

Social Services: What we do and the difference it makes

This document is available in Welsh

Director of Social Services Annual Report

Wrexham

2020-2021



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1. Introduction

In 'normal' times, social services is not always the most visible of the council's services – until you need it of course. Then it makes a huge difference to your life and the lives of your loved ones.

The last year, however, has not been 'normal' and the role of carers – professional and unpaid – has been vital and visible.

In last year's report, we told you what we wanted to focus on, things that would help us to help people and families. This year we will let you know what happened to those things, but you'll also read a lot about the things we did differently as we responded to the Covid pandemic.

During the initial outbreak we had to work with different people and organisations to find out how best to support the people who needed us the most, and it is to the credit of our staff that vital support was maintained.

But we couldn't have done it on our own. The voluntary sector, the independent sector along with other statutory sector partners, including the police and health board, all worked diligently to make sure the public continued to receive support.

In this very busy year we have also made positive progress to improve what we offer to children and adults. We have worked to improve children's services in line with an improvement action plan that is central to our progress, and in adults services have worked with the health board to strengthen our domiciliary care provision and support people to remain in their own homes.

Whatever the challenges of the coming year, we are committed to what needs to be done; to develop and deliver resilient and smart services with children, families and the people we support at the centre, helping to shape our services to deliver outcomes that matter.



Alwyn Jones, Chief Officer Social Care

October 2021

2. Summary of performance

Background

At the end of each financial year, every council in Wales must publish a report about its social services. This is our report.

The aim is to evaluate how well our services have been delivered, and highlight any improvements needed.

It's also a chance to explain how we're going to help people over the coming year – both people who need care and support, and unpaid carers who need our help.

As you read through these pages, you'll notice we talk about six 'quality standards'. These are part of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (we'll just call it 'the Act' from now on).

The format of this report reflects the requirements of the Act, and the need to measure the performance of social services around these six standards.

It also feeds into the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales – helping to create a place where we all want to live. Both now and in the future.

Finally, you'll notice we talk about 'outcomes' a lot. This is because so much of our work is focused on helping people achieve the end results they want to achieve.

Complaints and Compliments

Complaints are dealt with in accordance with the statutory social services complaints procedure, which is managed by a centralised complaints team in the council. The team have an excellent working relationship with senior managers across the department and liaise regularly to address complaints.

A full report on complaints and compliments is presented to the relevant scrutiny committee on an annual basis and subsequently published on the council's website. This ensures appropriate scrutiny of the complaints received by members and offers transparency for the public (whilst ensuring complainant details remains strictly confidential).

During 2020/21, the number of complaints received has increased, with 42 being received compared to 32 received during 2019/20.

Seven complaints were investigated independently at Stage 2. In addition, a Stage 1 complaint from the previous reporting period was investigated during this year at Stage 2. This is an increase from the five investigations in 2019/20.

58 compliments were received during 2020/21, highlighting the appreciation from service users and families for the support provided.

Example of the compliment received by Adult Social Care Department:

"I honestly can't thank you enough for everything you have done for us, its been many many years since I have woke up smiling and looking forward to the day. I've prayed for I don't know how long that I don't wake up to face another day, and that's the truth. I feel that I've been given a second chance at life. Thank you very much for your part in making that happen, and please pass on my sincere thanks to the doctor who got the ball rolling in the first place, I haven't forgotten him in all this and owe him many thanks. Thank you to everyone who has made this happen, you've changed my whole life, honestly thank you very much"

Example of the compliment received by Children's Social Care Department:

"Just wanted to show my appreciation and say thank you for all your help and support in the court case going in my favour yesterday. You have been fantastic and really thorough throughout all the proceedings keeping me updated and helping me. A big Thankyou from me and the boys x"

3. What people tell us about our services

Listening to the people we support is crucial. It's how we make sure we're delivering services that help them achieve what's important to them.

We're developing our approach to 'co-production' – where people and organisations work together to come up with ways to shape our services at every stage.

Jargon buster – 'Co-production'

'Co-production' refers to work undertaken with the full and equal involvement of service-users. In other words, people who use services are given an equal say in decisions and changes that affect them.

Friendship Hub

"I like meeting the groups online. I like meeting new people. It made me feel connected. It's a lively happy community. I didn't feel so isolated and I had fun."
Laura W

"It's stopped me feeling lonely. It was nice to see people I know as well as meet new people. It's been fun." Stephen D

"I enjoy it! I use sign language and being on Zoom means I can be understood. It's a good laugh and I have taught people how to sign with me on Zoom. But mostly I've had a good laugh with people on Zoom. I didn't feel so lonely." Anthony D

Working with the third sector

In the past 12 months, the third sector in Wrexham and social services have worked together at unprecedented levels both formally and through informal links as we have all responded to the needs of people during the Covid pandemic.

AVOW Helpdesk and Single Point of Contact (SPoA)

AVOW established the AVOW Covid Helpdesk to support people who had low-level needs, including food and pharmacy pickups. Working in partnership with Wrexham Council SPoA, AVOW coordinated an army of volunteers to ensure that people had access to urgent medication and supplies, with over 750 people supported in a 12-month period.

Volunteers also helped to identify a number of people who were not on the radar of services and needed support. The helpdesk liaised closely with the SPoA to ensure that welfare checks and other support were in place.

Volunteers helped Mrs K (age 75) to access social care support during the pandemic:

"I am truly grateful for the support that the volunteers have given me and my husband doing our shopping. We do not get any help from anywhere and I struggle because my husband cannot be left alone. The carers we are now getting have really helped."

During the summer period, volunteers stepped up again to assist in the distribution of the additional food parcels that children's services were providing to vulnerable people. This service reached up to 250 families a week with distribution being coordinated by AVOW.

Third sector organisations and volunteers also supported to safeguard vulnerable adults and children throughout the lockdowns, providing valuable feedback and referrals when risks were identified.

The risk to people's well-being as a result of isolation and loneliness throughout Covid increased significantly. Wrexham Council worked with AVOW to successfully apply for Welsh Government befriending funding through Age Cymru. These small grants were used to support such things as the purchase of iPads and other technology to enable people to communicate with friends and family.

Away from the emergency Covid response, AVOW has represented the views of the third sector in the development of a new Community Health and Well-being Facility at the redeveloped Crown Buildings. They provided valuable insight and the opportunity to develop a truly co-produced service for Wrexham citizens.

4. Improving well-being (the six standards)

These are the six standards we mentioned earlier.

There's a lot of information here, so we've split them into two sections to reflect our two social services departments – adult social care and children's social care.

Standard 1: Helping people achieve the well-being outcomes they want

This sounds complicated, but it's simple really.

We're talking about helping people improve their situation in a way that takes account of how they feel, and what they want.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Review the domiciliary care market and grow in-house provision to increase domiciliary care capacity.
- Review 'right sizing care' projects, developing further those which are proven to improve outcomes for people.
- Explore the development of 'micro-commissioning' models, to make it easier for people to access care and support – particularly in our rural communities.

This is what we did

Supporting domiciliary care providers

This year we've all valued the huge contribution of care workers, not least within our domiciliary care market.

Our in-house domiciliary care service has continued to provide a long-term homecare service, domiciliary care at our two Extra Care Housing schemes, reablement and intermediate care services, mobile response and night support services during the Covid pandemic. The service has provided stability through challenging times for many citizens, unpaid carers and families.

As part of our Covid recovery planning we are working to revisit our plans to grow our in-house capacity, recognising the important role it plays as part of a wider domiciliary care market.

