

Wrexham Social Services: What we do and the difference it makes

Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022 - 2023

This document is available in Welsh



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1. Introduction

2022/23 not unlike all other years has been one of significant change and development. As a department Social Care has a lot to celebrate and yet we know all too well that there are challenging years ahead.

This report provides you with an overview of our achievements against the 6 standards that we measure our achievements against. Collectively there are areas where we reflect a significant degree of pride in our achievement in supporting people.

In Children's services we have strengthened the basis upon which our practice is based with progress being made to establish a Thresholds Policy, a Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Screening Tool and an Extra Familial Harm Protocol. Importantly also our Prevention and Early Help Strategy has been formally adopted. We have also strengthened our offer to children and families in a number of areas with accommodation and support options for children leaving care strengthened, our pre-birth work with parents strengthened and the safety and engagement of children central to our work.

In Adult Services there has been positive improvements in the range of support with micro carers helping to assist a more diverse and varied offer of care. We have also wisely invested in new roles to strengthen the recognition of carers in our society and ensure we encourage us all to age well. The Wellbeing Hub in Crown buildings has been opened and is successfully providing information, advice and support to members of the public.

Our goals for 2023/ 24 are ambitious ones as they should be. In Adult Services we are committed to developing a strong performance framework to measure our achievements. We additionally hope to strengthen our Single Point of Access to enhance our focus on wellbeing and positive outcomes.

In Children's Services we wish to improve the experience of children in care by promoting Life Journey work, essentially to enhance each child's identity. We are also committed to developing a Disruption Tool to support those children at risk of becoming Missing and/or Exploited Children.

Wrexham Social Services are committed to develop and deliver the support needed to strengthen our communities and help to deliver the outcomes that matter to people.

Alwyn Jones

Chief Officer Social Services

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 is 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 will notice we talk about six 'quality standards.' These are part of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (we will 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 will 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 2022/23, the number of complaints received has increased, with 56 being received compared to 40 received during 2021-22.

6 complaints were escalated for an independent investigation at Stage 2. This is a slight reduction from the 7 investigations in 2021-22.

A number of compliments were received during 2022/23, highlighting the appreciation from service users and families for the support provided.

Example of the compliment received by Adult Social Care Department

"I would just like to let you know that X, that has been to my dad on a couple of occasions this week is a delight. She is so kind caring and professional. Always happy and smiling, she chats with mum and dad as she's working, she makes sure washing is brought down so mum doesn't have to carry it down the stairs (the little things that are very much appreciated). I would like to thank X very much, she really is a breath of fresh air and a credit to the care profession."

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

"Thank you for everything you've done for me these past few years. I really am thankful and grateful for all your support and advice you've given me. I know I haven't been the easiest to deal with at times but you really have gone above and beyond for me! Thank you, You really do make a difference in young peoples lives, lucky to have had you as a PA."

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.

Unpaid Carers

In response to our unpaid carers' consultation we produced a You Said, We Will Do report. The report details how we will improve services for unpaid carers going forward.

Some of the responses from the report are detailed below;

- 66 unpaid carers told us they had not been offered a Carers Needs Assessment; We recognise the importance of unpaid carers having a Carers Needs Assessment to identify their support needs. We will work closely with NEWCIS, who we fund to deliver unpaid carer services across Wrexham, and our social work teams, to ensure a qualitative Carers Needs Assessment is offered to all unpaid carers across the County Borough of Wrexham who are identified as an unpaid carer. We will also work closely with NEWCIS, to improve self-identification as an unpaid carer, to register as an unpaid carer, and obtain valuable support and guidance
- A number of unpaid carers told us they did not accept the offer of a Carers Needs Assessment; We will ensure that every unpaid carer understands the benefits of undertaking a Carers Needs Assessment, and the support that is available to them to enhance the quality of their caring experience
- A number of unpaid carers told us that their views have not really been listened to when discussing the needs of the person they care for; We recognise the importance of feeling listened to, and will work closely with NEWCIS to engage better with unpaid carers via workshops and unpaid carer forums. We will also ensure that our social care workforce are highly trained so that unpaid carers feel their views are taken into account when discussing the needs of the person they care for.

Standards of Wrexham Services Group

The SWS (Standards of Wrexham Services) group is run by the PCP (Person Centred Planning) department. They support us in this volunteering role. The SWS look at different ways to improve the support offered by WCBC to people with disabilities. They can look at easy read and accessible info. They look at what is a Safe Place and promote and work on the Safe Places Scheme. They have made videos for training and are able to support the PCP Team to deliver training. They run My Staff My Say which is a values based recruitment service for the Council that has people with a lived experience of support on interview panels for support workers and managers etc.

Here is what some people said about working with SWS:

- "The SWS gives me opportunities to change the support in Wrexham for the better. We work hard to be a positive force for good change!"
- "The SWS has many groups that we have started. Safe Places, My Staff My Say, the Friendship Hub and the tech drop in. All are supported by the PCP department in WCBC"
- "The SWS and Friendship hub helped me settle back into a post Covid life.... We arrange our own ten pin bowling and lunches out. We've met up for watch Top Gun and had a pizza night. We are now helping the PCP officers to arrange social activities for people with more support needs who might not be able to go out without support. We arranged a low noise firework display in the middle of Nov so it didn't stop people going to their local display. This also had a silent disco. We hope to arrange more events like this. We are part of the Stay up Late campaign! Helping people with 24 hour support go out in the evenings!"

Working with the third sector

We enjoy a close working relationship with our County Voluntary Council (CVC) the Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham (AVOW).

Through ongoing, open dialogue with the new AVOW Chief Officer, Dawn Roberts-McCabe, we have been able to collaborate on a variety of innovative projects including a trial to embed two posts in the CVC to allow better access to the community.

AVOW continues to represent the community and voluntary sector as a partner in the development and delivery of the Wellbeing Hub in Wrexham town centre and are a key partner in the decision making and allocation of Welsh Government Regional Integration Fund (RIF) for Wrexham supporting improved integrated approaches to health and social care focusing on prevention and wellbeing first.

Through Welsh Government Grant Funding obtained by our team, AVOW has recruited a Wellbeing Hub Officer to open an off-shoot Wellbeing Hub in Gwersyllt. The Hub, co-located in the Gwersyllt Resource Centre, is open three days per week offering a range of services from advice on lowering the cost of living to promotion of better mental health and personal wellbeing. All activities in the Hub are co-produced with the community members who benefit from the Hub.

We have also worked closely with AVOW this year to maximise access to Welsh Government Grant funding. AVOW facilitated the awarding of grants to combat loneliness and isolation in the community. AVOW's unique reach into the wider community meant the grants funded a range of needs from equine therapy to men's sheds. A larger recipient of monies focused on assisting a community building to be able to offer services to residents of all ages; from parent and toddler groups to a luncheon group for over 50's.

