provision for children who are 16 plus, though move-on into full independence is hampered by the lack of affordable housing.
- This year we have worked in partnership to develop our own local residential provision with the potential to accommodate 4 children with highly specialist needs, and worked with regional partners within Gwent to set up an integrated provision with health to provide short-term assessment placements.

This year our focus will be the further implementation of our commissioning strategy with the intention of creating further in-house residential placements through making use of existing council properties and utilising any available Welsh Government grant money to support our move to a not-for-profit placement base. At the same time we will continue our work to recruit carers as well as further enhancing our family support services to reduce the overall numbers of children in care.



*The service has a sophisticated recruitment strategy that runs throughout the year and makes use of a variety of methods.*

Monmouthshire Foster Carers are a highly dedicated and skilled group of people, who are at the very heart of our services for children who are looked after. Foster carers provide stability, nurture, care and support to some of our most vulnerable children and deserve the highest praise. Placing a child in an in-house foster placement allows us to provide the most appropriate holistic support for the child and the carers, drawing on the range of therapeutic and professional support that we have available as part of our 'offer' to Monmouthshire carers.

Following feedback from carers we are looking at ways of improving communication between carers and the children's social work teams. As the people who know and understand a child's day to day needs the best, we want to increase the involvement of carers as critical partners in key decision making and care planning for children.

Whilst our retention of foster carers is generally good we continue to look at how we can improve our offer in terms of benefits/support to foster carers. This helps both attract and retain carers. This year we will be seeking to provide some additional enhancements for in-house carers through becoming a 'foster-friendly' employer.



*Our foster carer appreciation event this year was held in the majestic Caldicot Castle in June 2023.*



The Placement and Support Team work incredibly hard to recruit, assess and support foster carers. They work closely with carers to support applicants through a challenging assessment process; understand their development and training needs and provide carers with personalised supervision and support. Overall, the number of in-house foster carers has increased over the last 4 years from 24 to 40.



## YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Care leavers are supported by personal advisors to make the transition into adulthood and independence. The Local Authority has a duty to support young people leaving care until they are 25 and a young person can reconnect and ask for support at any time up until then. We have 3 personal advisors situated within the Long Term Support team and at year end there were 73 young people who were care leavers.

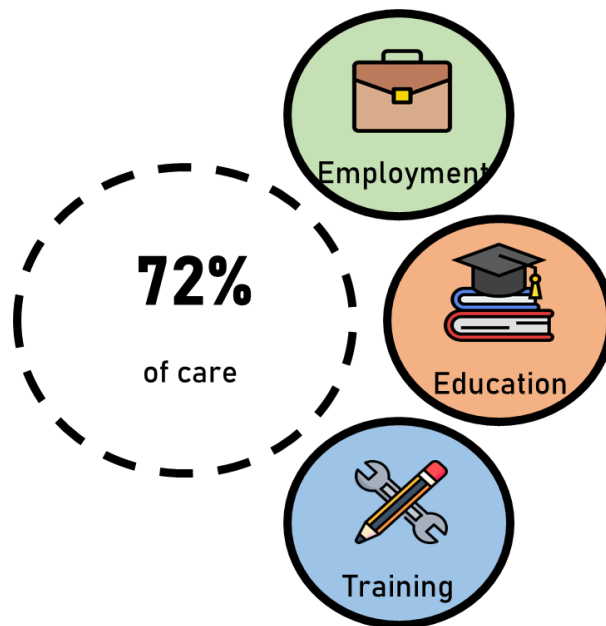
We are really positive about the achievements of our young people leaving care in Monmouthshire, who have often had to overcome considerable adversity.

We continue to have many Young People who:

- Manage full time employment or who are enrolled into further education studying a range of course, including university degrees.
- Move successfully into independent housing tenancies
- Pass their driving tests
- Become successful young parents themselves providing safe and secure environments for their children
- Budget and save for things such as holidays abroad or their first car
- Successfully reconnect to family and reestablish positive relationships.

One year after leaving care 72% of care leavers were in employment, education or training, and this remains very similar for care leavers 2 years after leaving care.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Care Leavers</b>				
CH/052	The total number of care leavers who experience homelessness during the year (As defined by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) within 12 months of leaving care	4	4	5
CH/053	The total number of care experienced young people in the following categories at the 31 March	64	60	73
Local	The percentage of care leavers in categories 2, 3 and 4 who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training in the 12 months since leaving care	-	73.3%	72.7%
Local	The percentage of care leavers in categories 2, 3 and 4 who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training in the 13-24 months since leaving care	-	25.0%	71.4%



## Corporate Parenting

There is an active corporate parenting panel in Monmouthshire with representatives from across the council's directorates, care leavers, foster carers, as well as cross-party elected members. The panel is now chaired by Cllr Ian Chandler, lead member for social care and health. The panel offers members opportunities to hear directly about the experiences of children who are looked after, care experienced young people and foster carers. Issues that are raised include loneliness and isolation; the impact of COVID; the difficult experiences some young people have in care; challenges around move on accommodation and securing employment opportunities. Meeting with and listening to young people helps the panel champion many of the issues that are raised by the group as being important to them.

Some of these have included:

- changing language used within the council about children who are looked after
- developing activity days for children looked after so that they can develop more trusting relationships with their social workers
- ensuring priority interviews for care leavers apply for jobs in the Council
- arranging leisure passes.

The revised [Corporate Parenting Strategy \(2022 - 2025\)](#) was approved by Council in May 2023.

## 4. Adult Services

Adult Social Care and Health services in Monmouthshire support people to live their own lives as independently as possible. Key to this is the ability to understand what matters to people and to identify the right support required to find solutions to the issues they face. The services are wide ranging and varied, but share a common purpose to 'support people to live their own best lives' as



defined by what matters to them as individuals. This is a holistic, value based approach aligned with the principles of the SSWBA.

Adult Social Care and Health is available to people aged 18+ with eligibility being determined by a social care assessment under the SSWBA. Referrals come from a range of sources including hospitals, GP's, Police, families, carers and of course the person themselves.

The provision of Adult Social Care in Monmouthshire is organised around three integrated hubs (north, south and central). Each hub has a single management structure that brings together a range of health and social care practitioners. This integrated structure is fairly unique in Wales and was put in place to support multi-disciplinary working and information sharing, and to help citizens (and staff) navigate what can often seem like a complex and confusing system.



*Chepstow Community Hospital opened in 2000 having been developed under the Government's Private Finance Initiative.*

Chepstow Hospital is the base for the integrated Health and Social Care Team which serves the south of the county including Caldicot. It is a 47 bed community hospital which additionally houses two GP practices (Mount Pleasant and Town Gate Surgeries). With primary, secondary health services and social care contained in the same building joined up and multi-disciplinary service provision to residents is fostered.



## Monowale Health and Social Care Centre

Monowale is an integrated health and social care facility situated in Monmouth. As well as the community based teams, a memory clinic, rehabilitation and therapy clinics there is a 19 bed community hospital ward on site which is GP led and has 2 direct community access beds.





## Mardy Park Resource Centre

Mardy Park Resource Centre in Abergavenny includes a social care respite and rehabilitation unit, as well as a range of health and social care clinics and support activities.

Mardy Park is a hub that welcomes people of all ages and hosts Growing Spaces and Bluebell Forest School in its grounds.



Alongside of the integrated hubs there is a community based mental health team and a specialist learning disability team working across the county.

The provision of direct services is organised through our commissioning team who work closely with the sector to ensure that support services including domiciliary and residential care are available to people who need them.

Adult social care also supports some in-house direct care services including:

- Learning disability support services including day opportunities
- Severn View residential home for people with dementia
- Monmouthshire Meals
- Support for people who have caring responsibilities
- Respite and rehabilitation centre in Mardy Park.
- Reablement services and home care.

## Current Challenges Within Adult Social Care

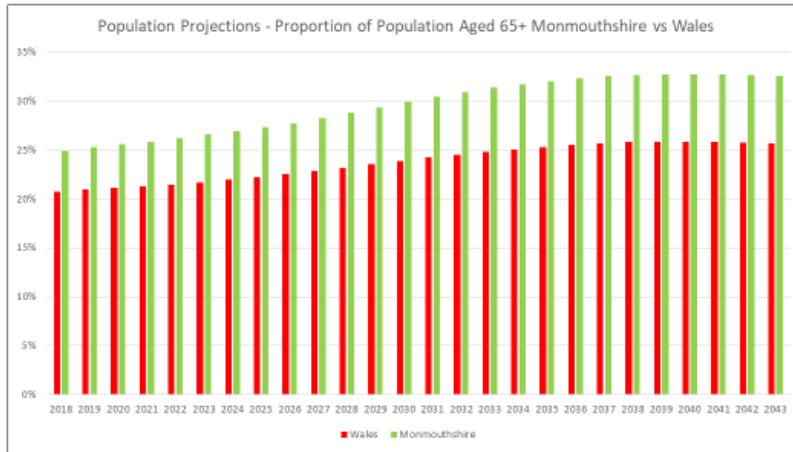
This year the sustainability of adult social care has been seriously called into question. Although in Monmouthshire we have remained steadfast in our commitment to developing community based early help, the demand for statutory care and support continues to rise to the extent that it is both outstripping our ability to meet demand and exerting considerable pressure on our financial resources.

During 2021/22 we saw increased demand for services and this has been sustained during 2022/23. The number of reports to social care and the number of assessments completed has remained high during 2022/23 at 8,806 and 2,205 respectively.

At year end 2022 - 2023 adult services had a relatively slight £367,000 overspend; however, this was bolstered by a number of grants totalling over £3 million. Added to this, at year end 2022 - 2023, there was an additional £3 million estimated projected costs for 2023 - 2024 due to inflationary pressures on the cost of care provision.

The ageing demographic together with the on-going impact of the COVID pandemic and other respiratory viruses has caused demand for services within adult care to remain on an upward trajectory over the year with increased waiting lists for social work and occupational therapy. Winter saw additional pressures on hospitals and the need to support timely hospital discharge has resulted in a number of costly packages of care and an increase in care home placements.

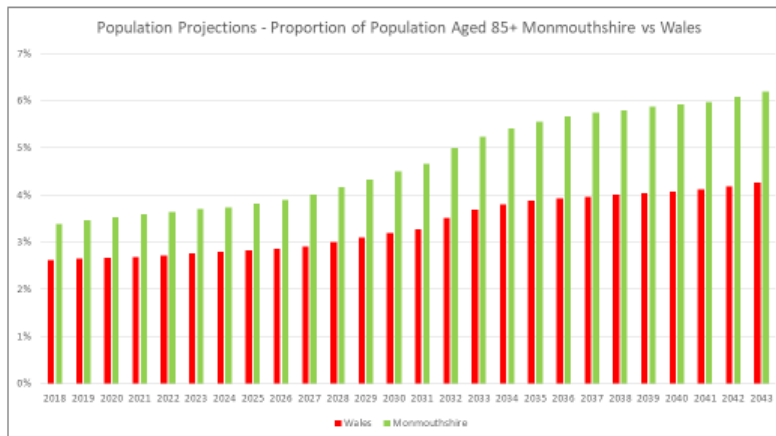
There is a demographic reality to this pressure.



	Monmouthshire	Wales
2018	25%	21%
2023	27%	22%
2028	29%	23%
2033	31%	25%
2038	33%	26%
2043	33%	26%

3

Population projections show Monmouthshire can expect the proportion of residents **aged 65** and over to increase to 33.6% by 2043. This is compared to 25.7% across Wales.



	Monmouthshire (%)	Wales (%)
2018	3	3
2023	4	3
2028	4	3
2033	5	4
2038	6	4
2043	6	4

4

Projections also show that 6.2% of the population will be **aged 85** and over by 2043 compared to 4.3% across Wales.

Census data tells us that the age demographic in Monmouthshire is increasing i.e. overall the population within the County is ageing, as illustrated by the graphs.

In headline terms the 2021 census data shows that:

- The largest age group in Monmouthshire (and Wales) was those aged 55 to 59 years
- 25.8% of Monmouthshire’s population was aged 65+ (24,000), higher than Welsh average (21.3%)

- In Monmouthshire, the total number of people aged 65 years and over increased by 26% between 2011 and 2021, the highest increase of all the Welsh local authorities. This compares with a 17.7% rise across Wales.

The older people are, the more likely they are to have complex care and support needs due to frailty, illness, dementia, disability and isolation.

The impact of Covid together with other acute respiratory illnesses and co-morbidities continue to generate powerful demand pressures across the system, particularly on our most vulnerable and frail residents and their carers. Increased admissions into hospital and subsequent delays in people's treatment and discharge pathways make it harder for people to get 'back on their feet' following long-stays, when lengthy periods of reduced mobility and loss of independence serve to lower confidence levels and increase physical frailty. In turn, the complexity and immediacy of people's needs when leaving hospital and the urgency generated by the need for hospital beds diverts our resources and creates increased 'unmet need' within the community.

Whilst increased pressures are felt more acutely during the winter months it is now generally accepted that building 'system resilience' requires a year-round approach.

The fact that growth in demand is not aligned to a similar growth in the workforce contributes further to the overall challenge within adult social care. This is in part associated with the limitation of our resources and in part to do with on-going significant recruitment and retention challenges across the sector, specifically in key posts including adult mental health, occupational therapy and direct care.

It is disappointing but unsurprising that in the context of increasing demand and a depleted workforce we are experiencing delays in provision. In many instances this has created situations where we have struggled to meet the care and support needs of our residents and where 'voice, choice and control' for some of our most vulnerable individuals and their families has been compromised.

All of this impacts on our ability to fully respond to people's needs in as timely a way as we would wish, which over time both exacerbates demand and has a demoralising effect on the workforce.

In the face of this financial and demand pressure the service has entered into a process of in-depth examination in order to identify where and how we must effect change in order to get ourselves onto a more sustainable footing. To achieve this without undermining our core practice values, of providing person-centred and outcome focused services, presents considerable challenges. Throughout the budget setting process this year, we have been clear in our intent to achieve sustainable change which is embedded within practice and rooted in concepts of fairness, consistency and equity.