Our positive working relationship with our commissioned domiciliary care providers meant we were well positioned to support them in responding to the pandemic. Working in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), we were able to establish early access to PPE, Covid testing, regular briefings, information and assistance and, most recently, the roll out of the vaccine programme to the sector. Our providers have worked tirelessly and professionally throughout the pandemic to ensure access to essential frontline social care services was maintained. We worked with our domiciliary care providers to establish our 'Rapid Response' service, which would support discharge from hospital and prevent long waits for home care packages. The service continues to prove a success, preventing unnecessary longer stays in hospital and providing an alternative to short-term residential care stays.

Jargon buster – “Domiciliary care”

Domiciliary care is provided to people who want to stay in their own home, rather than move to a residential care home. Care-workers visit the person in their home, usually on a daily basis.

Right sizing care

Right sizing care means people being able to access the right level of care to meet their needs; no more and no less.

With advances in technology and equipment over the years, alongside improved access to training for staff and citizens, we have been able to support people to access much less intrusive levels of care that is focussed on dignity, reablement and independence.

There have been some limitations to the opportunities to review care packages due to the pandemic and restrictions on visits. However, over the last 12 months, 30 packages of care were able to be reviewed. Before the review the number of care hours was 448.50 costing £7,682.81; after a review by the occupational therapy team, care hours were able to be reduced to 419.25 costing £7,181.75. Over a week this amounts to a cost saving of £1,494.59 equating to £77,718.81 over the year.

This is a positive indication of how we can work to make social care more sustainable, providing people with the care they need and ensuring services are able to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population.

But let's be clear. We're still facing a huge challenge.

The shortage of domiciliary care means we can't always provide people with the right care in a timely way and can put extra strain on unpaid carers (e.g. relatives or friends who help someone on an informal basis) and delay hospital discharges.

Micro commissioning

To support us in the development of small, social care enterprises or businesses, this year we commissioned Community Catalysts. They help people and communities across the country use their talents to start and run small enterprises and community businesses that support and care for other local people.

Funded through Welsh Government Community Transformation Programme, Community Catalysts identified gaps in current services and recruited local people to develop small enterprises to fill them, helping to care for and support Wrexham citizens, they include services like home help services, care services and support with household and garden tasks. We hope to use the next year to make the most of this service, creating more and more enterprises across the County Borough helping us to grow our care market and provide people with choices about how to meet their care and support needs.

Moya started her own community micro-enterprise after becoming redundant.

Moya wanted to use the skills she had learnt providing support to her mother to deliver a tailored service for other people in her community. She now offers companionship, meal preparation, cleaning, gardening, ironing, supporting people to maintain interests and hobbies, leisure activities and social opportunities.

“Community Catalysts really helped me because I have never been self-employed before. There were times when I thought ‘am I doing things right?’ Since being introduced to Community Catalysts I have felt that I have had someone who has had my back.

“Things are going well – I have everything I need in place, am promoting the enterprise and have four people who I am supporting already. I really like meeting people, listening to their stories and providing support that makes a difference to their lives.”

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Promote and roll out Active Support and Positive Behavioural Support Training across Provider Services to improve the way we support citizens in our delivery of care and support.
- Maximise growth of community enterprises and care cooperatives as an alternative care offer in Wrexham.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Ensure the national Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) is firmly embedded and supporting our social care teams on the ground.
- Continue to engage with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and progress with our improvement plan.
- Review SPoA processes for decision-making and case-transfer to ensure they're still fit for purpose.

This is what we did

Supporting domiciliary care providers

Since the introduction of the new WCCIS in November 2019, the department has been working to ensure that all of the system screens and forms needed to accurately and contemporaneously record all child- and family-related information are both easily accessible and simple to use.

Large-scale workshops were held for staff to give their views on form design and system set up, with WCCIS champions being part of design and implementation sessions. In addition, task and finish groups are led by the department's practice development manager and involve representation from all roles to ensure thorough discussions are held on any new developments and that they consider everyone's views.

Management information

To make things easier for our social workers and their managers, we have focussed on developing virtual desktops. These give all of our managers and social workers access to their caseloads and assessments, which helps them to manage and prioritise their daily workload.

Our social workers have told us how valuable access to these reports is and, with the department's focus on quality assurance, they are a constant reminder of best practice timescales and make it easy to spot if the timescales are slipping.

Through the department's focus on Practice, Performance and Quality Assurance (see below), we are ensuring our staff are equipped with the tools needed to provide better outcomes for our most vulnerable.

Accelerated Improvement Board (AIB)

The AIB action plan was established in 2019 and is structured around the following 6 improvement objectives for the Service, to tackle challenges that had been identified.

- Organisational Delivery Model that is fit for purpose
- Continued development of highly skilled and stable workforce
- Have and deliver effective processes and procedures
- Deliver high quality practice and services
- Work effectively with internal and external partners
- Ensure children and families can participate in services and decisions about them

Throughout the year, improvements have been made and we now begin phase three, which is to sustain positive changes.

The CIW carried out a planned monitoring visit in April 2021 and although their formal feedback is not due until later this year, CIW recognised that the pace of the department's improvement plan is "on-track" and there were no children at risk of significant harm.

Performance, Practice & Quality Assurance

Alongside the AIB Action Plan, we have the Quality Assurance Framework. This outlines

- how we will ensure the quality of our work
- how we will examine the response and service we are providing
- how we will learn from what we find

So, children's services now has a Performance, Practice & Quality Assurance work stream. This work stream contains a robust 12-month audit plan to select case files and conduct themed audits, regularly scrutinise case files against the audit scoring tools, and ensure findings from audits are identified in order to draw conclusions, identify training needs, and facilitate conversation in quarterly department-wide performance workshops.

Front Door

Our Children's SPoA Team, acts as the "front door" for children's services. The decision making process in this team is effective and ensures that all referrals have a decision made within 24 hours of being submitted.

We are constantly evaluating the services we provide and through this evaluation, changed our screening process for reports (referrals) to SPoA. Managers within the team now have full oversight of any incoming reports. This small but invaluable change has resulted in a more robust and effective screening process for any new contacts into the department.

Further improvements to SPoA this year include a review of the way in which it passes cases to our intake team, Assessment & Intervention (AIT). To ensure children and young people are safeguarded and there are no in-built delays to our processes, cases that require immediate progression to a strategy discussion are rated RED (immediate response), and transferred to AIT where a strategy discussion, involving North Wales Police is held. Previously, strategy discussions were held in SPoA, which sometimes led to delays due to the number of reports (referrals) arriving at our front door daily. Moving all strategy discussions to AIT has resulted in our most vulnerable cases receiving appropriate attention faster and overall, improving on outcomes for our citizens.

Jargon buster – "Strategy discussion"

The purpose of a strategy discussion is to decide whether the threshold has been met for a single or joint agency (Social Care and Police) child protection investigation, and to plan that investigation. They happen when it is believed a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, serious harm.

Engagement

This year, we launched the Mind of My Own apps across children's services to help children and young people share their views, wishes and feelings quickly and easily which has been particularly important during the pandemic. The Mind of My Own apps are another way we promote hearing a child's voice when it matters most and reflect this in the development their care and services.

Feedback from young people has been positive and staff have received training on how to use the apps and feel confident introducing them to children and young people.

"I find speaking in this way much easier, it's revolutionary."

– young person, age 16

"It got me thinking for myself. Very good app and very easy to use."