Care Inspectorate Wales

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is the independent regulator of social care and childcare. During our recent inspection the report found that there were areas requiring improvement in children's services and adult services.

Phases 1 and 2 of our improvement plan were successfully completed in 2021 and during Phase 3 (June 2022), Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) visited Wrexham to [review the local authority's performance](#) in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation. The report acknowledged the challenges experienced and recognised some progress had been made resulting in developments to practice and better outcomes for children.

A summary of those areas requiring improvement in Adult Social Care is given below;

Principle: People

They saw frequent examples of people and unpaid carers experiencing significant and unacceptable delay when requesting support.

Principle: Prevention

The length of time it takes for occupational therapy assessments to occur and support to be provided was an area identified as requiring improvement. Despite examples of effective Occupational Therapy (OT) interventions, providing assessments and adaptations is sometimes significantly delayed and does not address the wider need to take steps earlier in order to prevent further deterioration.

Principle: Well-being

Further work is required to ensure the five key elements of assessments; dignity and respect, compassion, to be included, responsive care and support and wellbeing, are addressed, people's outcomes are captured, and eligibility is addressed in line with statutory guidance.

Principle: Partnership

There is some evidence of developing professional working relationships with people and partners built on co-operation and a shared understanding of what matters.

However, the impact of the waiting lists is adding an additional challenge and negatively affects the ability to build trusting relationships due to increasing pressures and demand.

Throughout this report, you will read about how we are responding to the findings across Social Care.

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 care areas within the Department - 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

- Further grow Direct Payments and Micro commissioning.
- Deliver a local Action Plan to address service gaps as reported in the Regional Market Shaping report
- Utilising Welsh Government Capital, develop a plan for delivery of Intermediate Care for the medium and longer term
- Deliver an Unpaid Carers Lead to support in overcoming the challenges faced by unpaid carers.

This is what we did

Further grow Direct Payments and Micro commissioning

In order to improve services for people to receive a direct payment Wrexham County Borough Council made the decision to bring direct payment support back in house instead of using an external provider. We understand direct payments can provide citizens with improved choice and control in how they receive their assessed care. As such, we have worked to increase the percentage of Direct Payment uptake the last financial year by 23%.

To support us in the development of small, social care enterprises or businesses, we continue to work with Community Catalysts.

They help people and communities across the country to use their talents to start and run small enterprises and community businesses that support and care for other local people; these people are called community catalysts locally but all have their own business name too.

Funded through the Regional Integration Fund, 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.

The Project continues to develop well with over 70 enterprises having completed the 'doing it right' standards. All enterprises are fully booked up delivering packages of care, with citizens accessing direct payments to fund care in this way. This model of care and support is able to offer citizens an alternative, person centred care solution.

Jargon Buster - 'Micro commissioning'

Micro commissioning is where care is sought on an individual level from small often independent or third sector organisations or sole traders

[Community Catalysts Project: Wrexham](#)

Deliver a local Action Plan to address service gaps

We have been working with local authorities and the health board across North Wales to develop The Regional Action Plan following the publication of the Market Stability Report in November last year.

The plan sets out how the North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB) will respond to the findings of the [North Wales Population Needs Assessment](#) published in April 2022 and [Market Stability Report](#) published in November 2022.

We are building on the findings from the MSR and Regional Plan to include them in our local plans and we are already working on some of the actions highlighted within this report. There will be an annual update on progress made across the region.

Develop a plan for delivery of Intermediate Care

The Health and Social Care Integration and Rebalancing Care Fund (IRCF) is a new programme set by Welsh Government to replace the Integrated Care Fund (ICF), it directly supports the Programme for Government (PfG) commitment of developing 50 integrated health and social care hubs to rebalance the care market.

In order to support this the authority has commissioned an external specialist company North of England Commissioning Service (NEC) to carry out a feasibility study over a period of 6 months, which will include extensive consultation in collaboration with Health (BCUHB) and AVOW to establish the needs and gaps of provision, within the County Borough, to inform future commissioning plans:

- To include specific recommendations about what service improvement changes should look like and what capital investment is needed and where its needed to make best use of existing community assets.
- To include specific recommendation about what alternative and/ or additional Intermediate/Local Care provision is needed and where to include the scale and scope of any such facilities in Wrexham.
- The study and final report will prioritise the area of Cefn Mawr; to include the scope for development of an integrated hub to include a primary care facility in this area.
- Consideration for the remodelling of Children's Services in accordance with IRCF principles of colocation and integration of services within the local area.

Deliver an Unpaid Carers Lead

We launched recruitment for this role and a new Unpaid Carers Development Officer is now in post. This role is funded though Welsh Government Regional Integration Funding (RIF) and supports unpaid carers of all ages. The role aims to provide a dedicated resource to deliver service improvement in this area.

Work will include:

- the development of improved services coproduced with unpaid carers,
- an extensive consultation period to help develop new ways of working,
- working with employers to ensure they have an unpaid carers policy,
- Improving communications and developing a communications strategy with service providers.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Evaluate the effectiveness of 'micro-commissioning'
- Implement a Performance Framework to measure achievements in Adult Services. Review, redesign and implement a new process to audit the quality of services.
- Further develop our recruitment and retention strategy for Social Care
- Recruit and employ a specialist mental health and wellbeing Occupational Therapist to address our current waiting list.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- 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.

This is what we did

Wrexham Children's Services Threshold Policy

Children's Social Care launched the Children's Services Threshold Policy along with the Prevention and Early Help Framework through a virtual launch event attended by members of the local authority, Education, Housing, Youth Justice, Adult Social Care, our multi-agency partners and voluntary sector representatives.

The Threshold Policy was developed in collaboration with our multi-agency partners and the launch event showcased the guide which acts to support all agencies and organisation working with children, describing the circumstances in which they should refer children and their families for support across the spectrum of need.

Progress Improvement Plan and engagement with CIW

In October 2019, Wrexham Council embarked on an accelerated improvement programme for Children's Social Care. The Accelerated Improvement Board (AIB) was established in October 2019 and progressed an accelerated improvement action plan with key objectives developed to drive improvement at pace.

To achieve these 6 objectives the accelerated improvement journey has been approached as a 3 phase journey.

- Phase 1 - to ensure immediate actions were taken to stabilise service delivery;
- Phase 2 - strong foundations were established to build improvement on; and
- Phase 3 - medium and long-term actions identified to embed sustainable change and service improvement.

In September 2022, the Council's Executive Board agreed to expand the scope of the AIB to include improvement areas identified within Adult Social Care, forming a new Joint Social Care Improvement Board (SCIB) with the first meetings held in November 2022.

The newly formed Social Care Improvement Board builds on the progress made within Children's Social Care to achieve the required improvements in practice in Adult and Children's Social Care.