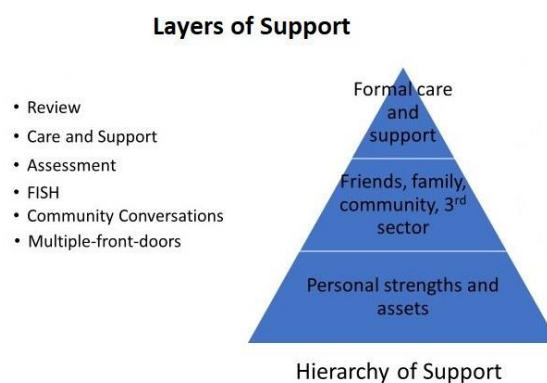
Ensuring our preparedness to deliver against substantial saving targets in the face of on-going demand pressures is very much a work in progress and will remain a top priority of the service over the next year and beyond. It is a process of learning, review and redesign and represents both threats and opportunities to the service, the council as a whole and most importantly to the citizens of Monmouthshire.

Here are some of our key areas of work to date:

- **Assessing and Providing Services**

The impact of the pandemic, and the surge of demand that followed, has had a lasting effect on the service and social care practice. In the face of this, we are putting in place steps to foster a renewed focus on practice as it was originally envisaged within the SSWBA. That is, practice that is strengths-based and seeks to build on personal resources and assets including what is available within families and communities. Individual, family and community resilience is more valuable and certainly more sustainable than statutory support.

To ensure fairness and equity we are working to put in place quality assurance measures that are shared across the service, allowing new packages of care and existing packages of care to be reviewed and understood through a consistent practice lens. In turn this builds further knowledge within the system (where services need to be better designed or developed, for example).



We are looking at how we assess and intervene to meet people's needs using the hierarchy of support

- **Focus on enabling approaches across the system**

To enable people to retain as much independence as possible, and to delay and reduce the need for long-term care, we want to ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate services in place. The focus of a reablement intervention can be as much social and psychological as a physical one and is a unique function of the council. Reablement can be of enormous benefit to individuals allowing them to remain safely and independently within their own homes and communities.

For us, this year, our priority will be to ensure that people who need support have access to our Occupational Therapy lead reablement services prior to any longer-term decisions being made and to increase the range of options available including solutions within assistive technology.

Reablement also underpins our ability to work with partners to develop services and practice approaches aimed at preventing unnecessary hospital admissions. Equally when people are in hospital a reablement approach ensures that the emphasis remains on maximising independence throughout their in-patient stay and supports integrated discharge planning.

- **Supporting a stable and fair social care provider base**

The commissioning team within social care have good knowledge and understanding of social care providers across Monmouthshire, and use a relationship based approach to foster honesty, openness and transparency. The COVID pandemic placed many restrictions on care providers; however, over the last year we have seen providers able to absorb an increased amount of care hours and provide more care home placements. This increase, in the context of the inflationary pressure across many

aspects of care provision, means that the cost of care is escalating. This year we are entering into negotiations with care providers to ensure best value for the council, using open discussions to see where costs can be curtailed without impacting on the viability of providers; pay and conditions for social care workers; or the choice and quality of care for residents. These reasons effect the extent to which these negotiations will be able to alleviate the current financial pressure on the service arising from the cost of care.

### **Adult Services Inspection**

As referenced in last year's report, Care Inspectorate Wales undertook a Performance Evaluation Inspection of Monmouthshire Adults Services in July 2022. The purpose of the inspection was to review the local authority's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation and its alignment with the principles of the SSWBA. There was a particular focus on adult safeguarding and whether people and their carers are able to access appropriate and timely care and support.

Overall, we felt that the report was fair and balanced, took good account of the challenging context we are working in and identified areas for improvement that we agreed with.

In summary, the inspection report concluded,

*"In common with many other local authorities in Wales, MCC is experiencing a challenging time in relation to the provision of social care. Many of the pressures currently experienced by the local authority's adult services reflect the national pandemic recovery context including high levels of demand and increased complexity of people's needs."*

*"We heard how staff morale was generally positive, managers were well regarded by staff, and managers in turn commented they have a committed and dedicated workforce. Workers valued the accessibility of managers and peer support from team members."*

*"During this inspection we found progress has been made in several areas. This has resulted in developments to practice and better outcomes for people. This progress has been achieved against a backdrop of the additional pressures and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic."*

The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Identified strengths and areas for improvement included:

#### **Strengths**

- People's voices are heard and people are supported to achieve their personal outcomes
- Strong strategic focus on prevention aligned to place-based working
- Effective partnership working
- Working in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act (2005)
- Flexible integrated teams, where different professionals work together, to provide tailored support
- Proactive monitoring and managing of waiting lists
- Effective and timely adult safeguarding

## **Areas for Improvement**

- Shortages of Domiciliary Care
- Pressure on partnership work at critical points, e.g. hospital discharge
- Maintaining a sufficient and suitably qualified workforce to meet increasing demand
- Gaps and inconsistencies in practice particularly around the identification of risk, contingency planning and timeliness of reviews
- Quality of assessments, and consideration of eligibility criteria
- Quality assurance process and management oversight
- Consistency of the Welsh active offer and the offer of advocacy
- Recognising and responding to needs of carers
- Role of commissioning in brokerage

The service has a robust action plan in place and has made good progress in working to address the recommendations made. We are confident in our ability to deliver the plan in the agreed timescales.

Areas where we have made progress this year include:

### **Implementation of a new supervision policy**

We have implemented a new supervision policy across the service. This is helping to improve management oversight and supports the development of individual and team practice as well as assisting with workforce planning.

### **System Development**

We have agreed a specification and implementation plan for system development of our current Social Care Recording system (Flo). This is essential development that will allow evidenced decision making, recording of risk and management sign-off more effective. It will improve our reporting functionality particularly in relation to the active offer of advocacy and carers support. We are fully engaged with both the Gwent and national programme to ensure that we are part of the next phase in procuring an integrated Health and Social care recording system for Wales.

### **Learning and Development Plans**

The workforce development team and direct services have been working closely together to evaluate and re-design learning and development plans to ensure that these align with the skills required of our workforce and meet individual learning gaps and objectives. The induction programme for domiciliary care has been totally re-designed and we are looking to expand this across other areas due to its success. This year we have implemented, alongside our corporate colleagues, a training recording system which will improve our data recording and oversight of all training (Thinqi). We will continue to grow this approach as we progress through the next year and beyond to ensure all learning and development on offer meets the needs of the services in relation to skills, knowledge and expertise. The platform supports workforce retention and the workforce planning required for both in-house and commissioned services.

## **Micro care**

This year we saw the development and implementation of a micro care platform in the County. The number of micro carers operating in Monmouthshire steadily gained momentum providing alternative employment options in care and supporting choice and capacity within the provision of care. Our development and delivery plan will continue over the next few years and this includes the development of a micro care portal that will ease the admin duties as the service grows.

## **Advocacy**

Advocacy is defined within the SSWBA as: “services which provide assistance (by way of representation or otherwise) to persons for purposes relating to their care and support”.

We are in the process of developing our social care recording system (Flo) so that the offer of advocacy is integrated into case work and to allow us to monitor the 'offer' and the take-up.

Advocacy for Adult Services is commissioned on a regional basis with the lead commissioning authority being Blaenau Gwent.

The service is called GATA – Gwent Access to Advocacy, and there is a website which provides citizens and professionals with information : [Gwent Advocacy Service – Home Page \(gata.cymru\)](http://gata.cymru). This service is a single point of access for information and advice regarding advocacy for adults. Citizens or professionals can ring the phone line and can be assessed and referred to the two main providers, Dewis and Age Cymru, if required. Social Workers can also ring Dewis or Age Cymru directly under the scheme.

## **Carers**

This year, we are looking to increase the level of integration between the carers team and the wider service so that we better understand the needs of carers across the whole system and ensure that roles and responsibilities around carers' assessments and support are clarified. We will be reviewing how we record the work we do with carers to assist with oversight and planning and look to increase training and awareness within the workforce with regards to supporting carers.



## How we performed Adult Services



Overall performance within adults services has remained incredibly resilient, largely attributable to the dedication and professionalism of the workforce. Our inspection report in July 2022 confirmed that despite the many challenges, the service continues to find ways to develop and improve, maintain good quality standards and meet its statutory requirements. Nevertheless, our ambition to maintain these standards leaves us with plenty to do.

Positively, our Care Inspectorate Wales (July 2022) inspection found that,

*"For many people, their voices are heard, and people's personal outcomes are captured. We saw some detailed and comprehensive biographies and personal circumstances, evidencing 'what matters' to the person. Many people said social services were helpful and they were treated with dignity and respect by practitioners."*

Although below levels seen in previous years, our Adult Social Care service user questionnaire shows a high proportion, 83.5%, of services users are happy with their care and support.

Feedback from services users shows a slight decrease in several areas including communication and involvement in their care and support. Feedback was more positive when considering the reliability and continuity of services provided.

The response to our adult survey question '*I have been actively involved in decisions about how my care and support was provided*' is below where we would like it to be at 76.6% from 83% at its highest with '*I feel that i was listened to*' at 79.9% from highest point 86% (2020). These figures are reflective of our challenging circumstances.

Feedback was more positive when considering the reliability and continuity of services provided.

Adults Questionnaire	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual
The service I get is reliable and I'm <u>told</u> about any changes in good time	80.0%	81.5%	82.1%	75.8%	<b>79.1%</b>
I usually get assistance from the same staff	67.8%	70.3%	70.1%	68.4%	<b>71.3%</b>
Do you think that the care and support you get still meet your needs?	92.4%	92.8%	91.2%	87.9%	<b>87.0%</b>

### **The Front Door**

Where people need to contact social care, multi-disciplinary professionals are available at the first access point. The role of the teams responding to reports (contacts) is to provide advice and assistance and where appropriate a decision is made for further assessment to be undertaken by the most relevant practitioner.

During 2022/23, the front door of adult services received 8,806 reports (contacts) of which almost three quarters (6,437) were from people not already in receipt of care and support. This is a slight decrease on the previous year, but the number of contacts received remains high. Health colleagues continue to be the main source of reports received as close integration continues between health and social care.

Of the new contacts received, 3,808 were provided with advice or assistance.

Feedback from our customer questionnaire shows 75% of adults receiving care and support feel they have had the right information or advice when they needed it which is the lowest level recorded in recent years.

In the same period, we have seen an increase in volume of reports received relating to carers, with 351 received in total during 2022/23, of which 128 were provided with advice or assistance.



Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Front Door (Adults)</b>				
AD/001b	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year which were new contacts	5787	6633	6437
AD/002	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	3961	4215	3808
<b>Front Door (Carers)</b>				
CA/001	The total number of contacts to statutory social services by adult carers or professionals contacting the service on their behalf received during the year	226	272	351
CA/002	The number of contacts by adult carers received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	88	92	128

Adults Questionnaire	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
I have had the right information or advice when I needed it	81.8%	84.3%	82.5%	77.4%	75.1%

### Assessments

Where the initial report (contact) indicates that an individual is likely to require additional support to ensure that their personal outcomes are met, an assessment is undertaken. The assessment looks further into their particular circumstances, what matters to the individual and their family and what might help. During the year ahead we want to support practitioners to be clearer about how we use the 'hierarchy of support' to make assessments and give advice about what we are able to provide.

The number of assessments completed during 2022/23 has remained largely stable, 2,205 in total, with around 30% of those assessed having needs that require a care and support plan. The picture is similar for assessments of carers, with a stable demand and proportion of assessments requiring care and support.

Patterns of demand have meant that some people have to wait for an assessment, with waiting lists being operated for both social work and occupational therapy. Although waiting lists are proactively managed and prioritised, we would like to see these reduce over the coming year. To assist with this, and where it is safe and appropriate to do so, our intention is to strengthen the advice and assistance that we provide at the 'front-door' rather than referring people on to wait for an assessment.

## Care and Support

Following an assessment, a care and support plan is developed which sets out how an individual's personal outcomes can be achieved. Not all adults with an assessed need require long-term support and wherever possible we use short term interventions. There was a reduction in the number of adults with a care and support plan at the end of the year.



### Adults with a Care and Support Plan

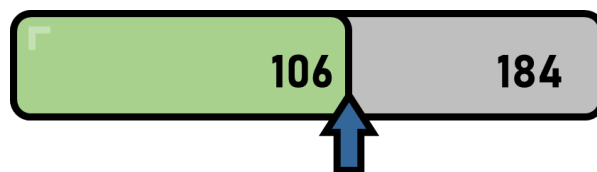
Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Assessments and Plans (Adults)</b>				
AD/004	The number of new assessments completed for adults during the year	2035	2177	2205
AD/005	Of which:			
AD/005a	Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan	721	826	671
AD/005b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	630	542	583
AD/005c	There were no eligible needs to meet	627	506	553
AD/012	The number of adults with a care and support plans at 31 March	1813	1728	1651
<b>Assessments and Plans (Carers)</b>				
CA/004	The total number of carers needs assessments for adults undertaken during the year	132	196	192
CA/005	Of which:			
CA/005a	Needs could be met with a carer's support plan or care and support plan	39	48	58
CA/005b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	32	43	63
CA/005c	There were no eligible needs to meet	55	25	27
CA/008a	The number of adult carers with a support plan at 31 March	68	105	86
CA/008b	The number of adults with a care and support plan who also have carer responsibilities	41	64	50

Adults Questionnaire	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual
I have been actively involved in decisions about how my care and support was provided	81.4%	83.1%	83.0%	77.4%	76.6%
I feel that I was listened to	82.7%	86.5%	85.9%	81.4%	79.9%

### Time-limited Interventions & Enablement Services

Wherever possible we use reablement to provide intensive short-term interventions which aim to restore people to independence, mitigating the need for long-term services in the immediate future. The sustained increase in demand for social care and lack of available provision, has meant that for the second year we have completed fewer packages of reablement. However, positively, during

2022/23 we saw an increase in the percentage of people who were independent following reablement.



**57.6% reablement packages completed that mitigated the need for support**

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Early Intervention and Prevention</b>				
AD/010	The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year	291	240	184
AD/011	Of which:			
AD/011a	Reduced the need for support	50	54	32
AD/011b	Maintained the need for the same level of support	45	36	35
AD/011c	Mitigated the need for support	171	122	106
AD/011d	Neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated the need for support	25	28	11
Local	The percentage of packages of reablement completed during the year that mitigated the need for support	58.8%	50.8%	57.6%
AD/013	The total number of adults with a care and support plan where needs a met through a Direct Payment at 31 March	123	139	149

Adults Questionnaire	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual
I am happy with the care and support I have had	88.3%	89.4%	89.0%	86.9%	83.5%

Reablement relies on the availability of physiotherapists and occupational therapists together with specialist home carers who can support and assist people to recover or develop their independent living skills.