– young person, age 15

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Formally launch Wrexham Children's Services Threshold Policy to all external partners and organisations.
- Continue to engage with CIW and progress with our improvement plan, ensuring plans are in place to sustain the level of change achieved.
- Agree and adopt a regional approach to the screening tools and safety plans used for missing, exploited and trafficked young people.

Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote physical, mental and emotional well-being

This means helping people look after their physical, mental and emotional health.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Through the Integrated Care Fund, develop a Wrexham Well-being Hub for Wrexham citizens.
- Develop integrated locality working.
- Formally launch the pacesetter project in South Locality (of Wrexham) to improve citizen experience and further enhance integrated working.
- Expand the Community Development Fund to further enable development of innovative care and support solutions for people and families living with Dementia.
- Work with services-users to co-produce projects that transform some of our mental health and learning disability services.
- Ensure positive working relationships are developed between adult social care and the proposed 'well-being hub' in Wrexham.

This is what we did

Community health and well-being

This year we teamed up with BCUHB, the third sector, stakeholders and citizens to remodel one of Wrexham Council's office buildings in Wrexham town centre. We did this with help from the Welsh Government's Integrated Care Fund. The ground floor is undergoing a huge transformation and will host a brand new health and well-being centre for people, families, children and unpaid carers.

We want to build on the strength and resilience of our citizens and communities, recognising that health and social care are only part of the jigsaw in enabling people to source and design solutions to their care and support needs. This space will improve people's access to community and specialist services, building on rather than duplicating what is already available in Wrexham. It will act as the central location for a range of accessible facilities, preventative information and advice, enabling people and families with wide ranging support needs to better engage with community services.

We look forward to the launch of the community health and wellbeing area in the spring of 2022.

Locality working

We have continued to develop transformed health and social care services in line with 'A Healthier Wales' utilising Welsh Government's Community Transformation Fund.

Our progress to deliver more integrated health and social care services meant we were well placed to work with BCUHB to respond to the Covid pandemic.

Our South Wrexham locality, GP led, cluster is now a well-established, multi-disciplinary team of health and social care professionals who are able to work together and at pace, due to their co-location, to design and deliver care packages to some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Professionals are seeing positive results for citizens in being able to assess and meet needs more effectively and without delay. Building on what we have learnt from the South Wrexham multi-disciplinary team (MDT), we aim to employ MDT care coordinators to develop the model in north and central Wrexham in the coming year.

Supporting people living with dementia

To support the delivery of the Welsh Government's Dementia Action Plan for Wales (2018 – 2022), local authorities and health boards are awarded annual grant funding through the Integrated Care Fund Programme. This is to develop service provision that supports people living with dementia, and unpaid carers.

Last year we told you how we had worked with partners to pilot a number of new technologies and innovations that we wanted to continue to build on this year. However, the pandemic meant we had to pause our plans so we were able to redirect resources and deliver Covid response services.

With access to traditional respite services limited, due to the closure of care home settings and some people opting to pause their domiciliary care packages due to risk of infection, the risk of unpaid carer breakdown increased.

Through conversations with unpaid carers and people with lived experience we looked to develop an alternative service offer through our commissioned carers service provider, NEWCIS. We were able to utilise the Community Development Fund (CDF) to provide carers with a grant that they could use to purchase respite solutions that worked for them during this time.

Following on from having a meeting with our Dementia well-being officer and completing a What Matters conversation and the Carer Emergency Plan, it was identified the [unpaid] carer could benefit from a carer grant through Bridging the Gap family/friend grant. The [unpaid] carer has been able to fund two month's overnight respite through this grant and this has helped the carer access support through NEWCIS and also help the carer financially by funding this respite for a short period of time. As this grant can be accessed every six months the carer will be able to benefit from the grant again in this financial year - NEWCIS Advisor

One project we were able to move forward this year through the Community Development Fund has been the purchase of Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activity (RITA) devices.

We worked with our partners, the Alzheimer's Society and My Improvement Network, to understand and scope the project, shaping it to meet the needs of Wrexham citizens based on what people with lived experience told us mattered to them.

These devices will be available at a number of our care homes throughout the next year, helping staff and families to engage with family members through shared, interactive reminiscence activity. We look forward to seeing this project develop and sharing people's experiences with you.

People affected by dementia have been some of the hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Throughout the Covid-19 crisis Dementia Connect, commissioned by Wrexham Council using Welsh Government Dementia Action Plan grant, and other services from Alzheimer's Society have continued to be in demand and we have continued to deliver a high level of support to people mainly through telephone and virtual support.

From April 2020 to March 2021 advisors provided 328 welfare calls to people in Wrexham. At the start of the pandemic these calls were an assessment of support needs, to check on people's safety and ensure that they had basic food and medical provisions. They also provided necessary advice, information, referrals and signposting in the absence of face-to-face services, working with other organisations to meet the needs of our citizens.

"It was lovely to speak to someone during these difficult times we find ourselves in and the contact allowed me to air some frustrations we were going through. Very grateful to have these calls." Unpaid Carer accessing Dementia Connect

As a COVID-19 response, the Alzheimer's Society introduced a companion call service within Dementia Connect in partnership with Santander to provide weekly telephone conversations with people to help combat these issues. Volunteers provided the support. 325 companion calls were made in Wrexham during this time and are still continuing for many.

Kevin, a carer for his wife in Wrexham, said: "Companion calls were my lifeline". He received regular support and welfare calls from the dementia advisor and said "Alzheimer's Society knew what I needed and understood what it's like". Kevin's wife is in a care home in Wrexham and the separation from her was breaking his heart.

The Dementia Connect service is designed to have a flexible and person-centred approach, which has worked extremely well in the last year – Alzheimer's Society

Transforming Mental Health and Learning Disability Services

I CAN is a health led service, providing easy to access, early support for people struggling with their mental health and well-being, reducing the need for referral to specialist NHS services.

Through I CAN, people can access help and advice on a range of issues, including debt, relationship breakdowns, drug or alcohol problems, employment difficulties, bereavement, housing and loneliness.

Support is delivered through a network of I CAN Community Hubs and through the I CAN work employment support programme – all of which can be accessed without a referral from your GP, or an appointment.

The aim of ICAN is to support people with high levels of vulnerability, to develop a multi-agency approach to prevention, care and support that meets the needs of the individual. The approach includes access to training for front line staff and assistance to access appropriate housing options to support the recovery pathway.

So far...

- There is an indication that ICAN services are effective in reducing the demand for other services
- Most ICAN volunteers feel that they...
are well supported
receive training which equips them well and makes them feel confident in their role
have a positive impact on their clients.
- A significant number of volunteers feel that their emotional health and well-being has improved since becoming an ICAN volunteer.

Through the Learning Disability Regional Transformation Programme we have been able to pilot new assistive technology projects across Wrexham, enabling children, adults, unpaid carers and their families to have better control over, and access to, their care and support. We have been able to upgrade technology at supported living schemes and test out new innovative technologies with people. This has proved really useful during Covid when many people with learning disabilities were shielding.

The transformation fund has also supported the development of a number of co-produced training resources including Enablement and Active Support and Sex and Sexuality.

"I cannot say how much difference the tech loan has made to me. It changed my life. At the beginning of lockdown I was in a very dark place. It was a black time, one of my darkest points. I was loaned an I-pad and mobile phone from the PCP [Person Centred Planning] team. They supported me to set them up, use Zoom and WhatsApp. The PCP Zoom sessions and WhatsApp groups gave me a realistic escape route. It gave me opportunities to put all my efforts into and I saw finished products. Like the declaration of independence, or the online training where I learnt animation skills, or meeting friends at online parties and events... The first few months of lockdown were the worst in my life. Then I got the tech loan and I reconnected with the SWS group. I am forever grateful to them for all they have done during lockdown." - Nick B on how the transformation programme and the Services of Wrexham Support group have supported his well-being during lockdown.