Adopt a Regional approach to Screening tools for exploited or trafficked young people

The publishing of the Extra Familial Harm Protocol in May 2022 was the result of efforts across Social Care, Housing, and Education and Early Intervention to create a protocol which provides Wrexham County Borough Council Departments with clear local guidance on the process in relation to children and adults who are currently missing or being exploited or trafficked.

A public launch event was held in January 2023, with members of the local authority, education, housing, and representatives from our multi-agency and preventative sectors present.

The development of the Extra Familial Harm Protocol coincided with the work undertaken by a Wrexham Task and Finish Group who were charged with the creation of a Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) screening tool. This work was successfully completed and the Department have been in a pilot phase in using an amalgamated screening tool, whilst we continue to engage on a national and regional level on the development of an agreed regional screening tool and safety plans.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Develop a robust transfer process for young people transitioning from Children's Services to Adult Social Care
- Fully embed the Extra Familial Harm Protocol and continue to engage with national and regional partners, continuing to engage in adoption of screening tools and safety plans
- Full review of the Children's Services Threshold document.

Standard 2: Helping people achieve the well-being outcomes they want

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

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Launch and continue a coproductive development of Wrexham Wellbeing Hub in partnership with BCUHB and AVOW to deliver community based health and social care prevention and wellbeing activity (across all ages)
- Deliver a programme of coproduced integrated care and support projects utilising new Welsh Government Revenue Investment Fund which deliver positive outcomes for citizens.

This is what we did

Launch of the Wrexham Wellbeing Hub

The partnership Steering Group of BCUHB (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board), AVOW (Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham) and WCBC (Wrexham County Borough Council) have worked coproductively with citizens and community groups to recruit the Wellbeing Hub Team and the facility was successfully launched on 5th October 2022. It offers a range of prevention and wellbeing information, advice and assistance for citizens of all ages.

The Wellbeing Hub Team work with health and community groups to provide a variety of services for the community, and advice and assistance for citizens to access services within their local areas that could assist them with support or practical help to live well.

The Hub delivers courses, meetings, group sessions and drop in services for all ages on a daily basis. There are open activity spaces, a Sensory Room, Changing Places, hireable meeting rooms and conference rooms, a Treatment Room (for health clinics), accessible kitchens and shortly there will also be a Café that will be fully accessible for all ages.

▪ **Case Study from a Hub User, Member of the Public, 'Suzzane'**

'Suzzane' first came to the hub to attend a coffee morning that was for carers week, she really enjoyed it and was amazed at what we had to offer at the hub. She really wanted to join more groups and to spend more time with people as she was feeling lonely after her daughter had passed away.

'Suzzane' is now a regular at the hub attending many sessions including Boccia (a type of armchair bowling), Stress Less Group, Chair Aerobics and Food Wise for Life. She has found the sessions have helped her a lot.

'Suzzane' also comes every week to the over 50's coffee morning and to see what is new at the hub. She said she is so grateful to have found the wellbeing hub and its friendly helpful staff.

Some examples of other feedback we have received are below;

- **BCUHB**

"I have been fortunate enough to have a tour around the Wrexham Wellbeing Hub, while attending a recent meeting in one of its community rooms. The building looks fantastic, is very inviting and is located in a handy Central Wrexham location with great transport links, as well as easy walking and wheel chair access.

The rooms for hire look super and we are very keen to run our Health Improvement Programmes from there, as they meet our needs of a kitchen for our Cooking Programme, there is also space for exercise classes, as well as tables and chairs for our educational sessions. We can see ourselves making great use of this amazing facility that we are so lucky to have in Wrexham, and recommend others come to see what potential it has for their groups/services."

- **AVOW**

AVOW's partnership in the Wellbeing Hub has been a great success within Third Sector, giving a focus for a range of third sector organisations, statutory partners and the community and groups to interact and to meet up with members of the public, beneficial to both organisations and individuals. A welcoming workforce and assets such as Changing places bathrooms draw focus for those who need more accessible services whilst in Wrexham.

Services - awareness sessions, training, preventative activities and community groups are often co-produced by all agencies and succeeds in offering complementary services and resolutions to further involvement in both Health and Statutory services. The addition of the café will only improve the draw to bring the public into the Hub, making it more of an asset to the community and increase footfall through the Hub.

- **Family Friends**

"The family I support absolutely loved their time in the Sensory Room at the Wellbeing Hub. Mum brought her two 3 year olds, one with additional needs and both children found the lights, noises and sensory equipment fascinating. Mum often struggles to find a setting that both children enjoy with their different needs so was so pleased that the children loved it. The Sensory Room is a wonderful addition to Wrexham town centre and I'm sure it will attract a variety of families in the future."

Deliver a programme of coproduced integrated care and support projects

The Regional Integration Fund (RIF) has been introduced by Welsh Government to replace previous integrated funding streams. RIF is a 5 year programme of revenue and capital monies.

The money is provided to improve the way health, social care and voluntary sector work together to support citizens. The money allows us to test improved and new ways to support citizens. There is also funding to improve our accommodation offer for supported living as well as community facilities. We are in the process of consulting with citizens to understand how our developments are meeting those needs we have a responsibility to support.

The regional allocation is just under £32.5 million revenue funding with Wrexham's allocation being just over £4.5 million.

Funded through this Programme are a number of projects in place that directly support citizens to remain living at home in their local communities, such as the Community Agents Service. This Service assists citizens to gain advice and information to support them to remain independent in their community and access activity and services so as to reduce loneliness and isolation. We also have joint projects with health colleagues such as the funding of the Community Resource Team (CRT) providing support to citizens that need some care or therapy intervention to help them remain at home and not need to be admitted to hospital. These services are very important to reduce admission into hospital when needs can be met in the community.

• Case Study example Community Agent Service

I was initially contacted by the daughter of AJ on 16th January, she explained that her mother is living with Dementia and felt that she was in need of support. AJ's daughter does not live locally, so her mother has become increasingly dependent on the day to day support of her neighbour in recent years.

I visited AJ on 17th January, taking the opportunity to better understand her unmet needs. Her home was very well equipped, clean and tidy.

She was finding it difficult to carry out what would have once been a simple task such as making a cup of tea, so I helped her to do this. She explained she was feeling quite isolated at home, we proceeded to discuss the sorts of activities she would like to become involved in and her interests and hobbies.

On contacting her daughter to discuss the outcome of my visit, I signposted her to Alzheimer's Society and NEWCIS. AJ was going to spend the following week at her daughter's house, so a follow up visit was scheduled to meet them together at the earliest opportunity afterwards. In the meantime, AJ had been allocated a social worker, offering support of 4 care visits per day and access to day care twice weekly had been agreed.

I continued to visit AJ on a regular basis and was able to also meet her daughter on 6th February, I provided them with information about activities happening locally that I felt AJ could benefit from, we also discussed and considered transport options. Arrangements were made for me to accompany her to a day care centre the following week, she thoroughly enjoyed the experience and has since attended the centre twice weekly with transport being provided.