In recent times, our ability to ensure that everyone has the benefit of reablement to maximise their independence has been hampered in part because of shortages in community occupational therapy and also because our specialist reablement home carers have been diverted to provide long-term home where critical gaps in provision have arisen.

Our plans this year include steps that we want to take to ensure increased capacity within our in-house reablement teams.

Assistive technology and specialist aids and adaptations can play a central role in supporting and enabling independence. This year we have developed a joint action plan, together with housing colleagues to ensure that social care practitioners are supported to understand what technology is available and the ways in which technology can enhance the lives of residents.

## Rehabilitation and Respite at Mardy Park

In July 2022 CIW inspected the wing at Mardy Park resource centre which provides a rehabilitation, re-settlement and respite service for up to eight adults. This provision provides the opportunity for individuals to stay in a safe and nurturing environment whilst their needs for care and support can be assessed and better understood. There are also beds which are dedicated to providing short-term respite for carers and a break away from home for residents.

In general CIW inspectors found that:

*"People at the service are happy with the care and support they receive. Careworkers provide support to people with dignity, respect and warmth."*

*"We saw an excellent handover of information between shifts which ensured all staff are aware of the current goals and needs of each person being supported."*

*"Care staff enjoy working at the service and feel well supported to carry out their roles... and the Responsible Individual has good oversight of the service, they visit regularly and know the care staff and residents well."*

Areas for improvement included ensuring that personal care plans contain all the relevant information pertaining to the individual and for care staff files to be fully compliant with safe recruitment guidelines.

### **Enabling timely hospital discharge**

Delays across the health and social care system create challenges and tensions within partnership and integrated working, particularly in the area of hospital discharge. The impact on individuals remaining in hospital longer than they should, are at best, not conducive to achieving positive outcomes and at worst, can be devastating.

Over this last year, we have worked together with partners in both primary and secondary health to both prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and support timely discharges. The regional 'home-first' team provides a 'turn-around' response at the hospital front-door wherever possible. In Monmouthshire we have extended this to pilot an integrated practice approach between ward staff and community practitioners to promote discharge planning earlier in the patient's journey following admission. Alongside of this we convene weekly multi-disciplinary meetings to try to identify and unblock delays when they arise. Despite these measures, however, ensuring well coordinated and timely discharges and managing the pressure within the hospital system remains challenging. More recently we have started to monitor the number of people who are delayed in hospital due to social care reasons. The number of people delayed in hospital due to social care reasons was 16 at the census date in March 2023 [this figure fluctuates week by week].

### **Longer Term Care and Support**

For many individuals within the service, a longer-term care and support plan is required. We have a requirement to regularly review care plans and in 2022/23 we reviewed 57% of care plans that were due. This is an identified area for improvement this during 2023/24, with plans in place to turn some additional resource to this task. As people's needs and circumstances change we need to ensure that their care and support plans are appropriate and equitable.

The provision of longer-term support is often directed at our most vulnerable residents with severe learning disability; chronic mental health conditions; complex physical disability; sensory impairment and those living with frailty.

One of our aims within the service is to support individuals and their families and carers to exercise choice in the way that they receive longer term care. This is sometimes compromised by lack of choice caused by both affordability (due to fees and charges that fall to individuals) and availability (for example limited choice of care home, or lack of available care at home).



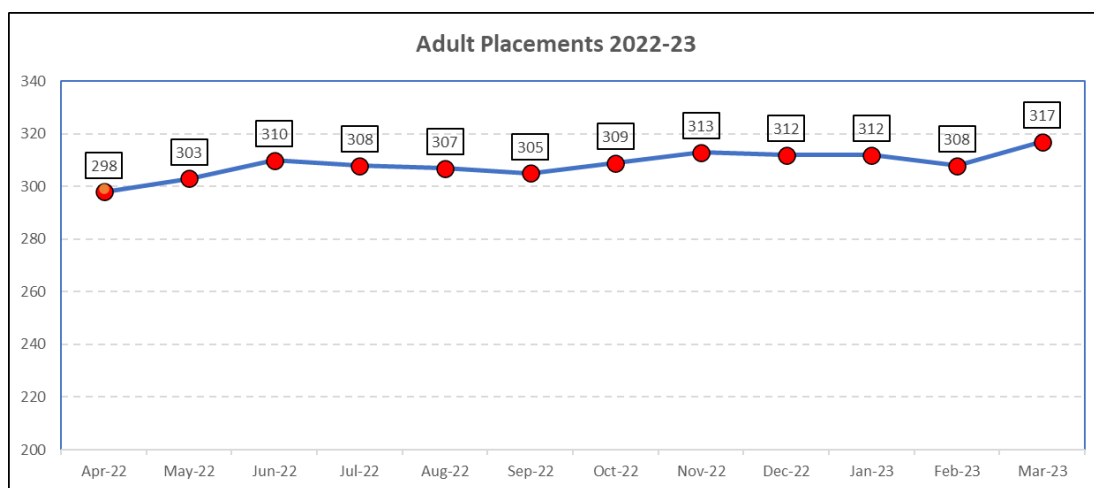
The overall quality of care and support plans and reviews with an emphasis on risk and contingency planning was identified by CIW as an area for improvement.

CIW inspection report July 2022 commented that the quality of assessments and care plans varied and that,

*" The local authority must improve the way it reflects people’s strengths and barriers to achieving their personal outcomes, and the risks of them not achieving them."*

Survey responses show that overall satisfaction with care and support remains high, although this has dipped to 83.5%.

The increasing complexity of people's long-term care needs has seen a steady increase in the number of care home placements over the year reflective of an underlying upward trend. Care home placements includes both residential, nursing placements and specialist placements, depending on the needs of the individual.

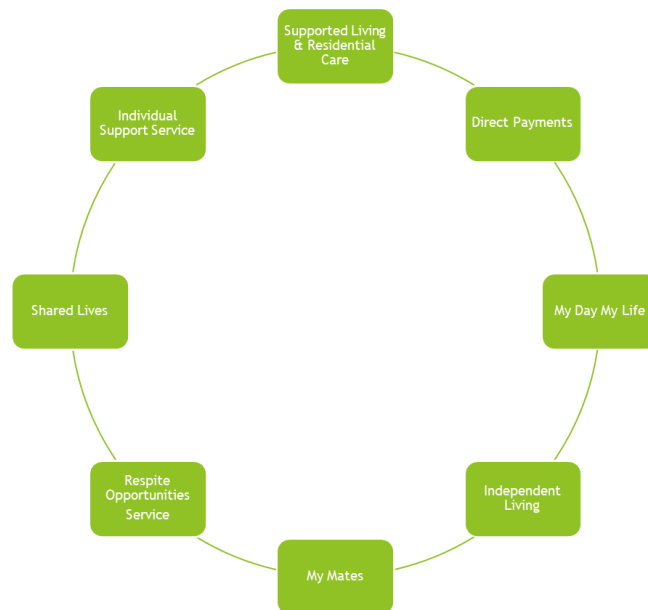


Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Provision of Services and Reviews</b>				
AD/030a	The total number of adults on 31 March supported with domiciliary care	-	-	635
AD/030h	The total number of adults on 31 March supported in a care home	-	-	189
AD/030i	The total number of adults on 31 March supported in a care home with nursing	-	-	128
AD/016	The number of care and support plans for adults that were due to be reviewed during the year	-	2094	1717
AD/017	The number of care and support plans for adults that were due a review in the collection year and were reviewed at least once during the collection year	-	1123	987
Local	The percentage of care and support plans for adults that were due a review in the collection year and were reviewed at least once during the collection year	-	53.6%	57.5%

The number of people arranging their own care through a direct payment has increased during the year. Direct payments give people more choice and control over their own care and support.

## Learning Disability Support Services

Just over 220 individuals with learning disabilities have care and support plans in place. There are a range of services in place to support people with learning disabilities to achieve their personal outcomes and goals and engage in activities that matter to them. Services range from short-term, task focused support to reach a specific goal, to longer term support to engage in daily living, access the community or live independently.



As with all social services, support services to people with a learning disability have changed considerably over the last 10 years or so. The emphasis has been on transforming services, so they are person-centred, strengths based and afford people the opportunity to be involved and engaged citizens in their communities.

Previously services had been very traditional and were aimed at meeting need, usually within exclusive learning disability settings. The emergence of the Housing Transformation, Respite Opportunities Service, My Day My Life and My Mates have been as a response to this new approach; seeking to support people to make friends, engage in their communities and do what matters to them as individuals.

COVID required us to think and work differently within a short space of time. As COVID restrictions eased we embarked on two service reviews to help us move forward positively from the impact of the pandemic taking into account the changing patterns of demand that had been observed.

During November 2022 to March 2023 we engaged Practice Solutions Ltd., an independent organisation with experience and expertise in services for people with learning disabilities, to undertake a review of My Day Life Services. My Day My Life is a service that enables people with a learning disability to develop and pursue their individual aspirations within every day, community settings. This approach has been in place since 2014 and has resulted in a move away from traditional buildings-based only day service to more bespoke individual opportunities, with a mix of support within the community and within My Day My Life buildings.

The review engaged directly with people who use My Day My life services and their families as well as the My Day My Life workforce and a range of other stakeholders. The review concluded that over recent years the service had 'lost its way' and that in response the council should take urgent steps to restore and develop the positive aspects of the My Day My Life service. The report went on to say that,

*"This will require a commitment to making timely plans and decisions, providing positive leadership and implementing practical changes. The programme of reform should be developed in full partnership with participants, their families, staff and stakeholders. The new service model must fit within a wider strategic offer for people with learning disabilities in Monmouthshire, which focuses upon supporting people to take part in community activities and helping services to become*



*genuinely more person-centred. The evidence from our review is that a return to the core My Day My Life principles which were actively pursued prior to the Covid-19 pandemic would win widespread support and make a major contribution to improving the opportunities available to people with learning disabilities and support their participation in meaningful activities centred around personal goals and development."*

The review made 10 widescale recommendations to support the development of the service. Implementing these recommendations will be a focus of the year ahead.

A link to the Practice Solutions report can be found [here](#).

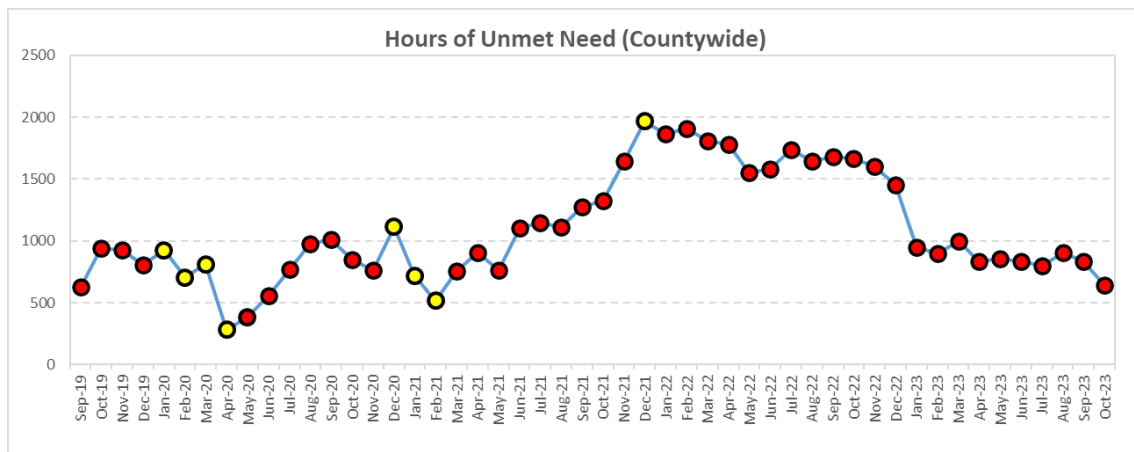
A review of the Respite Opportunities Service was similarly undertaken between November 2022 and March 2023. The review was undertaken internally and focused on patterns of demand and people's views about the different respite services that are offered:- residential respite; shared lives; short break holidays and direct payments. The review explored the prospects for the council's in-house residential respite provision at Budden Crescent and concluded that, as other forms of respite had come to the fore, sadly, this much loved and valued provision was no longer viable. Taking forward the service development recommendations arising from the review is a priority for the year ahead.

## CARE AT HOME

Domiciliary Care is the cornerstone of Adult Social Care and Health, and is provided through a mixture of in-house and independent sector providers at roughly at 30% / 70% split. The demand for care at home remains high and has been on an upward trend for several years - although over the last year we have been able to stabilise it. All the social care teams are reliant on domiciliary care and unavailability of home care impacts all elements of the service. This year, our ability to purchase care from our partner provider agencies has increased; however, provision across the county remains patchy.

Overall our weekly unmet need within home care has improved from last year. At year end the overall weekly demand for care at home hours was 8,177 with approximately 650 people in receipt of care at home. There were 834 hours per week identified as 'unmet'.

Notably, our home care data tells us that there are more people waiting for home care in the community, as opposed to those waiting for home care to enable hospital discharge, and that there is less of an acute problem in the North of the county than in the South and Central areas; and that rural areas remain particularly reliant on in-house rather than independent providers.



This year Monmouthshire's in-house Care at Home Service was inspected in July 2022 with overall positive outcomes.

CIW summarised their findings:

*"People are happy with the care and support they receive and are very complimentary of the service provided. Care and support is designed in consultation with people using the service, which considers their needs, wishes and aspirations. People know and understand what care and support is available to them, they are listened to and contribute to decisions affecting their lives. They are supported with their physical, mental health, emotional and social well-being."*

*"There is an embedded multidisciplinary approach at the service prioritising people's well-being and empowering independence. There is oversight of the service by the Responsible Individual with comprehensive quality assurance processes in place."*

Areas for improvement included recruitment and reporting practises and the process for reviewing care and support plans.

