

Caerphilly County Borough Council

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2023-2024



ENABLING OUR RESIDENTS TO THRIVE



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1. Introduction

The Statutory Director of Social Services is required to produce an annual report summarising the local authority's social care functions and priorities for improvement as legislated under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The production of the annual report is an opportunity to recognise the hard work, resilience and commitment of all of our staff and carers which, as always, has been exceptional. Although we have ongoing challenges in relation to recruitment and retention linked to the Council's salary scales, Caerphilly is fortunate to be able to rely on staff who are passionate about what they do, feel supported to deliver good services and are genuinely committed to improving outcomes for our citizens.

Overall performance across the Directorate has been strong despite significant pressures relating to increasing demand for services and the increasing complexity of needs being presented. This annual report confirms that all the identified service priorities for the 2023/24 financial year have been met.

It is important to acknowledge the key role that partnership working plays in the delivery of social care services specifically the joint working with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the National Probation Service, Gwent Police and a range of Third Sector providers. As a result, strategically and increasingly operationally, the Gwent Regional Partnership Board continues to influence service development and delivery.

Going into 2024/25, the Directorate continues to face challenges specifically in relation to the Council's financial pressures and the implementation of a brand new social care IT system. In addition, changes to the annual report process are coming into force from the end of the financial year effecting the production of the 2024/25 report. It is intended that the annual report will form part of the National Performance Improvement Framework going forward.

Despite these challenges, my staff are committed, enthusiastic and determined to continue to deliver the best possible services across every element of Social Services.



Gareth Jenkins
Interim Statutory Director of Social Services

2. Director's Summary

As referenced above, Welsh Government has undertaken a review of the performance reporting and have subsequently implemented a National Performance Framework for Social Services. During the consultation process and in response to the Covid Pandemic, the annual performance reporting mechanisms were replaced with monthly 'checkpoint' data submissions to Welsh Government.

Corporately, each service area is required to undertake a Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA) which is presented to Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council.

Taken together, the checkpoint data and DPA provide an overview of Social Services performance against agreed priorities.

What went well?

- All service priorities have either been completed fully or form part ongoing core service delivery.
- Performance across both operational service areas has been maintained at positively high levels.
- For Adult Services, the number of people requesting and receiving services remains constant however, the position in respect of un-commissioned hours of care has improved significantly during 2023/24 with the average monthly hours of care that could not be provided standing around 110 hours at the year end compared to a previous high of 530 hours.
- The number of assessments and reviews completed across Adult Services remained consistent despite the increase in complexity of issues being presented.
- The number of people waiting for the provision of a care package has, on average, been 12 at any one time.
- For Children's Services, the numbers of referrals progressing for assessment remained relatively stable however, complexity of the issues presented has increased.
- The number of Children Looked After (CLA) has remained stable despite increasing demands and the number of children included on the Child Protection Register (CPR) has reduced slightly during the year.
- Positive feedback and compliments have continued to increase and now outnumber the complaints received.
- Despite the increasing demand across the Directorate, Social Services reported a budget underspend as a result of significant staffing vacancies and additional in-year Welsh Government grant funding.

- During 2022/23, the majority of staff teams and services in the Directorate moved locations in accordance with the Corporate accommodation strategy.

What did not go so well?

- There continues to be fragility across the social care sector, particularly in relation to domiciliary care which can present challenges at times.
- Staff recruitment and retention issues continue to be a significant challenge with an increasing number of examples of Caerphilly falling behind neighbouring local authorities in terms of salaries.

What impact have we had?

- Vulnerable children and adults in need of care and support have continued to have their needs met through the provision of high quality services.
- CLA numbers have remained static and CPR numbers have reduced evidencing preventative measures and support services are effective.
- Whilst the level of complaints has remained stable, the number of compliments has continued to increase.
- Performance data confirms consistent service delivery.

What have we learned?

- Demand for services and the complexity of care needs continues to increase.
- Public and professional expectations continue to rise.
- The budget settlement going forward is going to be particularly challenging as 2024/25 will be the first year when there will be no growth in the budget to meet increasing demographic demands.

The Directorate Performance Assessment report can be found here: [:SOCIAL SERVICES DPA – 2023/24 year-end update - FINAL.pdf](#)

3. How are people shaping our services?

Caerphilly Social Services is committed to making sure that people can make their voice heard, whether this is about how our services are developed and delivered in the future or whether it is about a service they are receiving now. We do this in several different ways including, undertaking surveys, contract monitoring processes, Responsible Individual (RI) visits to care homes, complaints and compliments, consultation events and feedback from Regulatory Inspections.

The most important way of ensuring people's voices are heard and listened to is through every contact that our staff have with service users. This starts from the first point of contact with the Directorate. Our staff have all received Collaborative Communication training to provide them with the skills to have 'meaningful conversations' to identify 'what matters' to people including identifying the personal outcomes the individual wants to achieve and the support networks they may already have in place to rely on to meet these outcomes. Any plans to provide care or support are co-produced to ensure people's voices and choices are recorded and responded to appropriately.

Regulated services such as residential care and domiciliary care are registered under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act (RISCA) 2016 and inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). In line with requirements, all our registered services have completed Quality Assurance Reports which are submitted to CIW. Routine inspections, planned and unplanned, of services continue and the inspection reports and annual returns are all available on the CIW website:

[Home | Care Inspectorate Wales](#)

Engagement meetings have continued to be held with the CIW link Local Authority Inspector and the Director and Heads of Service.

Social Services has a three stage statutory process to follow when someone is unhappy with our services and wishes to make a complaint which is independent of the Council's Complaints Process. The three stages are:

Stage 1 – local resolution i.e. resolved within the service area

Stage 2 – formal investigation involving independent investigators

Stage 3 – referral to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) where the matter has been unable to be resolved at Stages 1 or 2.