By 16th February her care package was up and running with 4 visits daily. AJ has settled into her new routine very well. She is appreciative of the support she receives in going about her daily tasks, administering medication, help with food and hydration. AJ is a very sociable lady, so is enjoying getting involved in the activities when visiting the day centre and making new friends through this. She is also enjoying attending a weekly art class and looking forward to going to a singing for the brain session next month that I had signposted her to.

Rhosddu Community Agent

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Embed an outcome and strength based approach to practice
- Remodel our Single Point of Access Service to further focus on prevention and wellbeing, making best use of community assets and enable increasing numbers of people to meet their wellbeing outcomes outside of statutory services provision.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- 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.

This is what we did

Embed and launch the Special Guardianship Team

The Special Guardianship Support Team are fully embedded within the Department, providing direct support to carers who undertake the role of a special guardian. The team work collaboratively with social work teams, ensuring a smooth transition as a young person ceases to be looked after by the local authority and remains in the care of their special guardian, supported by an agreed and authorised special guardianship care plan.

Life Journey Work policy

In 2022, Wrexham Children's Social Care developed its Life Journey Work policy and procedure, supported by a formal launch event. The launch event and adoption of the policy was well received, with over 100 social workers and support workers attending the launch event as we focussed on the importance of ensuring our young people's life journeys are captured in a thoughtful, accurate and expeditious manner

Feedback from the event included comments as follows:

"As a social worker I know why life journey work is important, but this day helped to remind me of the value young people place on this information later in life. The guest speakers telling their personal stories was particularly moving - thank you."

Development of Young People in Care Council web site

Whilst we did not complete the development of a Young People in Care Council (YPICC) web site, the Department's Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Officer (ISRO) has reinvigorated the YPICC, recruiting new members, re-introducing the group's purpose and establishing milestones for the forthcoming year which include more involvement of young people in departmental developments, the inclusion of young people on interview panels and full consultation with your YPICC in the development of departmental policies.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Expand involvement of the Young People in Care Council to include participation in staff interviews and review/development of departmental policies
- Continuously promote the importance of Life Journey Work through annual conferences and workshops.

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.

Our priority continues to be, safeguarding people and families and utilising all resources available to us.

Both the adult safeguarding team and children's safeguarding and quality assurance teams continue 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

- Conclude our reviews of deaf support, visual impairment and advocacy services and deliver an action plan of service improvements
- Deliver a programme of training, development and communication with staff, partners and citizens to support the roll out of the LPS.

This is what we did

Review Deaf Support, Visual Impairment and advocacy services

Advocacy can take many forms for example, peer advocacy, advocacy which supports people without mental capacity to make some decisions or advocacy services which support people in vulnerable situations to make life decisions.

Over this year we evaluated these services and developed an action plan which included an Options Appraisal to be undertaken for Advocacy, Deaf Support Network (hearing impairment) and Vision Support (vision impairment) services. We found that these services were needed and used and valued; as such we have been considering how to best strengthen and build resilience in these important service areas.

All three provider contracts have been extended, to enable us to explore how we can do this through delivery of a larger contract with our neighbouring authorities.

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.

Training, Development and communication of Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)

We have provided training to staff around LPS providing Mental Capacity training in conjunction with our Workforce Development team. We have also accessed training externally to prepare for the implementation of this legislation

On 5 April 2023 the Department of Health and Social Care announced the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS), the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019, will be delayed "beyond the life of this Parliament" (therefore likely beyond Autumn 2024). Until such time as this piece of legislation comes into force we are advised to maintain support for those citizens who are or who need to be deprived of their liberty (in other words have some of their freedoms restricted) with protection under the existing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS).

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Redesign of an effective and efficient Single Point of Access (SPoA) for Adult Social Services.
- Undertake engagement with stakeholders to review the sustainability of our Occupational Therapy services and reduce waiting lists.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- 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 agreed 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.

This is what we did

Embed Protocol and Risk Model (MET) - Transitional Plan

The Department successfully launched the Extra Familial Harm Protocol during a virtual public launch event attended by multi agency partners and various third sector organisations.

The publishing of the Protocol in May 2022 was the result of efforts across Social Care, Housing, and Education and Early Intervention to create a protocol which provides Wrexham County Borough Council Departments with clear local guidance on the process in relation to children and adults who are currently missing or being exploited or trafficked.

Wrexham's launch was well attended with over 70 attendees from across all sectors.

To accompany the launch of the protocol, Wrexham's Task and Finish group reviewed and developed the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) screening tool and later entered into collaboration with regional groups to agree a revised tool to be used with those young people who have gone missing from home or care.

Presently, the combined tool is being used in the pilot phase whilst we await the introduction of an agreed regional model.

Develop a Suicide Pathway

In delivering the Welsh Government's response to the National Assembly for Wales' Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's inquiry into suicide, the Minister has announced an additional £500,000 a year investment to specifically support national and regional approaches to tackle suicide and self-harm prevention. Our local development of a suicide pathway to ensure communities are supported following a suicide of a child is still in progress, but it will follow the regional and national guidance.

These include:

- Recruiting National and Regional leads across Wales
- Implementation of the support after suicide post-vention pathway to support those bereaved by suicide, as well as a full review of support and targeted investment to improve this.
- Improved awareness and availability of resources including Help is at Hand and a new suicide prevention website developed by the national advisory group talktometoo.wales
- Guidance on suicide prevention training for staff across public services
- Funding to support programs and initiatives that have been shown to be effective.

Evaluation of the Mind of My Own Apps

Throughout 2022/23, there has been an active Mind of My Own Steering Group, meeting regularly to review progress and use of the Apps, making small improvements with involvement from key stakeholders and the system supplier.

The app allows young people to easily express their views and be heard. They can use the app on their own device or they can share the worker's device when meeting with them - could benefit from further improvement. Our findings will be included in the full scale review due for 2023/24 and will allow us to make better decisions about its use.

Child Protection Conferences - virtual platform

Children' Social Care have successfully embedded the virtual meeting platform through the use of Microsoft Teams. Originally in use throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of Teams for virtual Child Protection Conferences continues as necessary and has been its success with increased attendance of multi-agency partners and families.

Improve Active Offer - Advocacy

To further support improvements to the active offer of advocacy our partners, TGP Cymru provide a residential visiting service and advocacy offer to our respite residential unit, Tapley Avenue. A dedicated advocate visits each placement once a month, to provide the young people with somebody independent to talk to about any worries or issues they may be experiencing.

In total, 65% of young people eligible for advocacy accepted the offer and engaged with the TGP Cymru service.

Lynne Neagle, Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing on 5 April 2023 announced a delay in publication of guidance in relation to LPS. The notice received confirmed that the UK Government had announced their intention to step away from the introduction of LPS.

Wrexham had taken steps to prepare and Task and Finish Groups were identified and scheduled well in advance of the Liberty of Protection Safeguards (the LPS) and the implementation of the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 (the 2019 Act) however, this work was ceased.