With a more stabilised position achieved, our intention is to move forward with reviewing the way that we provide care at home taking into account the profiles of the main localities within the county and the different patterns of available provision. The aims of this are twofold in that we want to support a vibrant and high quality provider market and at the same time ensure that wherever possible our in-house provision is turned to reablement as this is where we can bring our specialism to bear most effectively.

## Expanding Choice and Capacity within Care at Home - MICRO CARERS



In partnership with the Regional Partnership Team we have developed a supplementary way of delivering care and support in the community, by supporting people to become self-employed care workers.

Recruiting home care workers in rural areas has historically proven a challenge. The development of the micro care directory looks to address this issue by offering an additional, viable solution to the availability of care services across Monmouthshire, providing greater choice to its residents.

Micro carers are self-employed individuals who offer personalised support and care to citizens who live in their local area. This means that the support services they offer can be delivered at times and in ways that suits the needs of the individual, offering greater continuity of care and flexibility. Micro carers aim to offer a tailored service that is responsive and imaginative in its delivery.

A micro carer can help and support with a variety of different care and support tasks, which could include (but is not limited to) domiciliary care, respite for carers, leisure and wellbeing activities, domestic tasks, pet care, companionship, gardening and shopping.

With support from Business Wales, all micro carers receive ongoing advice and guidance from the micro care team in order to meet the standards required to be entered onto Monmouthshire's Micro Care Directory. All the micro carers are offered free training through the Monmouthshire County Council Workforce Development Team, including, where appropriate, manual handling, safeguarding, food hygiene, Mental Capacity Act and other training relevant to the role. Once on the directory, micro carers are linked with local people looking for care services with help from Monmouthshire's direct payments team.

Since April 2022, the micro care team have supported 15 micro carers on to the micro care directory and are currently assisting many more people through the process of becoming a micro carer.

A facebook group is available for Monmouthshire microcarers and for more information which can be found [here](#).



<https://sway.office.com/GzhJn0aMjHhdkrRK#content=WwcA4lbeevkRtF>

*Tracy takes us around Caldicot and explains the benefits that being a microcarer has for her.*

During our first year our focus has been developing all of the Microcare policies and procedures. We have been able to on board to the register some micros and an evaluation of year one also took place. Below you will see the evaluation of year one. The micro care register can now grow from strength to strength and we look forward to seeing our network of micros cover each and every nook and cranny within the county.

microcare  
a little bit of good

# Microcare Pilot Evaluation



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy



Bwrdd Partneriaeth  
Rhanbarthol Gwent  
Gwent Regional  
Partnership Board

## ♥ executive summary

This report provides a broad evaluation of the microcare pilot developed between March 2022/23 in Monmouthshire CC in partnership with the Gwent Regional Partnership Team. The pilot aimed to support 10 Monmouthshire residents to set up their own micro care enterprise, providing care and support in their local community, in areas where traditional care services have historically proved difficult to source.

The pilot built on the principles of the Foundational Economy through the development of skills and talents within local communities, the creation of local jobs and maximising the economic and social benefits of social care delivery. The delivery model of microcare helps to ensure money remains in the local economy while providing residents with greater voice, choice and control regarding the care and support they receive.

In April 2019, the Welsh Government declared a climate emergency and in 2022 created a National Programme Board to support the decarbonisation of health and social care. The microcare model of care works on the principle that microcarers deliver care and support within their local community. This can significantly reduce travel times and car use as part of care delivery, thus reducing carbon emissions within communities.

The report finds:

- ▼ There is an appetite for microcare in Monmouthshire amongst residents seeking care and support either through their own funds or via a direct payment
- ▼ Monmouthshire residents are seeking flexible, autonomous local employment
- ▼ Microcare can help fill gaps in care provision
- ▼ Microcare can support the take up of direct payments amongst residents
- ▼ Microcare can prevent and/or delay people arriving at the front door of social services
- ▼ Microcare can potentially support timely hospital discharge
- ▼ Microcare does not appear to be more risky than traditional home care services if the correct quality assurance measures are in place



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## ♥ what is microcare?

A microcarer is a self-employed care worker that provides flexible, personalised support and care to people who live in their local area. Microcarers offer an additional option to traditional commissioned care, that does not replace, but complements existing care delivery.

Microcarers can provide a wide range of services which will depend on the microcarers previous experience, skills, knowledge and what they are comfortable delivering. Some will offer personal care while others may offer support with domestic chores or social activities.

In Monmouthshire, microcarers are currently paid either via a direct payment or directly by those who fund their own care.

Microcarers are exempt from registering with Care Inspectorate Wales under the following exceptions:

**Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 - Registration Guidance, page 11.**

1: 'Personal Assistants are exempt from registration on the basis that they work solely under the direction and control of the person receiving care or a related third party.'

Whether the service is paid for through a direct payment or self-funded by an individual, it does not affect the consideration of this exception.

2: 'A service that provides care and support to four or fewer named individuals at any one time is exempt from registration. This includes co-operatives which employ carers to provide care and support to four or fewer named individuals.'

Exception 2 has been interpreted differently by local authorities and 3rd sector organisations supporting the development of micro providers, compounded by differing guidance received from CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales) when queried. As part of the development of the pilot we met with CIW and were advised that if exception 1 is met and the micro provider is working solely under the direction and control of the individual then it is not necessary to consider exception 2 as the criteria for the exception has already been met making any other exceptions irrelevant.

However, both exceptions are dependent on the care and support being provided 'without the involvement of an undertaking acting as an employment agency or employment business.' Therefore, if a local authority was to commission a micro provider directly rather than via a direct payment, then it is the current understanding that exception 2 would apply.



Despite reassurances to the project board from Care Inspectorate Wales that microcarers are exempt from registering their micro enterprises, there remains some ambiguity that requires clarification at a national level. **The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016** was developed and published prior to the microcare model being adopted in Wales and so it can be assumed, that the regulations do not fully consider or reflect this new model of care. This has led to different interpretations of the regulations, particularly regarding the 'rule of 4' where microcare delivery currently exists. It may also be the reason the development of the microcare model has been much slower in Wales than it has been in England.

Note: The grey area surrounding the exceptions has been raised with Welsh Government's Domiciliary Care Policy and Foundational Economy team who are currently exploring microcare delivery in Wales and where it sits within the wider social care delivery framework.

Micro enterprises are now well established in England as part of a mixed economy of delivering care. In Wales, both Flintshire and Pembrokeshire have set up micro enterprise projects. All report that the establishment of microcare enterprises can offer the following benefits:

- ▼ People are well-supported at home or in the community by people who live locally
- ▼ Support is truly co-produced with those requiring care and support, meaning the care provided focuses on what matters to the individual.
- ▼ People can work locally, earn an income, and make a positive difference
- ▼ Care can be delivered more flexibly which can lead to greater engagement from the family of those in receipt of care.
- ▼ People stay better connected to their community, becoming less isolated.
- ▼ Money is saved as the cost of care delivered by microcarers is cheaper than traditional commissioned domiciliary care and agency sourced PAs and does not require prominent levels of back-office support and co-ordination.
- ▼ Microcare removes the need for direct payment recipients to become the employer, leading to a smoother and quicker transition when moving to direct payments. This can help speed up hospital discharge.



a little bit of good

## ♥ the microcare pilot

The microcare pilot was launched in April 2022, funded by the Winter Planning Fund for 12 months. The pilot has been developed and implemented by the Regional Partnership Team and Monmouthshire CC.

Planned and Business Wales have also been key partners in the development implementation of the pilot.

Planned is a community-led partnership established as a social enterprise. Planned began their own microcare project in 2019 and have provided invaluable advice, insight, and support during the initial stages of the pilot. Planned currently has a network of more than 50 micro providers in Pembrokeshire with plans to expand the project into Carmarthenshire.

Business Wales provides free independent advice to people starting, running, and growing a business in Wales. Business Wales have been extremely supportive of the pilot and have guided all those referred to them through the process of becoming self-employed microcarers.

The pilot's main aims were to establish if the development of a local directory of micro providers could provide:

- ▼ Increased care capacity in the community.
- ▼ A reduction in the number of people waiting for a direct payment.

- ▼ Local carers assisting local people to reduce carbon footprint and develop self-supporting communities.
- ▼ A reduction of unmet care hours.
- ▼ The pilot also sought to test if there was an appetite for self-employment within the social care sector in Monmouthshire.

Monmouthshire County Council was identified as the lead partner as the region has historically found it difficult to recruit care at home workers due to its rurality and high housing costs which means it relies on people providing care who live outside the county. Monmouthshire also finds it difficult to recruit personal assistants for direct payment recipients for the same reasons. Monmouthshire has the highest number of hours of unmet care needs in the region as well as a waiting list for direct payments due to a lack of Personal Assistants.

Microcare takes a foundational economy approach to social care delivery as it contributes economic and social benefits to the local community. It opens new recruitment pathways while providing good quality and rewarding employment to local people and ensures the money earned from care remains in the local community.



a little bit of good



## ♥ marketing and recruitment

Given the ongoing fragility of the domiciliary care market, the project made a significant effort to avoid recruiting existing care workers and destabilising the sector further. Initial recruitment was low key and focused entirely within Monmouthshire. A discreet social media campaign focused on local community Facebook groups and recruitment flyers were distributed to local community hubs.

A social media marketing company, Shed Social, was contracted to produce a Facebook advertisement and landing page that aimed to target those not already working in the care sector. Shed Social were able to provide us with the following figures:

802 potential microcarers visited the landing page which was broken down as follows:

- ♥ English language advertisement - 574 visitors
- ♥ Welsh language advertisement - 196 visitors
- ♥ Retargeting advertisements - 32 visitors
- ♥ Click through rates averaged 3.3% for first time viewers and 6.1% for retargeting campaigns.

The most responsive demographic to the advertisements were females aged 45+. The click through rates for this demographic were 120% higher than younger and male demographics. Enquiries received via the Facebook enquiry form increased by 85% during the 7-week campaign.





### Indeed

Microcare vacancies were advertised via *Indeed* during October 2022 on a trial basis. The *Indeed* advertisement generated significant interest and the decision was made to run the advertisement over a longer period. From October 2022 to 15th February 2023, 330 applications were received via *Indeed*, with 2,225 people clicking on the *Indeed* advert for further information. The total cost of the *Indeed* advert running for this period was £1,538.77 which was paid for with Social Care Wales funds awarded to Monmouthshire County Council.

There were 73 enquiries that lived within or near Monmouthshire, these were contacted, and provided with further information.

The microcare team also received referrals from Monmouthshire Employability Project, Monmouthshire Housing Association, and Monmouthshire Council's Direct Payments Team.

### Microcarer Referrals



- Indeed
- Word of Mouth
- DWP
- Facebook
- Careers Wales
- Direct Payments Team



a little bit of good

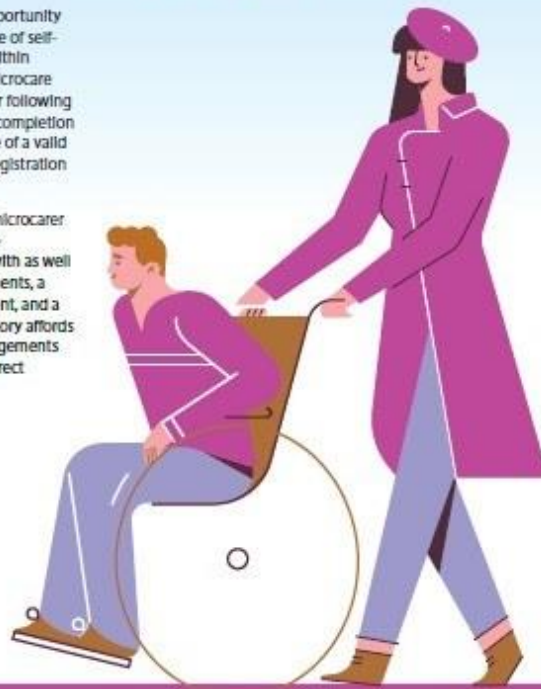
## ♥ governance

There is evidence that the long-term shortage of commissioned domiciliary care has led to a gap in the market that is currently being filled by local entrepreneurs providing informal care and support without the knowledge of the local authority. The background, previous care experience and training of these people is not clear.

The microcare pilot provides the opportunity for greater oversight and governance of self-employed care workers operating within Monmouthshire. Inclusion on the microcare directory is subject to the microcarer following a code of practise that includes the completion of basic training, providing evidence of a valid DBS, public liability insurance and registration for self-assessment with HMRC.

As part of the code of practise, the microcarer is also expected to develop a service agreement for those they contract with as well as basic policies such as risk assessments, a complaints policy, a privacy statement, and a confidentiality statement. The directory affords greater oversight than current arrangements made with personal assistants via direct payments.

Monmouthshire County Council reserves the right to remove a microcarer from the directory should they fail to meet the standards laid out in the Code of Practise. The code of practise includes the necessity for the microcarer and the client to be fully aware of Adult Safeguarding reporting procedures as part of their complaints policy.



## ♥ becoming a microcarer



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The Microcarer Handbook has been a key development in standardising the information and support provided to the microcarers in Monmouthshire. The handbook provides more detailed information regarding the entire process of becoming a microcarer and enables them to build a personalised action plan that progresses at a pace that suits them. The document has been made available to microcarers digitally, it is updated and reviewed frequently.

Monmouthshire County Council plan to host regular network meetings for microcarers which will focus on the latest guidance updates, training and any business support required. These meetings provide an opportunity for microcarers to meet each other, offer advice and guidance to others, and raise any support needs they may have with the microcare team.

The Dewts microcare directory lists those micro providers who have met the governance requirements of the project. Here, local residents, as well as the Direct Payments and Social Work teams within Monmouthshire can identify which areas of the county specific microcarers cover and the kind of care and support services their micro-enterprises can offer.

The Microcare Directory has been live since October 2022 and was the 3rd most searched term for Gwent on the Dewts website in 2022.

Setting up a microcare business is a rewarding but daunting undertaking. It requires tenacity and motivation. Those microcarers who have persevered with the pilot and developed their micro enterprises have proved they are committed to providing high quality, safe, person-centred care. The investment the microcarers have made in terms of time and effort is reflected in their care practice.



a little bit of good



## CASE STUDY Sophie's Community Care

Sophie is a parent living in Monmouthshire. She has worked within the care sector since she was 16 but stopped working to focus on the care of her son who has Autism. Sophie herself received a diagnosis of Autism as an adult which has also presented challenges.