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Work with partners to continue to deliver our Covid recovery plans across our services
- Through the Integrated Care Fund, appoint a MA and launch the new community health and wellbeing facility for Wrexham citizens.
- Embed locality working in south Wrexham and develop integrated locality working in north and central Wrexham.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- In line with the refreshed recruitment strategy, continue to increase the number of in-house foster carers.
- Deliver on our wider Corporate Parenting Strategy.

This is what we did

Foster carers and recruitment

In 2020, we increased our fostering recruitment efforts with a campaign in January, a website update and a radio advert September. All of which had a positive effect on initial enquiries from prospective foster carers.

We have recruitment drives to increase our number of in-house foster carers. In-house foster carers will help us save money on agency placements, as well as improving outcomes for children by keeping them in their local areas, schools and support networks.

When individuals put themselves forward as interested in fostering, we carry out checks to assess their suitability. One of these checks is a health medical. With many of our GPs taking the lead on the coordination and roll out of the vaccination programme, some of our assessments were delayed and, although we may not have achieved our target of 20 fostering households in 2020/21, we expect to approve double the number of foster carers in the coming year.

Future recruitment campaigns have some exciting additions including videos of foster carers sharing their experiences, social media advertisements on local media platforms, and advertisements on two roundabouts in Wrexham town centre.

Care Leavers

The purpose of leaving care services is to assist young people who have been in the care of a local authority to move from being looked after to living independently. Looked after children become care leavers. The advice and support that care leavers receive depends upon their age and care leaving status.

The looked after children team and the leaving care team have always been managed as one team. In the last year, they were separated out. This important change means the leaving care team has a manager experienced in care leaver issues and who can make sure that new elements are developed and offered.

The leaving care team is well established with low staff turnover, making it consistent, strong and effective. Appointing a leaving care team manager has complemented this robust team and allowed time and effort to target service developments specifically aimed at our leaving care population.

Supported accommodation

Some looked after children, as they near the age of independence, require a little extra support. Sometimes, this support comes in the form of supported accommodation and a "host". Supported accommodation is when you share your home with a young person. You provide a safe home and help the young person to live on their own, provide guidance and assistance to help them develop practical skills and emotional maturity to move on to independent living and cope as young adults.

In February 2020, Wrexham had five supported accommodation hosts. Through a successful recruitment campaign and lots of support and planning, in the last year we have nearly tripled our supported accommodation to 14.

Our supported accommodation hosts are integral to the emotional well-being of those young people who are moving on to independence. We have been fortunate enough to receive some lovely feedback from our young people.

My experience with supported lodgings has been the most memorable opportunity I have ever been given. To live in a household where not only you feel you've been given a second chance, but to also feel the support from others is warming to say the least. – Care Leaver

During the year I have been involved with supported lodging, I was always reminded in little ways that this is a meaning for a fresh start. I detached myself from problems I once had and began making new memories. – Care Leaver

Placement sufficiency

In order to ensure our looked after children (both now and in the future) are provided with sufficient, high quality accommodation to meet their needs, Wrexham wrote and agreed it's Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

This strategy is in place for the next four years and takes account the needs of looked after children in Wrexham, their families, and considers what they have told us about their experiences of being in care.

As a council we are committed to working with families to keep them together, and reducing the number of children looked after. However, for children and young people where continuing to live at home is not an option, we will work collaboratively with our partners, including those within the independent sector, to ensure that children looked after in Wrexham have a consistent place to live, where they feel safe and cared for.

This strategy provides a framework for how we will achieve this and ensures enough local placements in years to come.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Fully embed and launch the Special Guardianship Team and offer.
- Development and launch of Life Journey Work policy and practice
- Development of Young People in Care Council web site

Standard 3: Safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

This means helping to protect people who might be at risk of abuse, neglect or other forms of harm or exploitation.

Throughout the pandemic our priority has, and continues to be, safeguarding people and families and utilising all resources available to us. This has included adapting to rapidly changing guidance and restrictions, keeping people safe in their homes and communities, and enabling access to responsive emergency placements to ensure people are supported to be safe and well.

Both the adult safeguarding team and children's safeguarding and quality assurance teams have had to respond quickly and flexibly to rapidly changing scenarios. The approach has been innovative and flexible by using virtual meetings, being creative with the way in which we conduct and facilitate contact, whilst remaining focussed on the safety of our citizens and staff.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Develop skills to co-produce services with people with complex communication needs.
- Develop an audit cycle ensuring key themes of asset-based assessment, outcomes-focussed care and support planning, mental capacity and advocacy are embedded into practice.
- Manage the safe and effective transition from the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards to the Liberty Protection Safeguards.

This is what we did

Co-production

Covid has changed the way we co-produce and develop services with people.

In the absence of face-to-face meetings, we were able to develop virtual and online communication sessions for individuals with complex support and communication needs.

One such group is the 'making a noise' group offering many opportunities for differing levels and methods of engagement focussing particularly on the needs of those who find group engagement challenging.

We use British Sign Language and Makaton visual aids and signs as well as music as a means to enable more and more people to work together to help us to help develop services to support them and their peers.

This is a continuous process of learning and development, and whilst Covid has had devastating impacts on many of us, we will continue to talk with, and listen to, people building on some of the surprising ways the pandemic has enabled some people to come together to co-support and develop services.

"I get nervous around big groups and I don't know when I fit in so being on zoom... has helped me fit in a group that I know I can speak" - Laura who attends 'Making a Noise'

Asset-based assessment

A project manager has been appointed to plan and deliver an audit cycle focussed around asset-based assessment, outcomes-focussed care and support planning, mental capacity and advocacy.

They have begun working with team managers to consider what's working well and where improvements are required. Audit outcomes will be examined and fed back to relevant key members of staff including team managers, workforce development and department managerial teams to ensure that action plans to address areas for development are agreed including any key areas for training and a supportive learning approach can be fostered across all teams

Jargon buster – 'Advocacy'

'Advocacy' is when a person has another person (i.e. an advocate) to help look out for their interests. The advocate is usually a professional, relative, friend or another service-user, and they'll often accompany the person to meetings with health and social care providers.

Liberty Protection Safeguards

The LPS will provide protection for people aged 16 and above who are or who need to be deprived of their liberty (in other words have some of their freedoms restricted) in order to enable their care or treatment and lack the mental capacity to consent to their arrangement. This might include, for example, needing to add cot sides to a bed to prevent someone falling or locks on doors to prevent someone from running into a busy road.

Training has been accessed to enable key social care staff to gain a better understanding of what LPS is and what impact it will have on service provision locally. Work has been undertaken with our workforce development team to identify areas where it is anticipated training and support will be needed. This includes staff within the department, provider services and key stakeholders who will be affected by the implementation of the new scheme.

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Continue to manage the safe and effective transition from the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards to the Liberty Protection Safeguards.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Improve attendance of young people at child protection conferences.
- Develop and implement our Child Protection Plan.
- Ensure our risk model is embedded in everything we do.
- Increase the involvement of the 'referrer' and other agencies involved in strategy meetings and discussions.