Until such time as this new legislation is introduced the department will continue to support young people with their advocacy needs under the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) which remains in force.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Formally adopt and launch the Prevent, Modern Day Slavery and Channel Panel policies.
- Develop a disruption approach for missing and/or exploited children.
- Prepare for the implementation of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (LPS).

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

- Launch our Intergenerational Strategy alongside our Ageing Well Officer and Grant Fund to support an Age Friendly Wrexham.
- Continue to work towards Wrexham Council becoming an autism-friendly local authority.

This is what we did

Launch Intergenerational Strategy to Support Age Friendly Wrexham

Intergenerational learning is the way that people of all ages can learn together and from each other. It can be an important part of Lifelong Learning, where the generations work together to gain skills, values and knowledge to foster relationships between different generations not just old and young but between teens and adults.

In Wrexham we recognise that people have a number of skills that are of value to one another and Intergenerational Practice (IP) is an excellent way of resolving the issues faced by both generations.

Why does Wrexham Council need an Intergenerational strategy?

The population predictions state that there will be an increase in the amount of older people living alone. In the 85+ age range many people report that they are lonely and isolated from others and the community they live in, therefore we need to take action to avoid this rising further.

IP has the ability to reduce loneliness and isolation in older people and can build upon the strengths of both old and young in coming together, this has already been emphasised on a number of occasions. It has the ability to remove barriers, build upon cohesive communities and offer positive outcomes for all involved.

Social isolation is when people find it difficult to meet other people. This might be because of where they live or because they have difficulty getting out and meeting people which can have a huge impact upon a person's physical and mental health, and their quality of life.

Examples of work to date:

- We created Intergenerational packs using products specifically designed for people living with dementia. These packs also have similarities to products used in pre and lower school settings.
This makes the products accessible to intergenerational activity. There is a strong focus on nature and the seasons as well as physical activity. We have received very positive feedback from the homes and nurseries that have used the packs so far. These simple activities can be a meaningful communication for someone living with dementia who finds verbal communication difficult.
- Harry Helps Bags for Schools were created prior to the pandemic as a tool to support young children to have age appropriate access to learning about dementia. The bag contained a book which tells the story of a grandson helping grandad to remember his name through reminiscence activities. We were not able to progress this due to lockdown so we are currently sourcing some new materials to deliver similar packs to all of our schools in both Welsh and English to enable the schools to provide relevant feedback on how this has been received.
- A number of schools are now Dementia friendly schools i.e. Holt CP, St Pauls Isycoed, The Rofft School, Borrass Park and Victoria school.

Examples of some feedback received to date:

- "Oh my life, I cannot thank you enough for your kindness this morning, observing the interaction between young and old blew us all away ". Manager, Marford Little Explorers.
- "I do enjoy seeing the children come and visit, it cheers me up no end" A Resident Hillbury
- "One little boy does not engage well with people, to see him talking to the older people was such a treat" Teaching Assistant Bro Alyn
- "The children came to visit and sang happy birthday to me in both English and Welsh, it really made my day" A Resident Hillbury

Autism friendly Local Authority

We continue to develop both the Wrexham Autism Strategic Partnership group, and the coproduced local autism steering group to improve and develop Autism awareness across the Local Authority and Wrexham County Borough as a whole. A sub-group (including coproduction) has been set up to arrange a Wrexham Autism Conference for all professionals across Wrexham which will help to understand Autism, and increase awareness further.

Further e-learning modules have been developed for all staff to access, and under our partnership with the local steering group from 'Your Space' we have undertaken co-produced training with WCBC Work Force Development for social care staff and schools/colleges.

In addition Your Space have managed to secure Wrexham football star Paul Mullin as a patron. Mullin commented 'I am pleased to announce that I have agreed to be a patron of Wrexham based autism charity Your Space. As some of you know my son Albi has been recently diagnosed as on the spectrum so it is a cause that is close to my family's heart. Your Space are marking their tenth anniversary in 2023. I hope to get involved in some way during these celebrations!'

The WASP Group are currently supporting with the review of the Autism Code of Practice, and are working closely with the Regional Partnership Board.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- To achieve Age Friendly status from The World Health Organisation - they are the United Nations agency that connects nations, partners and people to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable - so everyone, everywhere can attain the highest level of health (WHO)
- Develop a Strategy for Autism and review the Code of Practice to understand how it can benefit our communities.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Participation in development of the Wrexham Wellbeing Hub
- 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.

This is what we did

Rollout of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy

Following the launch of the Prevention and Early Framework in 2022, the Prevention and Early Help Strategy has now been approved by the Council's Executive Board. The strategy includes 5 priorities which are:

1. All children, young people and their families enjoy good physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.
2. All babies, children and young people are able to communicate effectively.
3. All children, young people and their families enjoy positive healthy relationships.
4. All children, young people and their families have access to a good standard of living.
5. All children and young people engage well with education and reach their full potential.

The Prevention and Early Help Partnership will now monitor and evaluate progress against these priorities. The Wellbeing Portal, which has been a major project under the Prevention and Early Help Framework, is currently being rolled out and both the strategy and portal will be formally launched in October 2023.

Development of Pre-Birth Team

Wrexham Children's Social Care have put effective arrangements in place through the addition of a Pre-Birth Team. These arrangements ensure dedicated assessment and coordination of support is in place at the earliest opportunity for those expectant mothers and families who come to our attention.

The Department is currently undertaking a full review of the pre-birth offer within children's services and working in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) to improve communications and practice.

One such example of partnership working is the establishment of Pre-Birth Liaison Meetings - sharing information, communication and cohesive working between social care, midwifery and BCU Safeguarding.

The purpose of the Pre-Birth Liaison meetings are to track individuals and families open to the Local Authority Pre Birth Assessment Team and to ensure appropriate support is being offered.

Development of NEET

The Department continue to see more care experienced young people taking advantage of the "reconnecting to care" policy with pathways back into Education, Employment or Training up to the age of 25.

Where 'Care Leavers' do not wish to take advantage of this, details of how to reconnect are given to each Care Leaver prior to their exit interview.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Progress to next stage of development of the Wellbeing Hub, including 3rd sector involvement, functioning café, and review of opening times
- Full review of the pre-birth offer in Children's Services
- Improve communication and information sharing regarding children not currently in education.

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

- Employ an Unpaid Carers Lead Officer role to coproduce solutions to gaps in services reported to us, and our partners to include increasing the range of respite options.

This is what we did

Employ an Unpaid Carers Lead Officer

We have now employed an Unpaid Carers Lead Officer to coproduce solutions to gaps in services reported to us. This role is funded through Welsh Government Regional Integration Funding and supports unpaid carers of all ages. The role aims to provide dedicated resource to allow for service improvement in this area.