Sophie wanted to return to work within the care sector but needed something that worked around her care responsibilities and utilised her skills and interests.

Sophie was working with Communities for Work and Careers Wales when she was made aware of the microcare project in Monmouthshire. Despite being a little nervous about the prospect of setting up her own business, Sophie was assured that she would be supported throughout the entire process on a one-to-one basis. Sophie liked the idea of working hours and times that suited her, this made Sophie more comfortable with the idea of self-employment and she was happy that she could proceed at her own pace.

The microcare team referred Sophie to Business Wales for additional support in becoming a self-employed care worker. Sophie attended a Business Wales online seminar designed specifically for those new to self-employment. The online seminar provided information about what is involved in setting up a business, and Sophie was offered a follow up appointment with a Business Wales advisor. Sophie was able to access a start-up grant to support the set-up of her business.

To meet the microcarer code of practise standards, Sophie was able to access fully funded training via Monmouthshire Council which was arranged through the microcare team. Sophie completed the following training:

- ▼ Manual Handling
- ▼ Care of Meds
- ▼ Emergency First Aid at Work
- ▼ GDPR and Data Protection
- ▼ Safeguarding Awareness

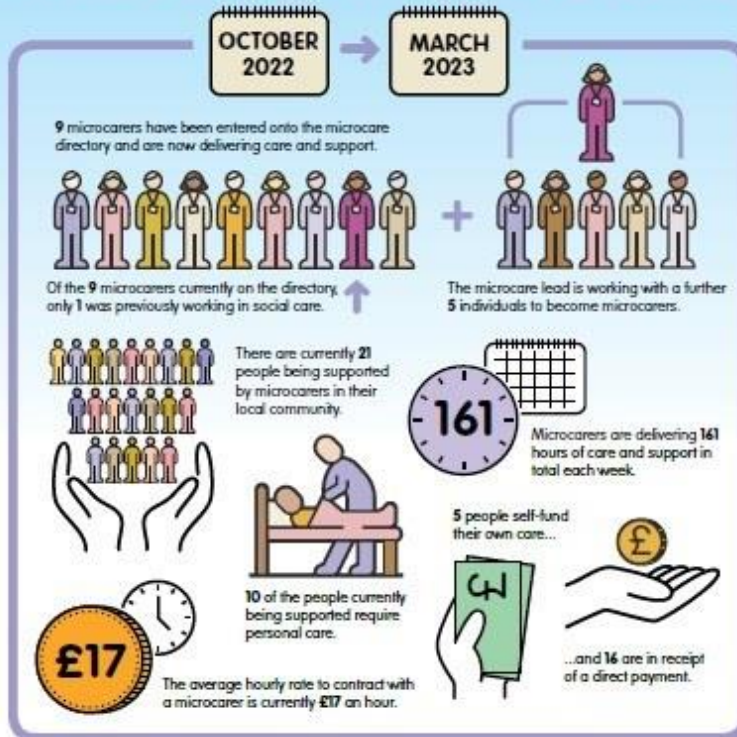
The training gave Sophie the opportunity to refresh previous learning, as well as the chance to meet the other microcarers. This helped to alleviate any worries Sophie had and enabled her to maintain contact with the other microcarers. Sophie now communicates with the other microcarers via a WhatsApp group where they share updates and information.

The microcare team also supported Sophie with a DBS check, sourcing suitable public liability insurance, writing a business profile and HMRC registration (via a Business Wales referral). Once she had completed the training, the micro care team made their final quality checks before 'Sophie's Community Care' service was entered onto the microcare directory on Dewls.

Sophie is currently supporting an elderly woman with getting to appointments, food shopping and general help around her home. Sophie now works hours that suit her family commitments, as well as the support needs of her client.



# ♥ the first 12 months of microcare in monmouthshire



Those microcarers on the directory come from a variety of backgrounds, all have had some experience caring for others.

Microcare can help to retain people in the local care sector as the flexibility, autonomy and pay helps the role compete with other sectors.



a little bit of good

# ♥ feedback from a microcare client

## 1. How have you found contracting with a microcarer?

"Excellent! Our carer, Liza, is very flexible and outgoing and has enabled our daughter to access lots of activities and helps her out with day-to-day tasks."

## 2. What difference has the microcarer made?

"Our daughter is very happy and has continuity of care."

## 3. Please could you tell us about how microcare differs from any previous care packages you have received?

"In the past we have employed PAs using direct payments. The problem with this is carers move on and the continuity of care, building up of relationships and trust is then lost."



## CASE STUDY

### Microcare and Hospital Discharge

David was admitted to hospital in Sept 2022 and was there until late Feb 2023. David has a diagnosis of Huntington's which can impact his mental health. The condition affects his movement and puts him at an increased risk of falls. David's wife was unable to look after him at home without the support of carer workers, but care was not available via the traditional route of care agencies.

David required 2 calls per day (single handed, 1 AM and 1 PM visit). The social worker explored the option of microcare with David and his family. One of the microcarers was able to take on the morning calls and she approached her microcarer colleague to cover evenings and weekends. This was funded via a direct payment.

The alternative care route in this case was an interim placement in a care home whilst awaiting a care package. David and his family strongly wanted him to return home with support. Microcare enabled them to achieve those outcomes.



## ♥ charges and fees

Microcarers are free to set their own fees for the work they carry out. However, they are advised to keep their hourly rate competitive. Microcarers currently on the directory charge between £15 and £18 an hour depending on the type of care and support they offer.

However, it remains difficult for direct payment recipients to recruit and retain Personal Assistants; microcarers are a more cost-effective solution to using agency staff, who typically charge a higher hourly rate.

Those now being supported by micro providers in Monmouthshire via a direct payment would have been referred to an agency due to the current waiting list for support.

There are also the back-office functions related to direct payments that are supported and paid for by the local authority to consider. Because microcarers are sole traders and the recipient of the direct payment no longer must act as the employer, much of this back-office work and support is reduced. The project run by Planed in Pembrokeshire is currently overseen by a single person.



a little bit of good

## ♥ next steps



Monmouthshire County Council intend to continue the development of this project for at least further 12 months. They have employed a full-time member of staff to ensure the project can move forward with sufficient resource.

The Gwent Regional Partnership Team intend to apply learning and resources to another local authority within Gwent, eventually developing a regional or sub-regional microcare service. An expansion of the microcare scheme can help to address significant workforce shortages, provide quality, self-employment opportunities to local people, increase direct payment take up and potentially support hospital discharge across the region.

Welsh Government is currently scoping where microcare sits within the wider social care delivery framework through engagement events with local authorities and via a pan Wales micro provider survey. It is hoped Welsh Government will recognise and support the opportunities microcare offers to local communities as the model chimes with much of their current strategic direction.

There are several for-profit organisations currently seeking opportunities within the microcare market in Wales. These organisations are primarily seeking to act as intermediaries between the micro provider and the person requiring care, and charge for this service. There is a risk that this could drive up costs for either the micro providers or the people they contract with, which in turn could lead to increased costs for direct payments teams. A pan Wales approach to training and set-up from Social Care Wales, coupled with some arm's length support and guidance for micro providers would help minimise this risk and ensure that micro providers remain a grass roots, community-based movement while reassuring Monmouthshire residents that micro providers are subject to ongoing quality assurance and can provide high quality care and support.





Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.  
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.



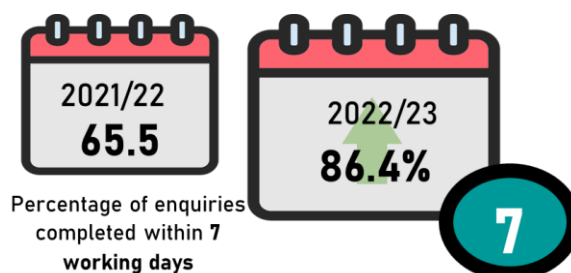
<https://sway.office.com/GzhJn0aMjHhdkrRK#content=iw6Ar58qiHrFgd>

Here is another Micro we would like you to meet, Liza. She will describe what a day in the life of a micro and why she loves being a Monmouthshire microcarer.

### **Safeguarding Adults Services**

Adult safeguarding reports are made through the adult safeguarding team which sits alongside of the wider service and are line-managed through the safeguarding hub arrangements (under children's services). Safeguarding reports are made when there are concerns about an adult who has care and support needs. Concerns may be around the abuse or neglect of an adult including financial abuse or exploitation. Compared with children's services, a higher proportion of safeguarding concerns in adult services are raised with regards to the individuals providing care and once investigated can often be addressed through workforce training, oversight and practice development.

Adult safeguarding has seen a decrease in the volume of reports being made during the year. The reduction in reports and subsequently enquiries is due to the service providing increased advice and support to referring agencies to help with a more consistent application of the guidance in relation to safeguarding reports. During 2022/23, 577 reports were made regarding 438 adults. The majority of reports are from providers and most reports fall under the category of neglect.



The number of reports leading to enquires has similarly decreased during the year, in line with the reduction in reports. Enquiries should usually be completed within 7 working days and during 2022/23, 86.4% were. This had been targeted as an area for improvement this year and is a significant increase on the previous year.

81% of adults tell us they feel safe, which is an improvement on the previous two years. Where people do not feel safe, comments often refer to concerns about mobility and fear of falling.

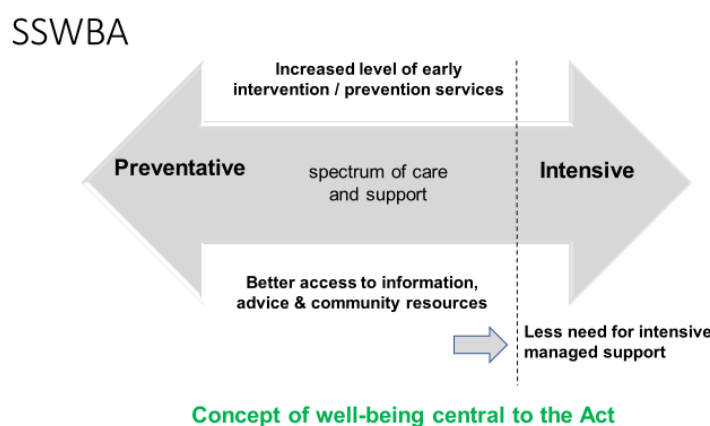
Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Adult Safeguarding</b>				
AS/001	Number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect reported during the year	463	528	438
AD/020	The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during the year	680	799	577
AD/022	The total number of reports received during the collection year where it was alleged that there was abuse under the primary category of:			
AD/022a	Neglect	258	344	242
AD/022b	Physical abuse	260	269	229
AD/022c	Sexual abuse	35	56	27
AD/022d	Emotional or Psychological abuse	176	214	145
AD/022e	Financial abuse	106	97	114
AD/023	The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk where it is necessary for enquires to be made	509	583	418
AD/024	The total number of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse	262	382	361
Local	The percentage of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse	51.5%	65.5%	86.4%

Adults Questionnaire	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual
I feel safe	81.8%	81.1%	78.8%	78.3%	81.3%

### Early Help and Prevention Through a Partnership Approach

Over recent years we have remained constant in our belief that providing community based support as early as possible helps people stay independent for longer and reducing the likelihood of them requiring formal services. The service has continued to build networks that enable people to connect with groups and activities in their local community with the aim of maintaining long-term health and wellbeing and decreasing loneliness and isolation. These concepts are rooted in the aspirations of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.

As demand pressure continues to increase and resources become tighter, one of the most critical challenges faced by adult social care over the next year is how to maintain our commitment to community based support. To do this we need to continue to work in partnership to jointly understand vulnerability and need; ensure that our resources remain well aligned and targeted at the most vulnerable and ensure that we maximise the use of existing, joint community assets wherever possible.



The development and provision of early help is dependant on working closely with our partners both within and outside of the council including many third sector and voluntary organisations.



Together with our Gwent partners, particularly Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), we have established 'well-being networks' and are working to strengthen and expand these across the County.



Similarly, responding as we did to the COVID pandemic helped us cement our collaborative relationship with the Council's Partnership Teams and volunteer networks giving us even more experience of working together within communities and creating opportunities to increase involvement and social connection for people.

We recognise the importance of place and community and have continued to develop our concept of 'place based working'. In essence this means a way of working that builds a network of community support to help people remain connected to things that matter to them supporting their health and wellbeing. By bringing a range of agencies together across social services, primary and community health services, and the third sector, with a shared purpose of supporting people's wellbeing, we are able to share skills, expertise, time and increase the opportunities for people to access support in the community without needing formal services.

*“Place-based working is a person centred, bottom-up approach used to meet the unique needs of people in one given location by working together to use the best available resources and collaborate to gain local knowledge*



In October 2022 Caldicot's Together WORKS celebrated its first birthday. As a partnership between the Council and a number of third sector organisations, Caldicot WORKS provides a safe, friendly, community space which supports a range of volunteering opportunities and welcomes groups such as Bore Coffee, Disability and Dementia Art and Craft, Stitched Together, Armchair Aerobics, Makers Space and Parents Breastfeeding Support to name a few.

Meanwhile in May 2022, the Chepstow's Community Cabin reopened for the first time since the Covid-19 Pandemic led to its temporary closure.

Based at Chepstow Community Hospital, the Cabin is a collaboration between Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Monmouthshire County Council, and acts as a hub for the local community and for voluntary organisations. It's a place where a wide range of wellbeing-focused organisations can have a base, right in the heart of the community. This also creates a fantastic space for co-operation and working together, as well as a drop-in opportunity for members of the town's community to find out about all the wellbeing services and events on their doorstep.

More than a dozen local information and advice organisations attended the opening, including Mind Monmouthshire, Autism Awareness, Papyrus, Monmouthshire Housing, Cyffanol Women's Aid and the Ffrind I Mi befriending service.




Alongside of community hubs wellbeing practitioners are embedded within community based social care and health settings. 2 practitioners, employed by GAVO, are directly connected to GP surgeries. Wellbeing practitioners provide direct support tailored to an individual helping people re-engage in doing what matters to them.