This is what we did

Child protection conferences

Children's services have worked creatively whilst delivering essential services and protecting our most vulnerable during a global pandemic. An area where this had a positive impact on our services is the introduction of virtual child protection conferences.

Since March 2020, we have seen our young people's attendance at case conferences grow, week by week. Our young people have demonstrated that they prefer to attend virtually, are fairly familiar with using virtual apps to dial in to meetings and are more willing to take part when they can attend part of the meeting rather than the meeting in full.

Training

In July 2020, social workers, team managers and support staff across children's services received a suite of training courses related to care and support planning and taking an outcome-based approach.

The training focussed on reflecting on changes to thinking and practice in relation to outcome based approaches and ensuring outcome-based practice is continually embedded in our service development and delivery. Simply put, this means moving away from task based service delivery to developing practice which is based on the outcomes people need and want to achieve.

This training helped us plan the development of our Multi-Agency Child Protection Plan by offering us the chance to reflect on how we are approaching our relationships with children and families, how our assessments and care and support plans are looking different, and how we know we are making a difference to the lives of children and young people.

The training provided us with a firm understanding of what our new Multi-Agency Child Protection Plan should look like and from this, a core group of practitioners have been invited to form a task and finish group early in 2022 to finally review and launch our new plans across the service.

Missing, exploited and trafficked (MET)

Continuing the theme of evaluating risk and improving on our risk model across the department, a full review of our MET process has been undertaken. We've aligned our MET processes regionally, which has created cohesion and consistency of approach.

By working with partners and adopting tools to identify possible exploitation we now feel able to intervene and support children at an earlier stage and minimise or reduce the risk of harm to them.

Strategy meetings

When reports are received at our front door from professionals who believe a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, our duty includes full discussion and evaluation of risk in a forum called a strategy meeting.

The purpose of a strategy meeting is to decide whether there are sufficient grounds to progress to a Child Protection Enquiry and what social workers and other professionals are going to do next about a case.

To strengthen our assessment of risk and decision making, children's services have amended their processes to ensure that high risk meetings include representation from partner agencies, namely Police, health and education, to include the agency making the report. This multi-agency working ensures we are able to provide a seamless response to individuals with multiple and complex needs.

Providing care and support

In order to ensure our families receive focussed attention at any stage of the child protection process (court work, assessments, child protection assessment and planning), we have realigned our family support team, separating out key functions of the team and assigning "pods" of workers whose role it is to concentrate on one area of work.

This realignment has allowed the team to have stronger oversight around safeguarding at different stages and ensure that all children and families receive consistent and timely support. This will be essential to support our Looked After Children reduction strategy.

Jargon Buster - "LAC Reduction Strategy"

The LAC Reduction Strategy is about taking action to reduce the number of children and young people who need to be looked after by Wrexham County Borough Council.

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Fully embed the MET protocol to include a transitional plan from 16 to adulthood where there are risks of exploitation and trafficking.
- Commission and embed the agree risk model.
- Develop a suicide pathway to ensure communities are supported following a suicide of a child.
- Further evaluation of the Mind of My Own apps for obtaining the voice of the child/young person in the child protection process.
- Move to virtual platform for Child Protection Conferences.
- Improve and monitor the Active Offer of Advocacy.

Standard 4: Helping people to learn, develop and participate in society

This standard is about encouraging people to take part in society – helping them learn, interact with other people and be part of their communities.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Continue to grow the shared lives offer as a more flexible and personalised alternative to more traditional care services.
- Evaluate the Community Agents Project and design a clear pathway between social prescribing and community agents.
- Co-produce Intergenerational Strategy to support improved outcomes for people.
- Co-produce a sub-regional partnership with the third sector for delivery of Safe Places.

- Prepare for implementation of Autism Code of Practice.
- Co-produce further development of a community based friendship hub.

This is what we did

It has been a hugely challenging year trying to prevent the risks of social isolation impacting on people throughout the pandemic.

Whilst many non-essential, face-to-face services were paused to help keep people safe during the ongoing pandemic, we had to find alternative ways to communicate with and keep in touch with people and unpaid carers.

We maximised grant funding to purchase and loan iPads to care homes and others at risk of isolation so that people could have 'virtual' face-to-face contact with family, friends and professionals. We supported people to engage in virtual assessments where it was feasible to do so and we built on our strong partnerships with health and third sector partners to identify potentially vulnerable citizens and coordinate support.

Shared Lives

'Shared Lives' is a scheme that pairs people with dementia and other health issues with carers who have similar interests and hobbies – so they can continue to enjoy a full and rewarding life. This can be anything...from gardening to fishing to going to watch the football.

During the pandemic, many of these services paused as people shielded and lockdown meant access to a number of services was limited. Those services that were provided were delivered in Covid safe ways with carers and citizens being supported to learn how to engage in new ways through, telephone, zoom and doorstep wellbeing calls.

We continue to work with our commissioned service provider, PSS to 'unlock' services throughout the recovery phase and will evaluate with our provider and citizens the need for any longer term service development in this area as a result of our learning from the pandemic.

Community Agents

Community Agents play a key role in helping us support the development of 'strong and resilient communities'. They help older people find local solutions to meet their needs – rather than having to come through social services. There are 24 operating across the County Borough.

The Community Agent service provided some much needed and well-received grass roots level support to people throughout the pandemic; working closely with AVOW to access the volunteer pool and with other providers and third sector services, the Community Agent service was able to respond rapidly to local need throughout.

The work of the Community Agents was rightly recognised with an AVOW Covid Recognition Award which the lead member for health and social care and chief officer were pleased to be able to celebrate later in the year via a virtual presentation.

Community councils have told us that the responsiveness of local services is very important to them and the people they serve and this is just what the review of the Community Agent service has provided. We will now take this work forward next year to ensure that these services are supported in a way which helps to sustain them for the longer term.

Intergenerational work

We have previously been able to celebrate a lot of intergenerational work in our Director's Reports such as linking nurseries and schools with care homes via activity coordinators. We had hoped this would help us to co-produce an intergenerational strategy to further embed and grow this area of service development... and then Covid hit.

All but essential visits to care homes were cancelled, which continued throughout 2020/21. Everyone's focus changed and very quickly our care homes locked down and older people were asked to shield for significant periods.

So what have we learnt from this? Well, we need our intergenerational strategy to be even better than we had intended. It must be able to operate despite social distancing and lockdown and we must do what we can to enable access to the technology to enable alternative intergenerational projects in the toughest of times.

We want to continue to do this because we saw and heard how beneficial linking younger and older people through shared activity and experience is.

Safe Places

The Safe Places scheme provides reassurance to people who may feel vulnerable when they go out, helping them to live more independently, knowing there are safe places in their community offering help if needed. Local shops, businesses and organisations sign up to become a 'Safe Place.' A sticker is placed in the window or on a door of a Safe Place, identifying that help is available there.

Safe Places is being delivered via the Standard of Wrexham Services Group. Covid impacted on the delivery of, and access to, Safe Places but we have worked to overcome this. Technology can provide a 'safe place' too, the SWS, supported by Wrexham Council officers, helped people to develop their online and virtual communication skills using platforms like Zoom, WhatsApp and Facebook. New volunteers were trained and supported via Zoom, which has enabled us to co-produce a new way of training online.

We are now able to work with organisations wishing to become safe places via online platforms.

Autism friendly

This year the Welsh Government launched their draft Autism Code of Practice and consultation, which Wrexham Council contributed to.

We have already done some great work co-producing awareness training and autism-friendly services and this year we wanted to make sure we kept going.