WCBC commissioned North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS) to deliver a (now award winning) respite service called Bridging the Gap (BTG). BTG is a respite scheme that provides short periods of rest for unpaid carers from their caring role. It gives the carer voice, choice and control over the type of respite they access ensuring they are receiving a meaningful service that meets their individual needs. 556 carers have accessed this service in the past 2 years.

We have also commissioned NEWCIS to deliver an Unpaid Carers Direct Payments scheme to enable carers to access respite breaks. The total number of respite breaks NEWCIS delivered during this last year was 306.

This is some feedback:

"My wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's over 3 years ago. After her diagnosis we felt quite abandoned and alone ... and worried that we would only receive help "at the end" During Covid my wife started to deteriorate, and I struggled with our changing dynamics and being so isolated (without access to my usual support). During this time I started to open up more to my daughter about how I was struggling. My daughter was talking to a family friend about my wife and (by chance) was signposted to NEWCIS and made contact. Since that first phone call our world changed ... Louise has been an angel.

She has further sign posted us to many organisations including the Alzheimer's Association and we have set up a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) which provides me with confidence for our future. One of the most surprising acts of kindness from Louise was when she applied for funding for our holiday/ respite where my wife and I went away for a week with our daughter and grandson. The week was truly special, we made the most wonderful memories, took too many photos and laughed more in 1 week that we had throughout Covid. Knowing that there are organisations like NEWCIS and wonderful people like Louise out there to support and guide us makes the future a little less terrifying. I want to thank you for this".

Wrexham Council have worked with NEWCIS to facilitate the scheme in a way that ensures it is truly person centred. Focussed on what carers view as a break or support for their own wellbeing and the feedback reflects how valued that is by carers. The direct payments scheme has allowed access to lots of activities chosen by carers and their families.

Feedback and examples

- Unpaid Carer A
"Thank you so much to everyone for my voucher for a washing machine, I have had my hair done with the money you put in to give myself a break with the rest I hope to go for a lunch break.... thank you.

- Unpaid Carer B
Thanks again for your support. It really is very much appreciated. We had a really relaxing 2 days. It was much appreciated as we hadn't had much time to ourselves. I can't tell you how much we enjoyed it. We walked along the ... Canal and did what WE wanted to do.

- "It will help pay for a week away in Norfolk with my family staying in a cottage on a farm. This complete break away from my caring role should help me de-stress and help me maintain my own wellbeing and continue to provide care as well as keep my full time job."

- "The 'myhomehelper' will mean I can video call my parents without interaction from them to check in with them from my smart phone - this will ease my caring role and mean I don't have to rush over every time I am worried about them and can see how they are doing at a glance. It will mean I can also devote more time to supporting my husband who is recovering from a breakdown"

- "I will be able to add reminders for both parents (as text notes for Dad who is deaf and 'voicenotes' for Mum who has dementia and also upload photos and use as a dementia clock"

Examples of how the Bridging the Gap scheme has been used to achieve desired outcomes:

- Carers spend time with friends and family
- Carers have meaningful breaks away from their caring role
- Carers draw on their strengths and resources, utilising Bridging the Gap to plan breaks
- Carers do things that matter to them (golf membership/holidays/Yoga classes/pre-arranged trips/events)
- Carers/cared for engaged in leisure activities giving time out and wellbeing
- The chance to explore community resources - NEWCIS currently working with Waterworld/Chirk Castle
- Attending things that matter to the carer (weddings/birthdays/special events)
- Carers able to feel a part of their community (join groups/give back/volunteer)

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Develop a more robust Unpaid Carers' offer including a new contract and service specification
- Communication strategy to be developed to allow unpaid carers to identify themselves and seek intervention
- Improving uptake of Unpaid Carers Assessments
- Working with employers in Wrexham to develop support for employees who identify as unpaid carers.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Continue with improvements at the front door to support 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.

This is what we did

Domestic Abuse Safety Unit Worker as part of SPoA

Working in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU), Children's SPOA were able place a DASU worker into the team to assist with screening and early intervention for those contacts where it is deemed appropriate.

The department wishes to expand on this development as we work toward revising our Domestic Abuse Policy and our documentation and assessments tools are reviewed.

Reducing the use of victim blaming language and the commissioning of more perpetrator programmes to support both victims and perpetrators will be our goal.

Mental Health Worker and Housing Officer in SPoA

Children's SPOA now have the added benefit of a Mental Health Social Worker and Housing Support Worker who take the lead on any contacts/referrals which require support in this area. The inclusion of this in the SPOA offer has ensured consistency of approach when actions are needed in response to these referrals and has aided in the building of relationships between housing, mental health and social services and ultimately, assisted in a more timely response to these referrals, with on-site specialist advice on hand.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Review policy and approach for Domestic Abuse and reduce the use of victim blaming language
- Increase commissioning of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes
- Progress improvements in SPOA to include involvement of North Wales Police.

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

- Research to continue into alternative models of delivery for day service and work opportunities to enable the expansion of services available.
- Deliver an expanded Care Closer to Home Programme.

This is what we did

Alternative Models for Day and work opportunities

During this year a review of commissioned day service provision was completed across Wrexham to provide an up to date picture on the current service model.

The review covered commissioned services for older citizens and citizens with a disability and a report of the findings has been prepared. Day services are traditionally building based and are contracted to provide a range of services including:

- Personal and/or practical care to those that struggle to access their community Independently
- Training and skills development to support independence
- Work based training and support to enable people to move into supported or open employment
- Coordination of social and recreational activities
- Provision of a meeting place to build relationships beyond those with carers and staff, thus reducing social isolation and loneliness
- Supported stimulating activities for people with profound multiple disabilities
- The review identified increasing numbers of people with high level need, in particular those living with dementia, attending day services and, as such, it is likely that specialist, building based provision for some people will continue to be a good outcome.

We want to be able to deliver coproductively for people greater flexibility to improve access to community solutions for those with lower need whilst enabling current services to meet the increasing needs of some citizens.

Wrexham County Borough Council want to engage with stakeholders internally and externally to identify the needs, demand and potential development opportunities for the future of services within of Day and Work Opportunities and the in house respite services on offer. The outcome of this engagement will be to develop an options appraisal for future service delivery, including an implementation plan.

Expand the Care Closer to Home Project

Through the introduction of Welsh Governments Housing with Care Fund (HCF) and Integrated Rebalancing Care Fund we have been able to continue to grow our Care Closer to Home Programme to:

- Support independent living in the community for people with care and support needs
- Provide intermediate care settings in the community so people who need care, support and rehabilitation can return to living independently or maintain existing independence in Wrexham.
- Ensure the accommodation and care needs of vulnerable groups are met as close to home as possible.

The programme is designed to meet the following priority areas in Wrexham:

- Purchase and adapt property to enable Health and Social Care to provide care and support to children and adults closer to home, to meet the needs of Wrexham citizens and reduce the need for placements outside of the local area.
- Extend the provision of Children's and Adults respite care through capital investment to increase bed numbers at our existing respite properties and/or adapt where possible to meet more complex needs.
- The project will consult, engage and coproduce with partners and the Health Board to develop integrated, intermediate and primary care projects.