## **PARTNERSHIP PREVENTATIVE SERVICES - 2 Examples**

### ***My Mates Monmouthshire***

My Mates originated in Monmouthshire and is now available throughout Gwent. Through My Mates, people with a learning disability have access to a variety of social events to form friendships and personal relationships, whilst being offered advice and information in a supportive environment. My Mates assists to build confidence and independence utilising the person's own network and the community. Events are facilitated by My Mates and are self-funded with individuals providing their own support from their extended networks. The project is member-led. My Mates focus isn't on trips and events; the relationships that are built within the social activity are paramount. My Mates seeks to improve: friendships and relationships, better community networks, education and awareness, combating isolation and the impact of loneliness for some people who might otherwise feel disconnected and unable to fully assert voice, choice and control over their own lives.



July 2023

Total Number of My Mates Member: 387

Monmouthshire Members: 143 \*This does not include individuals who are supported by Monmouthshire LA, but may live in another area.

**What have we been doing?**

- My Mates has developed into more than a friendship & relationship project that offers social and leisure activities. My mates offers advice & signposting on a range of topics including housing, finances, wellbeing, health, sexual health & relationships.
- Establishing a strong and active network of unpaid peer support across Gwent.
- Ongoing consultation around new activities and events that people may want to attend.
- We have engaged with members in their local communities providing opportunity to attend a considerable range of social events, workshops, advice & information across 7 days a week.
- Continuing our community presence in addition to maintaining online presence.
- Utilising & promoting community resources such as castles, libraries, museums, theatres, markets, gardens & parks.
- Working alongside our partners to implement transitional planning throughout Gwent.

**An example of how we enable members of Monmouthshire to live a good life?**

- Promoting Well-being
- Creation of Friendships
- Enabling not disabling
- New experiences
- Access to information & education
- Promoting independence
- Choice
- Creation of close personal relationships
- Self Esteem & confidence building
- Sexual Health & Well-being
- Encouraging the use of public transport
- Un-paid Support
- Self-directed care & support
- Self-worth
- Advocacy
- Community Presence



Follow the stack to see what people have to say about their involvement in My Mates

- *"There's so many places I've never been before. I'm doing so many new things with My Mates"*
- *"Being with My Mates has got me the confidence that I've never had before. I have new friends & I've been to places I've never been before."*
- *"It doesn't matter where or how we meet up, it's the meeting up that matters"*
- *"I now have a reason to get out of bed!"*
- *"My Mates is awesome!"*
- *"What would I do without you? My Mates has changed my life!"*
- *"Through My Mates, I've met the love of my life, I've got friends & I don't feel lonely anymore."*
- *"I've got friends! I've got someone to talk to everyday - I used to go days with only my own company."*



## GROWING SPACES

Growing Spaces is a Gwent-wide mental health charity that supports people with mental health challenges, learning disabilities and autism. Growing Spaces helps people to learn new skills in horticulture, woodwork and art and to build confidence and reduce social isolation. People receive support around re-entering paid employment opportunities and are supported with general advice for example, around the cost of living or access to other services. Mardy Park resource centre hosts one of the Growing Spaces sites where there are around 50 participants who attend every week and find meaningful activity and connection with others in caring for the gardens and orchard. The project grows organic fruit and vegetables for participants to take home to try and any surplus goes to the kitchen at Mardy Park for the café.



Growing spaces has won a number of awards in recognition of our sustainability and best practice including Best Environmental Project in Monmouthshire at the GAVO awards and has been awarded the Keep Wales Tidy Green Flag status for the last 3 years.

Basing Growing Spaces at Mardy Park has allowed the resource Centre to develop into a hub that welcomes people of all ages, and become truly intergenerational. All ages can be seen enjoying both the inside of the building and outside in the grounds.

Recently Growing Spaces took part in the national tree planting initiative, and Bluebells forest school, who also use the grounds helped with the planting of the trees. From the photos included you can see generations working together, with Bluebells supervising the planting.

The digger is in the process of preparing the area for a Green Corridor Pond, attracting frogs, butterflies, dragonflies and also including a bee bath for the hives that are also in the grounds, enabling the bees to have a wash and drink when needed.

## 5. Carers Service



*Our Carer's event in November 2022 was held in Westonbirt Arboretum.*

The Carers Team commissions carers services, provides information and advice, offers a range of free events and activities, works alongside community groups, health and social care professionals and most importantly carers and young carers. The team also undertakes carers needs assessments to ensure that carers needs are understood in their own right. The carers team are seeing an increase in demand for their support, with carers and young carers presenting with more of their own support needs than has previously been seen.

The support that the team provide is very much valued by carers and young carers. Giving the carer an opportunity to talk to someone about their caring role is a service in its own right. The team continues to maintain strong, open and honest relationships with commissioned service providers

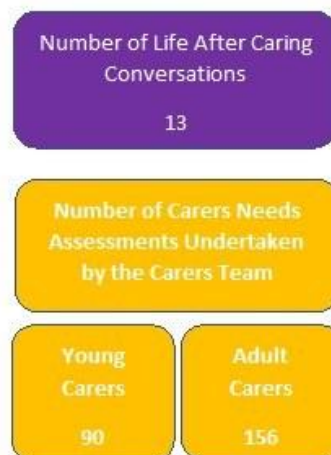
who provide direct support to carers. This relationship allows both us to flex and adapt services to meet carers needs. An example of this is how Adferiad has now started to also support young carers who are supporting someone with mental ill health.

Post COVID, the Carers Team have resumed their offer of free activities for carers including a trip to Westonbirt, a steam railway ride followed by a cream tea, coach trip to Worcester market, new year lunches and a guided walk. Numbers in attendance have not been at the same level as pre-COVID, which is in part due to the reticence of some not wanting to venture far or mix within groups. There have though been successes. One carer, along with her husband attended our steam railway trip and said she was so glad she came because she met so many people, and it has given her the confidence to go on our other trips. The Young Carers Service have similarly provided a number of trips for young carers including bowling, Greenmeadow Park, detective trail, Gilwern Activity Centre and theatre tickets.

These activities provide the Carers Team with the opportunity to talk directly with carers, young carers and their families. It is an informal way of checking in and seeing how they are managing with the caring role, and if there is any additional support or signposting they need. The events also give carers and young carers the opportunity to chat and make new friendships.

Feedback has been amazing, especially for the family events:

*“Hi, As a family we would just like to say a great big thank-you to giving us as a family the opportunity to have a day out altogether it was Robin Hood at the River Front Newport, it was amazing to see both M and B join in and for me to enjoy something with my girls to.”*



## Life After Caring

Whilst many people may not identify as a carer when their caring role ends this can become a period of uncertainty, change and trying to recalibrate their own identity. The caring role, in some instances, can isolate a carer from their own interests and networks of support. The Carers Team recognises this and gives those who have cared, the opportunity to chat with our Carers Information and Support Workers (CSIW). One of our CSIW provided such support to a lady who was caring for husband. Due to the rural and remote location of their home they had few visitors, whilst their family lived 4 hours away. Caring for her husband's complex and life changing illnesses put a great strain on the lady, especially as she was managing her own health conditions. Over this 3-year period, the CSIW and the District Nurses were the main visitors she received. When the lady's husband died, she turned to the CSIW for support. The CSIW helped her with some benefits queries and spent time listening to the lady and supporting her through this difficult period. Being there for those who have cared, allows us to acknowledge and value their caring role, whilst recognising someone as an individual.

## Commissioned Carer Services

The Carers Team commission several services that support carers to have a life of their own and/or continue with their caring role. We are very grateful to these organisations which include Age Cymru Gwent, Care Collective and Adferiad Recovery and Building Bridges and Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations who provides us with management of the Carers' Coordinator role.

The Carers Coordinator works in collaboration with the Council's Carers Team to plan and deliver carers events, administer the Leisure Card 25% discount scheme and the carers newsletter.

Carers Co-ordinator  
Tel: 01291 675474



April 2022

### Monmouthshire Carers

A Partnership Between GAVO & Monmouthshire County Council



#### Goodbye and Good Luck Tracey!

Can you believe it, after 17 years Tracey Davies, Carers Co-ordinator is leaving us, and moving onto pastures new. During those 17 years Tracey has built up a carers database that is now providing newsletters, activities, events, training and information to over 1200 Monmouthshire carers. Whilst Tracey works for GAVO she has been an integral part of the Monmouthshire Carers Team and most importantly someone whom carers know they can rely upon for being friendly, helpful and knowledgeable. We are going to miss Tracey, yet it's an exciting new chapter Tracey starts and we want to say thank you to Tracey for her dedication in supporting Monmouthshire Carers, and that she enjoys all the good things ahead of her.

#### Changes are Afoot

There is going to be a transition of change after February, when Tracey Davies leaves her role as Carers Co-ordinator, GAVO and when a new person steps into the vacant role. The Carers Co-ordinator role is pivotal in maintaining the carers database, producing and disseminating the carers newsletter, co-ordinating and organising carers events and training and managing the leisure card scheme. The Carers Team, Monmouthshire County Council, are working with GAVO to ensure there is minimal disruption during the interim period. So please bear with us in the meantime.



**Carers Week 2022**  
6th June 2022 Well-being Day – Mid Monmouthshire;  
9th June 2022 Carers Walk – Cefn Isla, Usk;

#### ...INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Carers Co-ordinator;	Carers Hub;	Carers UK;
Carers Week 2022;	Men's Shed;	Monmouthshire Carers Network;
Young Carers;	Carers Handbook;	WhatsApp;
Carers Carers Rights Day;	Royal British Legion;	EPPCymru.



Welcome to Monmouthshire  
**Young Carers Service**



The Young Carers Service is working with a caseload of young carers and families that are receiving the 12-week intervention support depending on their level of need. This programme focusses on their goals which includes emotional and/or practical support.

During February half term the Young Carers team organised some activities one of them being a Pottery session in Lollypops and Ladybirds as an opportunity for the young carers to take part in a fun creative therapeutic activity.

We had a great time and parents were invited to get involved to provide the family with some much-needed time out.

The young carers were able to socialise with people who understand their situation and to make new friends.

A great day was had by all. Feedback from a Mum "Thankyou for today we had a great time and it was lovely to spend some much-needed time with others who are in our situation"

If you are a young carer/young adult carer aged 25 years and would like any support, please contact the young carers service on:  
 Email: [YoungCarers@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:YoungCarers@monmouthshire.gov.uk) / Tel: 01633 644621



### Carers Rights Day Luncheons

Over 40 carers in Monmouthshire enjoyed a three course Christmas luncheon at Llanfoist Golf Club to promote Carers Rights Day.

The luncheons took place on Wednesday 24th November and 1st December, 2021. Carers relaxed and chatted over a scrumptious Christmas feast....

A great day was had by all!



## TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY CYBER SAFE

**Top Tip**  
 Always install anti-virus software on your devices.

For help and advice about staying safe online visit:  
[www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)



- Social Media**
  - Be wary of the data you post on line. Social media sites do sell your data onto third parties so posts you share can also be shared with a wider audience. Don't put countdowns to holidays on there. Limit the data you post about yourself in your profile. Always keep your on-line presence small.
- Shopping safely**
  - Fake emails offering a refund will ask for bank details **IGNORE IT**
  - Received an email from a friend asking to buy a gift card for them? **IGNORE IT**
  - Look out for look-a-like websites, safe sites start 'HTTPS'
  - Protect your cards by using RFID card protector sleeves.
  - Stay vigilant for counterfeit goods. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. **IGNORE IT.**
- Passwords**
  - Never use the same password for different accounts, if one is hacked the others can be too. Use UPPER, lower case characters, numbers and special characters e.g. !Y0u'r3 \$imply Th3 B3st!\$. Check if your account has been hacked at: [www.havebeenpwnd.com](http://www.havebeenpwnd.com)
- Phishing emails**
  - Check the spelling of the senders name and the email address. Hover over links to check where the link is pointing to. If in doubt, get the email checked out.
  - Report Phishing to: [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)

Men's Shed  
+ Sied Dynion



Mae'r grŵp yma i ddyfynion y gymuned MS allu trafod y pynciau sydd bwysicaf iddynt. Ymunwch a ni i gael paned neu peint drwy Zoom. Mae'r sesiynau ar gael i unrhyw un sydd gyda MS neu sy'n rhoi cymorth i rywun sydd yn dioddef.

Mae'r grŵp yn cwrrd ar **ddydd Mawrth cyntaf y mis am 7 o'r gloch y nŵs.**

Cysylltwch a'r Hwb Lles am fanylion.

(Yn gyffredinol bydd y sesiynau yn cael ei rhedeg drwy gyfrwng y Saesneg)

email/ebook:  
[wellbeingwales@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:wellbeingwales@mssociety.org.uk)

MS Society



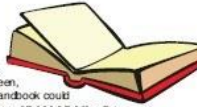
We are the group for the men of the MS community to get together and catch up on the topics that matter most. Whether you live with MS or support someone close to you, join us on Zoom for a moment to unwind!

We meet every month on the **First Tuesday at 7pm.** Contact the Hub for details.

Are You A Carer?

Please let us know if you have changed your contact details so we can update the carers register.

COMING SOON  
...the New Carers Handbook



The Monmouthshire Carers Handbook has had a makeover! Whilst we have had many positive comments on how useful the handbook has been, carers have also given us some excellent suggestions as to how the handbook could be improved. The new handbook offers guidance and support for a carer whilst highlighting the need for them to think about their own needs beyond their caring role. The handbook also includes a directory of organisations that may be able to offer additional support to carers. In the meantime, the 2018 handbook is still available online at [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/social-care/carers-project/](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/social-care/carers-project/). Watch this space. We will keep you updated and let you know when the handbook is ready for circulation.

SOUTH WALES ADMIRAL NURSE SERVICE



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

The Legion works with Dementia UK to provide Admiral Nurse support - a service that supports their beneficiaries, which can be the carer or the person living with dementia, who have served in the UK Armed Forces. The focus of the service is to maintain independence and improve the quality of life for carers and families and to provide the practical advice they need. Admiral Nurses have the experience to facilitate the service every step of the way, offering skilled assessments to determine the needs of family carers and the needs of the person living with dementia; information and practical advice for carers and their families on supporting those with dementia; to work with carers and families to provide emotional and psychological support throughout the caring journey; advice on how to care for someone with dementia and help to develop skills to encourage positive approaches to living with dementia.

Regional South Wales Areas Covers:  
Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent.