We have commissioned local autism charity, Your Space, to develop a local autism steering group of people with lived experience to drive service development in this area.

The Wrexham Autism Steering Group has also been reinstated after pausing during the emergency phases of the pandemic, and we are recruiting a coordinator to support in the delivery of the Code of Practice and our local Autism Action Plan.

To ensure our progress towards making Wrexham Council an autism friendly authority wasn't halted during the pandemic, we also worked with the Integrated Autism Society and our workforce development team to ensure autism awareness training could be accessed virtually.

We look forward to driving forward the Code of Practice and working with our partners and the steering group to establish Wrexham Council as an autism friendly local authority in the coming year.

Friendship Hub

During Covid, the Friendship Hub continued to develop online, offering inclusive activities for anyone who needed support. Working co-productively with the SWS Group we developed numerous online activities providing support, friendship, information and advice.

Utilising an online network for people with learning disabilities, we have been able to promote meetings and activities throughout the County Borough and beyond, reaching people we might not otherwise have done.

The hub has held virtual quizzes, coffee mornings, learning opportunities, social events and much more throughout the pandemic ensuring many who might have been shielding, or felt otherwise isolated due to lockdown measures, had a safe place they could link with peers and other support.

Co-produced, citizen-led, socially-distanced activities such as walking groups have also been supported by the Friendship Hub this year and most recently a positive partnership has been forged with Yellow and Blue, a new community enterprise in Wrexham town centre through the use of Welsh Government transformation funding.

We look forward to working with citizens and our partner Yellow and Blue this year as we recover from the pandemic and more face-to-face social interaction is allowable once more.

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Co-produce Intergenerational Strategy to support improved outcomes for people, to include digitally inclusive projects enabling people to engage in a variety of ways.
- Continue to work towards Wrexham Council becoming an autism-friendly local authority.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Review the IFSS model to ensure the current service is fit for purpose.

This is what we did

The Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS)

IFSS is available to families with complex needs resulting from parental substance/alcohol misuse, mental health problems and domestic abuse. We work with families therapeutically and intensively to promote behaviour change in hope to create a safe environment for the children.

During the pandemic we have seen many families referred to us and benefit from the support. Despite the challenges of working in a different way due to Covid-19, families have told us that the support has still enabled them to make changes which has led to good outcomes for children.

We will undertake a full review of the IFSS service in the coming year with the view that this will enable us to explore all of its functions, how it currently operates, if there are any adjustments that may be required to enable us to support more families in the future.

Multi Systemic Therapy Team

The department has fully invested in a partnership with the Multi Systemic Therapy Team (MST). MST is an intensive family and community based intervention for children and young people aged 11-17, where young people are at risk of out of home placement in either care or custody due to their offending or having severe behaviour problems.

The aim of the MST is to break the cycle of anti-social behaviours by keeping young people safely at home, in school, and out of trouble.

Working in partnership with MST and developing a referral pathway has meant that therapeutic support has been quickly available for some of our most challenging young people in order to improve their outcomes and family life.

Case Study

The Department's partnership with the MST has been a particular success with one young person who has cognitive impairment development delay.

This young person's understanding of risk is impaired and risks were increasing in relation to sexual exploitation as a result. There were real concerns that none of the plans in place were keeping them safe. Discussions held at the Department's Solutions Panel determined that a referral should be made to the MST. Through involvement with this service, risks were significantly reduced. The young person's behaviours within their own home were being managed. Family reported that there was less lashing out and aggressive behaviours.

With all the support involved, behaviours continued to de-escalate and this young person was eventually removed from Child Protection registration and stepped down to a Child in Need of Care and Support Plan. Mother reported that behaviours were managed and through the therapy and support provided, mother was able to make adjustments in her approach, which only further helped to sustain the positive change.

This young person was removed from MET panel within two months of referral to MST and the family have continued to work well together.

The Rainbow Scheme

The Family Information Service continued to provide support to families of pre-school age and vulnerable children through their Rainbow Scheme.

Rainbow Activity Bags were provided to support resilience and well-being during the pandemic.

The activity bags contain a range of craft and play materials and ideas to enable play to take place in the home.

The Rainbow activity bags were made available for vulnerable school aged children who were having to self isolate.

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Participation in development of the Community Health and Well-being Facility
- Participation and rollout of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy
- Full development of the pre-birth team
- Full development of the NEET project to support young people not in education, employment or training
- Review of IFSS, its functions and outcomes to better support improved numbers of families.

Standard 5: Helping people maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

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

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Implement outcome-focussed monitoring of care homes based on what 'good' looks like to people.
- Commission emergency respite solutions for people living with dementia and their carers.

This is what we did

Family life as we know it changed a lot this year with many going months without face-to-face contact with loved ones.

We know social isolation can be detrimental to people's health and well-being and whilst virtual platforms offered some respite from this, accessing the technology was a barrier to many.

We worked with regional and national partners to access Welsh Government funded digital inclusion projects that provided iPads and training to potentially isolated people in care homes and the community.

We also worked closely with our third sector partner AVOW to access the volunteers who wanted to help ensure no one went without the goods, services or contact they needed. Via our SPoA, community agents and other commissioned services we were able to link people with a growing army of volunteers.

Care homes

Standard monitoring visits to care homes were suspended in March 2020 as they implemented local lockdowns to shield their vulnerable residents. So we had to think of a way around it.

Officers from the commissioning and contracts team provided a broad range of support to all providers including: the implementation of a PPE distribution process, daily support calls to homes, working closely with colleagues from environmental health to support homes with outbreaks, disseminating local and national policy information and updates to care providers, processing claims for financial support and incentives to providers on behalf of Welsh Government, supporting the PCR and LFD testing processes and most recently coordinating vaccine roll out.

We have worked closely with BCUHB colleagues to measure, monitor and manage risk across our care homes, supporting homes to develop comprehensive contingency plans and ensuring access to support, advice and resources around the clock. As we exit wave two of the pandemic we look to cautiously, but hopefully, support the sector to recover, rebuild its resilience and ensure the long term sustainability of the market.

Dementia support

Through Dementia Action Plan funding we have been able to commission NEWCIS to employ a part time dementia support worker. Their role is to support unpaid carers to develop emergency plans should something unforeseen happen such as the carer becoming unwell.

These plans will be available to allow social workers to access the right people at a time of carer crisis. The NEWCIS dementia worker will also support carers to update these plans regularly, helping to avoid inappropriate admissions to hospitals and care homes, which we know can be detrimental to the well-being of people living with dementia.

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Work with BCUHB to assess care home market recovery plans and take a risk management approach to reinstating of monitoring visits

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Review the PASS Team to ensure the current service model is fit for purpose.
- Embed the regional adoption service model.
- Continue to develop early intervention and preventative services in line with Welsh Government priorities.

This is what we did

Supporting Positive Relationships

A range of family support and counselling services were provided via the family centres and third sector organisations (Homestart, Family Friends, Advance Brighter Futures, Action for Children), which are all focussed on improving relationships within the family.

Commissioned provision (also Families First funded) delivered by the youth service to young people and their parents also focusses on healthy and safe relationships.

Through the work of the Prevention and Support Service team (PASS) and Together Achieving Change team (TAC) direct work has also been provided to individual young people and parents to support positive relationships.

Grant funding has also been used to enhance usual provision:

- The Child Development Fund enabled more counselling provision for parents of 0-5 year olds at Advance Brighter Futures and Action for Children
- A single fund enabled training for practitioners and a course for parents to mitigate impact on children and to support family relationships when parents are separating.