Since the initiation of the programme we have seen work progress swiftly with the completion of 2 new children's home developments in 2022 - 2023. We have also extended our children's respite services, with the completion of a 3 person, small respite service. This enables us to continue to provide children's respite service, flexibly to meet the needs of those families who rely on the service.

In March 2023 we completed on the purchase of a further property to continue the work and expand our placement offering to children currently placed out of county.

Work has also continued with our Registered Social Landlord (RSL), the HCF Fund has enabled us to expand our independent living housing stock plans for adults with complex Learning Disability and Mental Health, increasing by three new schemes with 7 additional bed spaces, and over the next 2 years increasing with a further five schemes resulting in 14 additional bed spaces.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Explore alternative models of delivery for day service and work opportunities to enable greater independence for those with learning disabilities
- Review of Brokerage model to expand brokerage functions to ensure effective and efficient placement commissioning; making better use of our resources and give greater choice to the people of Wrexham.
- Pilot Positive Behaviour Support App in Community Living Service and to better support citizens, increase responsiveness and accessibility of support plans
- Joint working between reablement and prevention services to strengthen and unify service delivery for our citizens

Jargon Buster - 'Brokerage'

Brokerage is about sourcing a range of suitable support options that meet the needs of the client and enables the most suitable provision to be made.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

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

This is what we did

Complete the Kickstart Project

The Kickstart project includes a provision of up to 14 placements for children and young people aged 16+ with complex needs. The project has been facilitated by a Steering Group, meeting regularly to review project timescales and direct actions to ensure it is delivered and meets its objectives.

Whilst there was some initial delays due to construction factors outside our control, the project has delivered the completion and handover of:

- 1 x 4 bedroom property - already occupied
- 2 x 1 bedroom flats - already occupied
- 4 x 2 bedroom properties - 1 x already occupied 3x ready for occupation

A robust referral process accompanies the planning and transition of young people to these properties and has proved to be a valuable addition to the placements that Children's Services are able to offer to support our children and young people.

Increase Respite Provision

This year, the Corporate Parenting Panel developed and launched their Accommodation Sub-Group, the aims of which are to:

- Identify suitable accommodation and provide specific support for Care Leavers aged 16 years or older in the County Borough;
- Agree and implement the Care Leavers Pathway;
- Secure larger or more appropriate accommodation for those willing to foster children and for children with disabilities; and
- Assist vulnerable families whose housing needs currently cannot be addressed as there are substantial barriers such as rent arrears, etc. preventing rehousing

This was a joint partnership between the Housing Department and Children Services.

Although the remit of this Sub Group was to develop and implement solutions to address the above issues, it was agreed that the first priority was to source additional accommodation for Care Leavers aged 16 years and over.

Development of the Miner's Rescue Station for Care Leavers

Our Care Leavers Offer has been progressed throughout the year and we are currently in the process of developing our accommodation pathways for young people which will provide varying degrees of support on their pathway to independence and their own tenancy. We hope to achieve this by continuing to develop our in house Supported Lodging's Service, Kick Start Project, Step Down Project, When I'm ready (WIR) and use of our Training Flat. The Leaving Care Team are seeing more care leavers take advantage of the `reconnecting to care` policy with pathways back into education or employment up to the age of 25. Where Care leavers do not wish to take advantage of this, details of how to `reconnect` are given to each care leaver prior to their exit interview.

In 2022/23 we intend to continue with the development of our Care Leaver's Offer with the offer of ILM Level 2 in Leadership to 10 Care Experienced young people 18+ through the Fuse Research Project starting in June and the Basic Income Pilot which is due to launch in the summer.

Increased recognition of Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings Hosts

In 2022 the Council's Executive Board agreed increases in the allowance paid to Local Authority Foster Carers and Supported Lodging Hosts. These increases are intended to recognise the valuable role that these carers and hosts have in young people's lives and to attract more citizens to consider becoming foster carers and hosts in Wrexham.

It was agreed to increase the Wrexham weekly rate annually in line with the increase in percentage (Percentage (%)) that Welsh Government recommend for the national minimum weekly allowance for Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings hosts. Agreement was also given for further investment to increase the basic rate allowance for foster carers, and amend the age banding for the basic rate and professional allowance rates with effect from 1st February 2023.

It was also agreed to increase the current weekly rates paid to Supported Lodgings Hosts, which have not been increased since 2013 by 80% from 1st January 2023 to allow for inflation and to bring them in line with Foster Carers payments.

This is what we want to do in 2023-24

- Review the use of Family Group Meetings to look at alternative accommodation needs for children and supporting families to remain together using local community networks.
- Further development of the Care Closer to Home project.
- Review and improve pathways for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Develop and define the model of delivery for our children service to include a strengthened trauma informed practice.

5. How we deliver for our citizens

A. Developing our workforce

Our workforce development team continues to offer a range of online training sessions, eLearning modules and face to face training for the social care sector. The regional [Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme \(SCWWDP\) 2022/23](#) grant application has been submitted and our local plan has been published on our website.

Wrexham's grant allocation (which includes 30% match funding) is the same as last year £472,012.

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

As part of the department's drive to grow its own social care professionals and tap into the talented and committed employees we already have working for the council, Social Care has committed to sponsoring up to eight employees to study for a BA Degree in Social Work on an annual basis. This year (2022/23) six employees were successful in their application and started their degree. We are currently processing applications for the 2023/24 cohort. The Social Worker course is three years of full time, long-distance learning via the Open University.

We have also offered an opportunity for three employees to study for a BA Degree in Occupational Therapy with a guaranteed job as a Social Worker or Occupational Therapist at the end. The Occupational Therapy course is four years of part time study at Glyndwr University.

This year we have also delivered a significant amount of Mental Capacity Act (MCA) training in preparation for Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS). Positive Behavioural Support training has been a priority for providers and will continue to be in 2023/ 202, as will trauma informed practice.

More information about [regional and local training and qualification priorities, emerging effective practice and training initiatives](#) can be found on our website.

B. Finances and planning for the future

Since the 2018/19 financial year adult social care have delivered £4.2m of savings and children's social care have delivered £225k of savings. In 2020/21 an additional £2.5m was allocated to the Social Care Budget, followed by a further £3.5m in 2021-22 to Children's services to deal with the significant increase in specialist provision.

The pressure in Children's Social Care continued into 2022/23 with a further £5m allocated to the Children's Social Care budget due to service demand and increased numbers of the younger people it is having to support, along with the continued need for the use of agency staff due to the difficulties in finding suitable permanent staff to appoint.

In addition, a further £2.4m was allocated to the Adult Social Care budget in 2022/23 to meet the additional costs of introducing the Real Living Wage for care workers as set out by the Deputy Minister for Social Services, together with an increase in provision for residential and nursing home fee increases.