In terms of postcodes, we cover all CF and NP postcodes and SA10 - SA13.  
Telephone: 0333 011 4497 • Email: [admiral@southwales@rblslegion](mailto:admiral@southwales@rblslegion)

Carers UK have launched new resources for carers about Disability-Related Expenditure



Carers UK have launched new resources for carers about Disability-Related Expenditure

If you care for someone with a disability or a medical condition, there may be extra costs involved in helping them manage this. These are called disability-related expenses (DRE). Carers can claim help from their Local Authority regarding their DRE, but this is not always known about or widely shared, and it can be complex to submit a claim.

That's why, to help carers better understand what disability-related benefits are, including whether they are entitled to support, and how to make a claim, Carers UK have recently launched some new resources.

Please visit: [carersuk.org/help-and-advice/funding/support/disability-related-expenses](http://carersuk.org/help-and-advice/funding/support/disability-related-expenses)

# SUPPORT

**When you turn 18 there is still support out there for you**

### If you want to talk to someone

You can talk to Ali Page who works within the Carers Team to see what support you might need. You may just want to talk about how turning 18 might change your caring role and the choices you want to make.

If you do want to have a chat then contact Ali Page, Young Carers & Young Adult Carers Assessment Worker, Monmouthshire County Council

Tel: 07866 188360  
Email: [AliPage@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:AliPage@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

### If you want to keep in touch & know what's going on

You will receive regular updates through the Carers Newsletter which contains information that could help you, gives you access to free events, updates on any new carers grants, access to leisure & wellbeing discounts whilst letting you know there is still support for you in Monmouthshire.

If you want to sign up to the newsletter then please contact Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO)

Tel: 01291 675474  
Email: [carers.co-ordinator@gavo.org.uk](mailto:carers.co-ordinator@gavo.org.uk)



We hope you want to keep in touch so we can all connect together

**WhatsApp Messaging Service**

We are expanding the way we communicate to our residents by developing a WhatsApp messaging service.

If you would like to subscribe to these messages, please contact [ABB.Engagement@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ABB.Engagement@wales.nhs.uk)



**Gwasanaeth Negeseuon WhatsApp**

Rydym yn ehangu ein dull o gyfathrebu gyda'n trigolion drwy ddatblygu gwasanaeth negeseuon Whatsapp.

Os hoffech gael y negeseuon hyn, cysylltwch ag [ABB.Engagement@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ABB.Engagement@wales.nhs.uk)



The Health Board will be launching a WhatsApp Messaging service to engage with residents across Gwent.

By subscribing to this service, you will receive frequent updates from the Health Board on a variety of topics including, COVID-19 messaging, our vaccination programme and other information about our healthcare services.

If you or someone you know would like to receive these messages, please contact [ABB.Engagement@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ABB.Engagement@wales.nhs.uk) and use the email 'WhatsApp Subscription'.

In the email, please provide the following details:

- Your full name:
- Postcode/Borough:
- The mobile number you would like the messages to be sent to
- If you would like to receive messages in the medium of Welsh

For the avoidance of doubt, messages will be received from the following mobile number:  
**07972695798.**

**Welsh Ambulance Service Non-Emergency Patient Transport**

Transport is available for patients in Wales needing to get to Non-Emergency appointments who have a specific medical need and require Ambulatory Care. You can visit our website to enquire if you are eligible, to search for transport options in your local area and find FAQs about what to expect if you travel with us.

**Temporary Change to Booking:** Under normal circumstance we ask patients who are eligible for transport to call and book as soon as they receive their appointment. However, due to the increased risk surrounding Covid cases, we will only be able to take transport bookings within 4-days of our patients' appointments. By limiting advance journeys allows us to obtain the most up to date Covid information from our patients and therefore helping towards ensuring the safety of our staff and patients.





**Free NHS Health & Well Being Course,  
Working with MCC Digital Lending Library**

**Gain Digital skills using an ipad & improve  
your well-being at the same time!**

**You will need to register** with the Digital Library to take part, contact Helena from the MCC Library Service on [helenawilliams@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:helenawilliams@monmouthshire.gov.uk) or phone 07970 380358

This is part of a pilot scheme taking place in **Monmouthshire** libraries for people who want to get online or may benefit from learning digital skills. There will be volunteers to support you.

**For info** on our other courses contact the **EPP Team** by [epp@gavo.org.uk](mailto:epp@gavo.org.uk) or use the **QR Code link**









## 6. Complaints and Compliments

Representation and complaints procedures in Social Services departments are a statutory requirement. Everyone who makes a complaint about social services has a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. We always take complaints seriously and use them as an opportunity to critically appraise our practice and reflect on any improvements that need to be made.

General advice about the procedure is published in our complaints leaflet “How to be heard”. Alternatively, people can contact the Customer Relations team for help and advice about how to make a complaint.

There are 3 stages to the complaints process. Local resolution (stage 1); formal investigation (stage 2) and referral to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (stage 3).

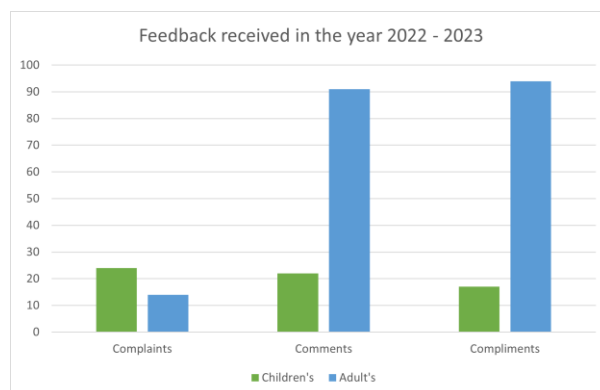
During the year covered by this report we received 38 complaints (24 in children's services and 14 in adults services). Of the 38 complaints, 33 were started at stage 1 of the process during April 2022 - March 2023. 7 complaints were received at stage 2 of the process, of which 3 were escalated and 4 were new within April 2022 - March 2023.

We received a total of 113 comments of which 91 were from adults services and 111 compliments of which 94 were from adults services.

General themes within complaints include communication issues; not being listened to or involved in decisions; and dissatisfaction with the provision of services.

We use the outcomes from complaints investigations as part of continued professional development and to help us shape policy, operational practice and the design of services.

Compliments are equally collated and used to validate the things we do well, support practice development and as an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the actions of individual practitioners or teams.



7 - Number of comments, compliments and complaints received in the year 2022 - 2023 in both adult's and children's services.

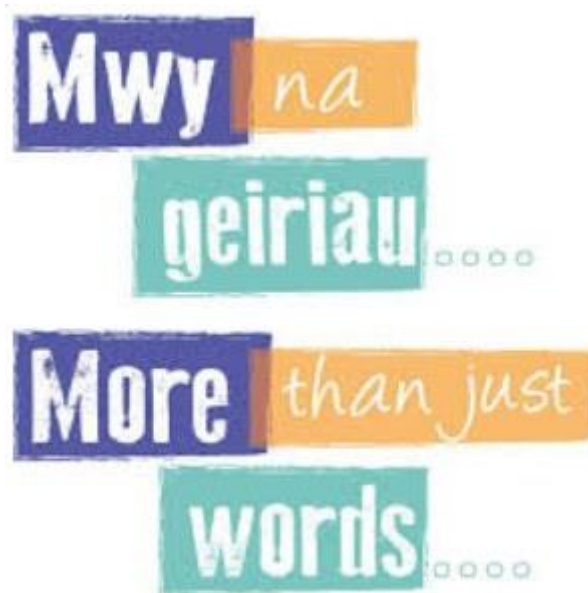


- *'\*\*\* wanted to pass on her sincere thanks for all the support you gave to both her and her husband before he died, \*\*\* reports " \*\*\* transformed her husband's life at the end, she was kindness its self. Thanks to \*\*\*.'*
- *'Not getting advised on changes of times of calls.'*
- *'I just wanted to drop you an email to thank the staff of the day centre /pub club for all their hard work and dedication. Recently on Dad's 88th Birthday the day centre staff threw him a party and he had a lovely cake both my sister and myself were so touched its all the little thoughtful things the staff do that make it such an amazing resource. The Pub Club team are fantastic with dad and so understanding if he decides not to go last minute ! Only this week a lady came to the Dad's house from the reablement team as one of the bus escorts had contacted her ref dad needing a rail out by front door. Again showing the staff team going above and beyond. I just wanted to say such a big thanks and please pass this on to anyone who needs to see the recognition all the staff deserve.'*
- *'I only see a social worker when it is my annual review or it is always someone different. There is no continuity.'*
- *'I was really worried when I was discharged from hospital, I wondered if I would be able to manage on my own. Then these wonderful carers came each morning and night, I called them my Guardian Angels, they helped me to do things gave me confidence to do things I didn't think I could do, they never rushed me, it was these girls that helped me to get better, I*

*don't have them anymore as I am improving every day, thanks to these guardian angels, can't thank them enough - \*\*\*.'*

- *'..However the Direct Payments Team in Monmouthshire are fantastic. They go above and beyond. \*\*\* in particular really is a credit to the team. Her manager is non-judgemental, she is fair, organised and incredibly helpful.'*
- *Raising concerns and complain about the drift, delay, poor communication, and case management in relation to nephews.*
- *'My Father needs a social worker, he has recently been told that he hasn't been allocated one.'*
- *'Our social worker has been very helpful and supportive many thanks.'*
- *'\*\*\* and \*\*\*, You made a very difficult and distressing situation more bearable than we could have hoped. Your empathy and professionalism were above and beyond what anyone could have expected and we are so grateful for that. We would like to thank you so much, You were both wonderful'*

## 7. More Than Just Words



*More than just words* is the Welsh Government's strategic framework to strengthen Welsh language provision in health and social care. Its aim is to support Welsh-speakers to receive services in their first language.

In October 2021, it was announced there would be a small national task and finish group to develop a five-year plan for *More than just words*, following an independent evaluation of the framework.

The evaluation showed that, for many Welsh-speakers, being able to access services in Welsh made a significant positive difference to their overall experience and, in many cases, their health and wellbeing outcomes. But it also demonstrated people often found it difficult to access the services they need and were reluctant to ask when Welsh-language services were not offered.

The task and finish group, considered patients' experience, evidence from Welsh Government, the NHS and social care, regulators, professional bodies and from the education and training sectors.

The five-year plan is based on the following themes, which emerged from the task and finish group's work:

- Culture and leadership
- Welsh language planning and policies
- Supporting and developing Welsh language skills of the workforce
- Sharing best practice and developing an enabling approach

A performance management framework will measure progress against actions in the plan and a new advisory board will be set up.

In Wales, almost 200,000 staff deliver health and social care, by far the largest employer in Wales. There is therefore a huge opportunity for health and social care to become exemplars in providing Welsh language services and to contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition to increase language use and the number of Welsh speakers by 2050.

Across Gwent we have set up a regional group to support the delivery of the 5 year plan. In Monmouthshire the Welsh Language officer has been working closely with our directorate to support us with all our specific actions as detailed below.

Social Care & Health – Welsh Language Action Plan 2022-2027			
Action	Progress	Who	When/RAG
<b>Data &amp; Analytics</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a data dashboard for More than Words in collaboration with the Welsh Language Officer and performance team.</li> <li>• Update quarterly.</li> <li>• Report year end.</li> </ul>	Meeting planned to take forward with the newly appointed Welsh Language Officer.	C & S	Yellow
<b>Workforce Planning</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit of staff Welsh Language skills in collaboration with the Welsh Language Officer.</li> <li>• Analyse Welsh Language skills across each operational team.</li> <li>• Cross reference skills against need.</li> <li>• Agree Welsh Language workforce plan with each service area. (This will identify learning &amp; development priorities)</li> </ul>	Last audit completed October 2022.	C	Yellow
<b>Raise Awareness of 'Active offer'</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree activities for both Children's &amp; Adult's services to raise awareness of the importance of the Active Offer when working with our residents.</li> </ul>		N	Red
<b>Proposal of Welsh Language in Recruitment and Selection</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language skills on application form.</li> <li>• Language skills on the E-Form (employee records).</li> <li>• Include in every role profile 'what are the benefits of working in MCC': opportunity to develop welsh language skills.</li> <li>• Upload data from the survey into individual My View records.</li> </ul>	In scope for new corporate E-recruitment modules.	A	Yellow
<b>Social Care Sharepoint Tile</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh the 'Active Offer' Hub Tile on Share point online.</li> </ul>	Project due to commence	S	Red
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Populate Hub site with all Welsh Speakers across both SC&amp;H and whole the authority</li> </ul>	Update on a regular basis	S	Green
<b>Regional Collaboration / Joint Plan</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue involvement with regional More than Words activity.</li> </ul>	Joint action plan in place & regional meeting set up	A	Green
<b>Onboarding</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MCC video at induction/onboarding</li> </ul>	Need to source funding (possibly via SCW)	N	Red
<b>Meetings and Review Plan</b>			
Every Month Claire Robins, Nia Roberts, Sophie Cook.	Ongoing	A	Green
Key:	Green Complete	Amber Work In Progress	Red Not Commenced

## 8. Workforce



In Social Care we recognise that the workforce is our most important resource. To deliver our vision, that Monmouthshire is a connected county that cares and supports well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life, we need a confident, competent and skilled workforce.

The social care and health workforce, whilst showing such incredible fortitude and resilience, has been under sustained pressure for over two years now without let up. The workforce as a whole could best be described as fragile. Given also the indications that decreasing numbers of people are choosing careers in care, sustaining an adequate, skilled and resilient workforce remains one of the top priorities for the service.

We recognise that our workforce is our greatest asset and are committed to building the capacity of our workforce to ensure they have the skills, knowledge, confidence, and experience required to deliver services that secure positive and sustainable outcomes for people. To continue to develop as a forward-thinking, innovative directorate we will continue to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

The following is a snap shot of how we have supported the workforce this year and our strategy for people, culture and performance – building a productive, safe, diverse, and respectful workplace; effectively managing risks and resources; and ensuring we have the capability to deliver our priorities now and into the future.

### Workforce Development Team



This has been another challenging and exciting year in the workforce development team with the continued development of many work programmes with particular focus on the implementation of a learning management system, new on-boarding programme and attraction and recruitment into the social care sector.

The infographic presented highlights learning & development data from the year 22-23.