During the year, children's services teamed up with education colleagues and other partners including health, Police, third sector and housing, to develop an improved prevention and early help offer in Wrexham and an early years integration pathway.

We are only just getting going with this, but we hope to improve access to information advice and assistance provision, a more joined up approach for early help services and mechanisms to enable a more strategic approach to planning and commissioning early support in the future, across all partners.

Jargon buster - " TAC"

The TAC (Together Achieving Change) process is a way of identifying, organising and coordinating support services for children and young people between the ages of 0-25 years and their families who have additional needs.

North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS)

Wrexham hosts the regional North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS), which helps place children from North Wales, who can't return to live with their parents, for adoption.

In 2019, NWAS was reviewed and recommendations were made to improve the governance and structure of the service specifically around post-adoption support services.

In 2020/21, these recommendations were addressed and the improved management of the service has enabled NWAS to meet all of its regional, national and legislative obligations.

Staff have also benefited with improved access to management support.

The service is now fully staffed with a service lead, operational manager covering Wrexham and Flintshire, operational manager covering Gwynedd and Ynys Mon and an operational manager covering Conwy, Denbighshire and the Adoption Support Service.

The changes have allowed NWAS to expand, and deliver an enhanced post-adoption service as directed by the Welsh Government – benefitting potential adopters, adopters and adopted children. This service although in its infancy is proving to be successful in offering post adoption support to families.

Family group conferencing

Across the department, training has been delivered in family group conferencing and mediation. This has allowed such conferences to take place at a preventative level with referrals for conferences coming in from partners in youth offending service and education, with the aim of receiving early intervention support.

This is what we want to do in 2020–21

- Continue with improvements at the front door with the inclusion of a domestic abuse safety unit worker forming part of the SPoA service.
- Continue to support healthy domestic relationships with the addition of a mental health worker and housing officer in SPoA.

Standard 6: Helping people achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

This means helping people improve their income. As well as helping them benefit from a social life and a suitable place to live.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Implement further phases of the day and work opportunities review and co-produce new and alternative solutions to enable people to achieve greater economic and personal well-being.
- Expand the use of assistive technologies to enable people to live independently.
- Develop our model of community-based care and support solutions for people with mental health conditions.

This is what we did

Day and work opportunities

We worked in partnership with North Wales Advocacy Service to complete two co-production events to find new ways to help individuals and families with moderate to low needs. We also had plans for further co-production activity throughout 2020-21 but this worked was halted due to the Covid outbreak, which impacted our service delivery and further implementation of the review of our day and work opportunities.

The service adapted with the introduction of some outreach support, well-checks calls and support with the distribution of the PPE. In recent months, we have been able to start thinking about a phased re-opening of these services working closely with public health colleagues.

As recovery planning continues to move forward, we look forward to once again progressing our review of day and work opportunities with citizens and building a service that meets the needs of people long into the future.

Assistive technology

Utilising the Welsh Government's Learning Disability Transformation Fund, we have supported individuals, families and providers by loaning equipment and teaching them how to use it. This has enabled many to access various opportunities virtually including access to 'Multi Me', a virtual platform helping people to develop and review their person-centred care and support plans, and maintain contact with friends, families and professionals.

Mental health supported living

A new type of supported living for individuals with mental health support needs is currently being developed.

This project is focussing upon a step down/recovery model for individuals who are looking to repatriate back to Wrexham as well as those who are in placement locally.

This project focusses on recovery and aims to enable and support individuals to live more independently while still receiving the care and support required for their mental health needs.

This is what we want to do in 2021-22

- Work with partners to safely unlock work opportunities services in line with Covid regulation and revisit plans to continue to review the service to provide a more person centred and flexible service.
- Improve accessibility of community based mental health services.
- Development of 'Adult at Risk Team' to improve access to services
- Using Welsh Government's Integrated Care Fund capital increase the number of local residential and supported accommodation solutions for children and adults through delivery of the Care Closer to Home Project.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Progress the 'Kick-Start' project offering intensive and therapeutic support to young people with complex needs who are at risk of placement breakdown and homelessness.
- Ensure 4C's framework is embedded in practice and results in improved, cost effective placements.
- Deliver on the care leavers offer.

This is what we did

The Kickstart Project

Kickstart is a model that is delivered in partnership between Castell Ventures (delivering Castell Care and Support (CCS)) and Wales & West Housing. Kickstart provides accommodation, care and support for children aged 16+ with complex needs and provides ongoing support in their own accommodation after leaving the Kickstart house. The property belongs to Wales and West Housing and the care and support provider is Castell Care and Support.

The Kickstart service helps people change their life; focusing on skills development and self-sufficiency. It comes in two parts:

- The house
- Community / Move-on

Working in conjunction with Castell Ventures, children's services have been busy putting in place the framework for the Kickstart Project.

We hoped to have the project ready for occupancy in September 2020, but after some building delays we now expect it to be ready in winter 2021/22.

Placement stability

The 4C's frameworks for residential and foster placements made outside of the authority has been embedded in practice by the fostering team and procurement department. This has led to more placement stability and an auditable process trail with regards to the identification of placements.

Partnership working

Working in partnership with housing, the Vulnerable Housing Panel has been set up to review situations where there are families approved as connected carers for children, but housing is a stumbling block in terms of having suitable accommodation (enough bedrooms or living space) to accommodate the young person.

Representatives from social care and housing meet regularly to discuss individual cases in order to assess the situation and agree what support can be provided to fast track applications and reunite these families.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Completion of the Kickstart Project.
- Increase our respite provision.
- Support and aid development of the Miner's Rescue Station for Care Leavers.

5. How we deliver for our citizens

A. Developing our workforce

Our workforce development team continues to provide a wide range of training opportunities for the social care sector. The regional Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP) 2021/22 grant application was confirmed 19th April 2021. Both the regional and local plan will be available online from May 2021. Wrexham's grant allocation (which includes 30% match funding) is £441,696.

Training and qualifications are made available to the social care workforce development partnership, whose membership and function is explained in our communication plan.

In the last twelve months, in response to COVID, we have utilised virtual online learning to support workforce development, including Community Care Inform (CCI), promoting eLearning, signposting to resources available from Social Care Wales and workshops delivered via Zoom/Microsoft Teams.

More information about regional and local training and qualification priorities, emerging effective practice and training initiatives can be found on our website:

wrexham.gov.uk/service/workforce-development

B. Finances and planning for the future

During the last four years adult social care delivered £5,061,058 of savings and children's social care delivered £322,000 of savings. In addition, our budgets have been reduced through Supporting People grant money (£200,000).

An additional £1,000,000 was allocated to the children's social care budget to fund the accelerated improvement of the department.

We've updated our medium-term financial and service-efficiency plans, and continue to factor future pressures into our budget-planning.

The council has a rigorous budget process that asks managers to identify potential savings over a three-year period.

Departments like social services – who have a duty of care – are supported as much as possible.

To meet these significant challenges, we've had to reshape and re-tender services to reduce costs. But we've made every effort to reduce the impact on vulnerable people.

C. Political leadership, governance and accountability

On a political level, the council is supported by an executive group of councillors – called ‘lead members’ – who make key decisions.

They’re supported by scrutiny committees. Social services comes under the Safeguarding, Communities and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

On a management level, the director of social services (chief officer) reports directly to the chief executive of the council, and they are supported by a departmental management team.