This underlying pressure is expected to continue into the medium term and is reflected as a commitment in the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Medium Term Financial Plan with an additional £7m invested in 2023/24 to meet Social Care Demand and Workforce pressures followed by a further commitment of £6.6m over the next two financial years.

The year end financial position for Social Care of £17 million overspend reflects the demand pressures we currently face. For 2023-24 we will work to deliver services within our cash limited budget.

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 Social Care 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 Board meets every two months to review progress against the SCIB Action plan, with regular reports provided to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Members and end of phase reporting to all Members. The senior political and officer leadership provided is crucial in underpinning the sustained positive changes that are being achieved.

Partnership working

Wrexham County Borough Council is a partner of the North Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB). This is a board consisting of all 6 local authorities, health board and third sector partners from across the region. They provide a collective approach to the development of services and oversight of regional monies provided by Welsh Government. Where possible they are there to look for ways to deliver projects and solutions on a North Wales wide footprint.

To inform this work, RPBs must produce regional Population Needs Assessments, Market stability Report and annual reports on progress against key pieces of work. These must demonstrate citizen engagement and co-production. WCBC have been involved in the delivery of this work throughout the last year and you can find links to the published documents here:

Further sub regional (Wrexham and Flintshire - East Area) groups are in place that feed information into the North Wales wide work. And then there are forums set up local to Wrexham, focussing on areas such as Dementia and Unpaid Carers so that the lived experience an Unpaid Carer voice can be heard alongside Local authority, Health and third sector partners.

Safeguarding arrangements

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and to minimise the effect of abuse and supporting vulnerable people who are affected.

We also ensure children and vulnerable adults wellbeing are promoted, taking into account their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on action.

Grounded by the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019), we ensure safeguarding is at the forefront of everything we do and value the relationships and partnerships we have established with our multi agency partners and voluntary organisations.

Our commitment to safeguarding is supported by investment in workforce training. Working in partnership with Human Resources and Organisational Development, we ensure safeguarding training is delivered throughout the year which covers basic safeguarding awareness and multi-agency working and sharing of information, including individual targeted subjects where trends or patterns are emerging locally or nationally.

Safeguarding is embedded in the day to day work of all our teams from our preventative services to those teams responsible for undertaking longer term assessments and care and support services working with children/young people and vulnerable adults.

Social Care is supported by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team, which brings together several roles to ensure there are robust arrangements for oversight, quality assurance and challenge over all statutory processes.

The Department's Adult Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Team ensure that adults at risk receive support within statutory timescales, investigations are coordinated and timely and safeguarding plans are in place to protect adults.

The DoLS arm of the team remain responsible for protecting a person who lacks capacity to consent to their care and treatment in order to keep them safe from harm.

As a Department, we value learning and development as the key to continuous improvement, and work diligently to create and maintain a learning environment across Social Care. This is supported by a robust annual audit framework, providing us with regular opportunities to measure practice and standards of service delivery; safeguard our most vulnerable, and provide ample opportunities for self-evaluation and challenge.

6. Further information

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

Council Complaints and Compliments

wrexham.gov.uk/service/contact

Council Plan

Overarching plan that defines where the council focuses its energies

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

Council Structure

wrexham.gov.uk/council

Dewis Cymru

dewis.wales

North Wales Safeguarding Board

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

northwalessafeguardingboard.wales

Wrexham Public Service Board

wrexhampsb.org

Your Voice Wrexham

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

yourvoicewrexham.net

Council Reports and Documents

Charging Policy

wrexham.gov.uk/service/adult-social-care

Performance Evaluation Report (October 2020)

careinspectorate.wales

Report on Regulated Care Services in Wrexham

careinspectorate.wales/service-directory

Transport web-pages

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

Welsh Language Standards

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

Workforce Development training plan, brochure and mid-year report

wrexham.gov.uk/service/workforce-development

Wrexham Council Workforce Strategy

wrexham.gov.uk/service/workforce-development

Wrexham travel plan - Wrexham Connected

wrexham.gov.uk/services/key-council-documents

7. Appendix 1: Performance Measurement Framework

Standard 1

Helping people achieve the well-being outcomes they want.

Performance Metric	2022-23 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	5,302	Consistent performance. On par with 2021-22.
CA/002 - The total number of contacts to statutory social services by adult carers received during the year where advice or assistance was provided	No Data	No Data
CSC/014 - Percentage (%) of assessments completed within statutory timescales	76.78%	Overall improvement from 2021-22 74.71%

Standard 2

Working with people and partners to protect and promote physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Performance Metric	2022-23 Out-Turn	Comment
AD/032 - The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified	24	Targeted efforts to improve the recording of advocacy in 2023-24.
AD/033 - Total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified and provided	17	Targeted efforts to improve the recording of advocacy in 2023-24.
CSC/0010a - Percentage (%) of assessments completed where there was evidence of the Active Offer of Welsh	99.31%	Consistent performance. On par with 2021-22.
CSC/034 - Percentage (%) of initial core group meetings held within timescale	69.95%	Overall, slight improvement from 2021-22.

Standard 3

Safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm.

Performance Metric	2022-23 Out-Turn	Comment
CSC/033 - Percentage (%) of initial child protection conferences held within timescale	75%	Significant improvement in comparison with 2021-22 54.70%
AD/023 - Total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk where it is necessary for enquiries to be made	900	Wrexham continue to perform exceptionally well in response to Adult Safeguarding reports.
AD/024 - Total number of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse	826 91.77%	Wrexham continue to perform exceptionally well in response to Adult Safeguarding reports.

Standard 4

Helping people to learn, develop and participate in society.

Performance Metric	2022-23 Out-Turn	Comment
CSC/054a - Of Care Leavers (Categories 1, 2 and 4), the Percentage (%) who have completed at least 3 months of consecutive employment, education or training in the 12 months since leaving care	57.14%	Slight reduction compared to 2021-22 66.67%
AD/010 - Percentage (%) of packages of reablement completed during the year which reduced, maintained or mitigated the need for support	No Data	No Data

Standard 5

Helping people maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

Performance Metric	2022-23 Out-Turn	Comment
CSC/038 - Percentage (%) of children looked after at 31st March who were registered with a GP within 10 working days of the start of their placement	No Data	No Data
CSC/042 - Percentage (%) of health assessments for LAC due in the year that have been undertaken	No Data	No Data
CSC/052 - Percentage (%) of Young People that required and were allocated a personal advisor	No Data	No Data

Standard 6

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

Performance Metric	2022-23 Out-Turn	Comment
CSC/055 - Percentage (%) young people leaving care who move into a "When I am Ready" placement	No Data	No Data
AD/015a - Percentage (%) of Residential Care services started during the year	No Data	No Data
AD/015b - Percentage (%) of Domiciliary Care services started during the year	No Data	No Data