*Not too big groups so the interaction was very good between us all, everything was explained well and delivered well.*

*Training was very organised all information was clear and easy to understand*

*The group was lovely the training was exceptional*

*In everyday tasks to the best of my knowledge to ensure service users experience the best care as possible in their own homes*

- *It was very inclusive and relatively informal which definitely made it easier to learn. The trainers were very approachable and made the long sessions fun and enjoyable.*
- *Do a week training then practice in workplace, then do another week.*

From the managers' perspective the impact of the induction programme was equally positive. Although there were concerns that there was a lot to learn all at once, overall it meant that people were starting their care roles with the appropriate training, *skills and connections with other carers already in place.*

100% of the evaluations identified the trainers were organised, approachable and knowledgeable demonstrating the value that our internal social care trainers have made through ensuring learning and development reflects the service needs. This engagement and collaboration with the services and approach of the trainers ensures meaningful learning for participants which is reflected in an 82% attendance rate.

## Placed Based Learning

Place-based learning and development to upskill care staff in Monmouthshire has been delivered wherever possible. Delivering learning and development locally increases access to training. It has reduced the travel time for participants therefore minimising the impact of staffing frontline services and ensures non-drivers are able to access it more readily.

Our work has been continuing to evolve with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, and our two NCN leads, to develop a *train the trainer* model for delivering training and completing competency assessment in relation to vital signs and taking blood sugar readings for home carers. We hope that we can pilot this model of training and care delivery during 23-24, as part of our work to reduce unnecessary admissions to hospital.

## Foster Carers





Monmouthshire Foster Carers have been continuing to complete some of the core learning and development using the e-learning platform. 2022/2023 has seen a total of 125 e-learning courses completed.

In addition, the *Moving Children On* webinar proved popular in November with 4 Carers attending followed by an additional 7 in January 2023. Also popular was the *Suicide and Self Harm* webinar with 7 Foster Carers attending in February 2023.

Foster Carers feedback has suggested they are keen to have a mix of face to face and e-learning in the future so 2023/2024 will be working towards this.



## Learning Management System – Thinqi



Social care and health have been working collaboratively with our colleagues across the council to ensure we have a Learning Management System that will support us to deliver learning and to facilitate personal and professional development. In August 2022 the testing, evaluating, planning and building the content ready for migration of the whole social care and health workforce to move over to our new learning management system began. It was fantastic to realise this goal and to see social care and health go live with the new system – Thinqi – in April 2023.

Thinqi is proving a great platform for our social care and health workforce. Each employee has their own profile where any learning and development completed is recorded.

All line managers are able to see all the learning that their team have completed and the system highlights what training is mandatory for each role and lets people know when they need to refresh learning in any particular topics.

Everyone learns differently so Thinqi has a host of learning resources within its library including interactive e-learning, podcasts, articles, powerpoint presentations and weblinks as well as the opportunity to book face to face and online training.

Learning needs and opportunities are discussed in supervision, 1:1's and appraisals including identifying any courses which are mandatory or specific to an individual's professional development.

Thinqi includes a booking and reporting system to assist how the Workforce Development Team plans, delivers and reports on training for all employees and managers. Access, knowledge and engagement with learning can be delivered in multiple formats to support individuals learning style and maximise their continuing professional development.

Given CIW registration is now required for both homecare and residential support workers, having all learning recorded in one central learning management system will support employees in evidencing the learning they have undertaken and facilitate the registration process.

## Well-being

During 22-23, to support the workforce there was investment in the social care trainers becoming trained in delivering connect 5, which is a 3 module course to support people with their wellbeing. Connect 5 is based upon the 5 ways to wellbeing and supports participants with their own mental wellbeing as well as the mental wellbeing of others by giving them confidence to engage in open conversations. The course focuses on a number of tools that can be used to support staff and help build resilience not only in their personal lives but also in the workplace.

During 22 - 23, 54 staff completed the Gwent Connect 5 module 1, 19 completed module 2 and 12 completed module 3.

In addition to the Gwent connect 5 programme, there are a number of resources to support employee wellbeing including the Melo website, Canopi, occupational health, employee counselling and the go to group.



## First 3 Years in Practice

First 3 years in practice is an important transition from student to qualified social worker. In Monmouthshire we believe it is essential that social workers are supported with a comprehensive induction, a specific Newly Qualified Social Work programme to consolidate their university learning and embed their learning into practice before undertaking the consolidation programme at either Cardiff Metropolitan University or the University of South Wales. In year 2022-2023 we supported three first year in practice students, one from adult services and two from children's services. During the year 2022-2023 the workforce team supported seven consolidation candidates, five from children's services and two from adult services.

## Student Social Workers & Social Care Education

Level	Programme
1	Cardiff University x 1 University of South Wales x 3 Open University x 2
2	Cardiff University x 2 University of South Wales x 1 Open University x 1
3	Cardiff University x 1 Open University x 3

As part of work force planning, Monmouthshire invests resource into enabling people to become qualified social workers, helping to ensure a sufficient workforce into the future. As a local authority we host students from both Cardiff University & University of South Wales. We also invest in our own workforce and sponsor staff to become qualified social workers via the Open University, whilst working in their existing roles.

In 2022 we enrolled three Social Care Assistants onto the Social Services Practitioner pilot programme. This is a 2-year, Level 4, work-based fully-funded qualification run by Bridgend College. A further three members of staff have been accepted onto the second cohort, commencing in September 2023. The qualification is recognised by Social Care Wales as an equivalent to the first year of the social work degree programme.

## Recruitment

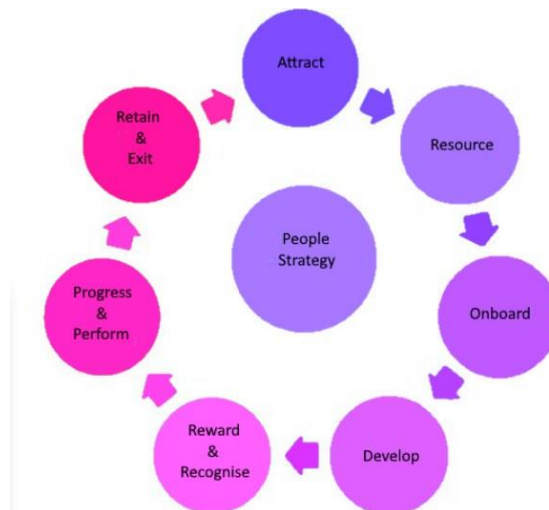
In terms of ensuring that we have the sufficient workforce, particularly in key posts around direct care, mental health, team leader posts and occupational therapy, this is an on-going endeavour. The perceptions of working in social care tend to be negative; however, in Monmouthshire we are trying to counteract these negative perceptions and demonstrate the opportunities, career

progression, work life balance and job satisfaction that people experience who work within the sector. Attraction and recruitment of people into the social care sector continues to be a challenge. We were successful in securing a grant from social Care Wales to film a video to challenge these perceptions and support the recruitment of people into the sector – the video which can be seen below.

The impact of this video saw a 700% increase of applications within a 1 month period.



## Our Workforce Priorities



The All Wales Health & Social Care Workforce Strategy [Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy - HEIW \(nhs.wales\)](#) continues to help us set direction and forms the platform for our ongoing priorities.

Given that the council's challenging financial landscape will continue to stretch our workforce, we consider that supporting employees appropriately at each stage of the workforce *life cycle* is critically important to the overall resilience of the service.

We have developed our priorities around the 7 stages of the workforce life-cycle.

**Attract:** Use all of Monmouthshire's Social Care and Health attributes in order to be a major employer of choice in our community.

**Resource:** Facilitate all available talent to apply, leaving no stone un-turned.

**Onboard:** Welcome and induct everyone who joins us.

**Develop:** Support everyone in all corners services to grow, develop and learn.

**Reward and Recognise:** Everyone's contributions are recognised.

**Progress and Perform:** Hold regular conversations about performance and development.

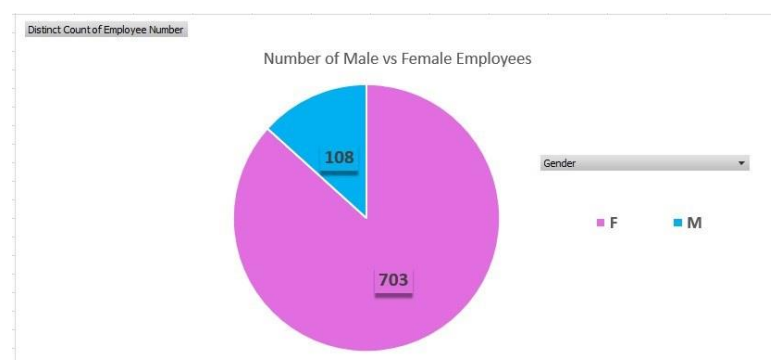
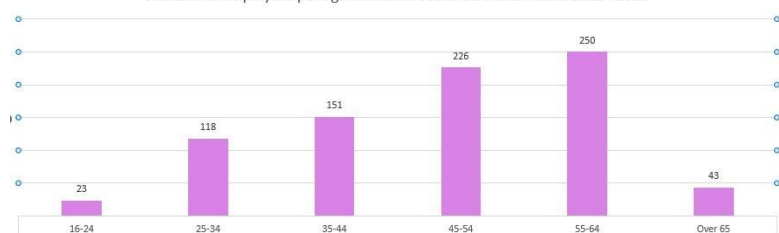
**Retain and Exit:** Encourage our people to stay and then learn from those who leave.

We are proud of our whole workforce and the underpinning values we all work to. We are a small local authority but we have big ambition and there is no holding back on what we can achieve together. Day in day out, no matter what, our people constantly strive to support our residents and continue helping people to live happier, healthier lives for longer in their communities.

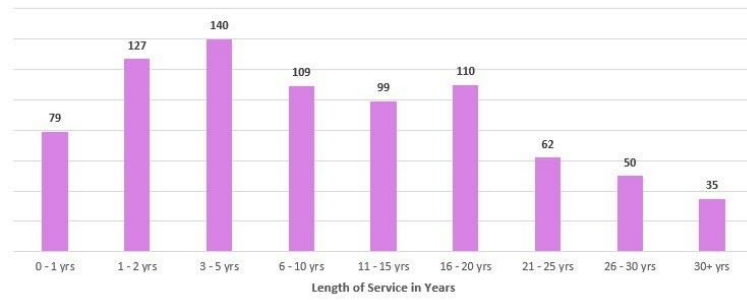
## What Does Our Workforce Look Like?



Number of employees per age bracket in Social Care and Health 2022 - 2023



Comparison of length of service in the workforce in 2023



### Labour Turnover



Children - 12.47%



### Labour Turnover



Support Services, WDT, Finance,  
Digital - 11.51%

### Labour Turnover



Total Turnover - 12.67%





## 9. Next Steps, Key Challenges and Priorities

This year, in the face of the post-pandemic reality of a demand heavy and resource depleted environment, we have embarked on in-depth appraisals across many service areas with the prime purpose of ensuring sustainable and viable services into the future.

In some instances this will mean continuing and, where possible, accelerating plans that are already in train such as supporting children to remain safely at home and the development of in-house placement solutions for children who are looked after. In others, it is driving us to return to basic principles of practice around how we assess, review and provide equitable services to people using strengths-based, preventative approaches. At some level, all services are inevitably having to change and respond to the current circumstances – doing so ‘on the go’, whilst simultaneously dealing with intense operational pressures.

I have tried to maintain balance within the report both highlighting challenges and describing how they are being addressed. In summation, my overall evaluation of the service is not a pessimistic one. My optimism springs foremost from our service base and the commitment and expertise of the workforce together with the quality of the leadership in place and the willingness within the service to be resourceful and creative - to engage in the professional thinking and knowledge build that is required to find solutions. Secondly, from the desire (which is evident across the board) to support the health and wellbeing of people in Monmouthshire in the best way that we possibly can, both on an individual basis and at a wider population level. I take optimism also from the deep-rooted partnerships within Monmouthshire that have been forged over many years. For all of these reasons, my belief is that we are well placed to face the coming years with positivity and confidence.

At very least I hope that this annual report has provided the context for what I consider to be our most pressing strategic risks and operational challenges, which I have summarised as follows:

### **Risks**

- Financial sustainability of social care
- Demographic and demand pressures including complexities of presenting needs within both children and adults services
- Impact of financial pressures across the Council affecting social care
- Potential negative impact on people as a consequence of changes in how we assess and provide services
- Insufficiency of placements for children with the potential that we are unable to provide appropriate placements for individual children
- The operational pressure on the workforce and leadership within the services given the extent of the strategic and operational challenges

### **Operational Challenges**

- Ensuring that the social care workforce is organised so that resources are deployed to best effect in order to meet demand and deliver the services changes that are required.
- The welfare of the workforce

- Ensuring that social care services are provided consistently, fairly and equitably in the context of financial restraints
- Delays and waiting times within adult social care services including assessments, reviews and provisions of home care packages, particularly the limited availability of reablement
- The need to protect resource for preventative / early help services in the face of budgetary pressures (in health and social care)
- Ensuring that early help services are targeted to the most vulnerable based on shared understanding and priorities
- Maintaining the stability of adult social care providers within the area
- Insufficiency of placements for children who need to be looked after
- Maintaining partnership working when all key partners and statutory agencies are under significant pressure

### **Priority Actions for 2023**

- Work on targeted recruitment where it is most needed
- Recruit to key gaps in the leadership structure within adult services so that practice can be supported with appropriate levels of oversight and accountability
- Implement a quality assurance process that is digitally enabled and supports practice
- Facilitate the on-going training, support and practice development across the workforce
- Develop further clarity around how we communicate with the public and with the workforce about social care and health services
- Ensure that there is a fit for purpose case recording system that meets operational requirements and prepare for the next version of a Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)
- Further develop assistive technology approaches and a joint action plan to support prevention and reablement
- Review and redesign services where this is required to increase future sustainability and viability and implement the outcomes from the disability support services reviews
- Rebalance reablement and long-term care within our in-house care at home service
- Further develop strategic and locality based commissioning and seek to expand choice for how individuals receive the care they need
- Review of front-door arrangements and Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) within adults services with a focus on the connection between social care and community based support
- Further enhance family support services in Children's Services using Welsh Government grants

- Implement the placement commissioning strategy within Children's Services specifically regarding the recruitment of foster carers and the development of not for profit residential placements
- Use the Integrated Services Partnership to ensure good alignment of local resources against shared priorities