Councillors and senior managers with these lead-responsibilities understand the importance of social services, and council policy states that we’ll prioritise services that support vulnerable people when setting budgets, making savings and changing how we do things.

The Accelerate Improvement Board comprises the two Lead Members for Social Care, the Chief Executive and Senior Officers from across the Council who can support the improvement work, including from Children’s Social Care, Legal, HR and Finance. The Accelerated Improvement Board meets every two months to review progress against the AIB Action plan, with regular reports provided to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Members and end of phase reporting to all Members. A Scrutiny Task and Finish Group has also been established to provide further challenge for the improvement journey. The senior political and officer leadership provided is crucial in underpinning the sustained positive changes that are being achieved.

Partnership working

The Wrexham Public Service Board (PSB) was established as a result of the Future Generations Act.

It aims to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wrexham County Borough – in a sustainable way that won’t harm future generations.

To help do this, the PSB has different boards working on different things.

PSB priorities are:

- That children and young people have the best start in life.
- That all people can learn and develop throughout their lives.

Safeguarding arrangements

Everybody has the right to be safe, no matter who they are or what their circumstances. Safeguarding means protecting the health, wellbeing and human rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults, enabling them to live safely, free from abuse and neglect. To do this, we work together with people and organisations to prevent and reduce both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect and educate those around them to recognise the signs and dangers.

Safeguarding and protection from abuse or neglect is embodied within everything we do, from screening and making enquiries on referrals, conducting assessments, information sharing, working with multi-agency partners, preparing and agreeing care and support plans, arranging services, undertaking case reviews and seeking the voice and wishes of young people and vulnerable adults. All of the safeguarding work our teams do is underpinned by the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and statutory safeguarding guidance Working Together to Safeguard People, adhering to practice guidelines set out within the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019.

Our teams are set out to look for, respond and act upon any concerns raised regarding safeguarding, from our preventative services like TAC (Together Achieving Change) who organise and coordinate support services for children and young people between the ages of 0-25 years and their families who have additional needs, SPOA (Single Point of Access), who are the first point of contact for any member of the public or professional who may have a concern regarding the wellbeing of a child or young person, Assessment and Intervention (AIT), who undertake assessments with families who may be experiencing difficulties and work with multi-agency partners including North Wales Police to reach decisions where concerns have escalated to child protection, whilst working proactively to help families remain together, wherever possible. Our Family Support Team (FST), provides statutory child protection services and family support services to those children and families who have been assessed as requiring services to meet the needs of vulnerable children in order to promote their emotional, physical and social well-being and also provide services to children who are looked after following procedures to initiate care proceedings in the family courts. Where it has not been possible for the child to remain living within their family, our Looked After and Leaving Care teams aim to secure permanence for children to enter the 'looked after' system and ensure that children and young people are in placements which meets their needs, reflects their right to safety and security and encourages them to reach their full potential at every stage of their development.

Overall, the primary focus of the service is to ensure, safeguard and promote a child or young person's welfare.

Our Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Team provide robust arrangements for oversight, quality assurance and challenge of care and support planning, as well as take responsibility for the Department's audit framework. The Department is committed to ensuring quality assurance is an integral part of everyday practice and not just an "add on". Our audit framework is based on practice standards and is used to evaluate the work we do and the services we provide. Our Quality Assurance Framework further supports our safeguarding arrangements by ensuring there is excellent oversight of practice in all services areas and we are constantly measuring the impact of service delivery in order to improve outcomes and that services are being delivered effectively and to the standards that enable children and vulnerable adults to be safeguarded and promoted.

6. Further information

This final section lists where you can find more information about some of the things mentioned in this report.

Council structure

wrexham.gov.uk/council

Wrexham Public Service Board

wrexhampsb.org

North Wales Safeguarding Board

Helps ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and neglect.

northwalessafeguardingboard.wales

Council Plan

Overarching plan that defines where the council focuses its energies.

wrexham.gov.uk/service/council-plan-2020-2023

Your Voice Wrexham

Public Service Board consultation website – used by the council for online surveys.

yourvoicewrexham.net

Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspects local authority social services, and reports on their effectiveness.

careinspectorate.wales

Wrexham Council reports

Annual Performance 19-20

careinspectorate.wales

Performance evaluation report 14-15

careinspectorate.wales/report-childrens-services-risk-based-inspection-and-adults-services-performance-evaluation

Older adults – 2019

careinspectorate.wales/190328-inspection-older-adults-services-wrexham-county-borough-council

Childrens services -2017

careinspectorate.wales/inspection-childrens-services-wrexham-county-borough-council

Report on regulated care services in Wrexham:

careinspectorate.wales/service-directory

Council complaints and compliments

wrexham.gov.uk/service/contact/complaints-and-compliments

Dewis Cymru

dewis.wales

Council reports and documents

Charging Policy

wrexham.gov.uk

Wrexham Council Workforce Strategy

wrexham.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-06/communication-plan-scwwdp-2122.pdf

Workforce Development training plan, brochure and mid-year report

wrexham.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-06/social-care-training-brochure-2021-22.pdf

Welsh Language Standards

wrexham.gov.uk/service/complaints-and-compliments/welsh-language-standards

Wrexham's Ageing Well plan

wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/social_services/key_documents/aging_well_wrexham.pdf

Transport web-pages

wrexham.gov.uk/service/links/links-transport

Wrexham travel plan – Wrexham Connected

wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/travel/wrexham_connected.pdf

Housing Strategy

wrexham.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-04/housing-revenue-account-business-plan-2021-2022.pdf

Appendix 1: Performance Measurement Framework

Standard 1: Helping people achieve the well-being outcomes they want

Performance metric	2020/21 out-turn	Comment
AD/002 – The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	8979 of 14,863 60.4%	
CA/002 – The total number of contacts to statutory social services by adult carers received during the year where advice or assistance was provided	687 of 687 100%	
CSC/014 - % of assessments completed within statutory timescales	75.08%	

Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote physical, mental and emotional well-being

Performance metric	2020/21 out-turn	Comment
AD/032 – The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified and AD/033 – Total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified and provided	70.4%	
CSC/0010a - % of assessments completed where there was evidence of the Active Offer of Welsh	98.57%	
CSC/034 - % of initial core group meetings held within timescale	81.19%	

Standard 3: Safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

Performance metric	2020/21 out-turn	Comment
CSC/033 - % of initial child protection conferences held within timescale	70.73%	
AD/023 – Total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk where it is necessary for enquiries to be made and ASD/024 – Total number of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse	95.29%	

Standard 4: Helping people to learn, develop and participate in society

Performance metric	2020/21 out-turn	Comment
CSC/054a – Of Care Leavers (Categories 1, 2 and 4), the % who have completed at least 3 months of consecutive employment, education or training in the 12 months since leaving care	67%	
AD/010 – % of packages of reablement completed during the year which reduced, maintained or mitigated the need for support	97.13%	

Standard 5: Helping people maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

Performance metric	2020/21 out-turn	Comment
CSC/038 - % of children looked after at 31st March who were registered with a GP within 10 working days of the start of their placement	100%	
CSC/042 - % of health assessments for LAC due in the year that have been undertaken	88.45%	
CSC/052 - % of Young People that required and were allocated a personal advisor	100%	

Standard 6: Helping people achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

Performance metric	2020/21 out-turn	Comment
CSC/055 - % young people leaving care who move into a "When I am Ready" placement	22.22%	
AD/015a - % of Residential Care services started during the year	31.6%	
AD/015b - % of Domiciliary Care services started during the year	62.45%	