Naturally, we endeavour to ensure that the handling of complaints is quick and effective with the result that the majority of issues are able to be resolved as early as possible.

The Annual Social Services Complaints and Compliments Report for 2023/24 was reported as an information item to Scrutiny Committee on 16th July 2024 and can be accessed via the following link:

[Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023-24.pdf \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](#)

During the year, the Directorate received 179 complaints, a drop of 10 from 2022/23. The Social Services Complaints and Information Team put significant effort into attempting to resolve issues to the customer's satisfaction at Stage 1 of the process. The Team record whether complaints are upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. This enables the Directorate to note any themes and trends from the findings to improve future practice and identify any isolated incidents of poor practice that may require attention.

Of the 179 complaints received at Stage 1, the following outcomes were noted:

- 13 were closed with 7 being withdrawn by the complainant themselves and 6 being subject of other processes where the issues raised could be more appropriately resolved i.e. ongoing legal proceedings
- 19 complaints were upheld – an increase from 13 in 2022/23
- 4 complaints were partially upheld – a drop from 8 in 2022/23
- 142 complaints were not upheld compared to 147 in 2022/23
- 1 complaint was ongoing at the year end

Of the 179 complaints received:

- 57 (32%) related to Adult Services
- 66 (37%) related to Children's Services and
- 56 (31%) related to the Corporate Complaints Procedure

12 complaints progressed to a Stage 2 formal investigation with 3 progressing to independent investigation, 6 being dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure and 3 being ongoing at the year end.

In addition, there were 13 contacts by our customers to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) – a slight increase on the previous year (9). Of these:

- In 6 cases, the PSOW confirmed that Caerphilly had followed due process
- In 4 cases, Caerphilly had been unable to follow procedures and so the matters were referred back to the Council to conclude
- 1 complainant withdrew their complaint and
- 2 cases were ongoing at the year end.

The Directorate appreciates the importance of learning from complaints and representations. General themes emerging from the complaints in 2023/24 included:

- Delays in communication or perceived miscommunication
- Delays in the provision of packages of care
- The consistency of carers calling to deliver care
- Requests for financial support
- Concerns in relation to the behaviour of Children Looked After

Equal emphasis needs to be placed on learning from positive outcomes and the Team also record praise and compliments in the form of thank you cards, letters and emails. During 2023/24, 193 compliments were received, of which 122 (63%) related to Adult Services and 71 (37%) related to Children's Services. This percentage split is similar to previous years and reflects the nature of the services being delivered by the two areas.

4. Promoting and improving the well-being of those we help

As stated in Section 3 above, staff within Caerphilly's Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service are trained to undertake 'meaningful conversations' with service users, their families and carers about 'what really matters' to them.

'Meaningful conversations' start with IAA staff the first time someone contacts us. These conversations concentrate on people's strengths, on working with people to maintain or regain their independence and utilising their own skills and networks to achieve their desired outcomes wherever possible.

It is important to acknowledge that the majority of contacts for Children's Services are from professionals and as a result the 'what matters' conversations with the child and/or their family are unable to take place until an assessment for Care and Support has commenced.

A guiding principle for Caerphilly Social Services is the promotion and maintenance of independence.

For Children's Services, this means supporting families to stay together and maintaining children within their homes and communities wherever it is safe to do so. This is underpinned by timely assessments of need and creative solutions being sought to help keep families together.

Whilst some families may have a negative view of Children's Social Services to start with, we ensure that children, young people and their parents and carers are fully involved in the assessment process and that they help to shape and influence their plan for care and support. Working in this way helps to improve working relationships over time.

To ensure that they have the opportunity to participate in planning and decision making processes and making their views known, all children have access to an Independent Advocate who can support them in meetings to ensure their voices are heard. We were the first Local Authority to develop a statutory Parent Advocacy service jointly funded by Families First. Welsh Government subsequently provided funding to roll the model out across all Local Authorities in Wales.

Supporting adults to retain or regain their independence is a key objective for Social Services.

We have full access to the national citizen's wellbeing database called DEWIS so that people can have quick and easy access to information directly from a website rather than having to make a call to Social Services and/or speaking to a professional where they may prefer not to. We have a dedicated lead officer to further progress the development of DEWIS.

Adult Services provide an assessment service for domiciliary care to look to promote people's independence wherever possible using a 'Reablement' approach. This has enabled people to be discharged from hospital and be assessed in their own homes. This has now been expanded to include older people in the community who have not previously received care and support from the local authority.

Working with the Health Board to gain access to their commissioned domiciliary care run has allowed speedier discharges of people from hospital who require a larger package of care thereby reducing their length of stay and enabling them to return to their own home which improves their well-being.

We continue to run a successful coffee shop staffed by 12 individuals with a learning disability who previously attended day services. We have employed 8 individuals on the Council's terms and conditions and are looking to increase this number.

How we addressed our priorities for 2023/24:

- We worked collaboratively with Blaenau Gwent to roll out training on collaborative conversations across adult services. We have developed a joint mentoring scheme and introduced reflective sessions across teams to embed practice
- Introduction of the assessment service has enabled a clear focus on promoting independence which is now reflected in care and support plans for those people who go on to require formal support.
- Learning from Caerphilly was shared across Wales to support the successful roll out of Parental Advocacy in Children's Services

Our priorities for 2024/25:

- To promote the uptake of direct payments by utilising the regional work and rolling out good practice guidelines.
- To work with health colleagues to train staff in balancing rights responsibilities and risks for people attending hospitals to promote their independence, choice and control.

- To research and develop improved ways of engaging children in their statutory review meetings for both Children Looked After and children on the Child Protection Register

5. Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

Caerphilly recognises the importance of working with people and our partners to improve outcomes for all service users and this will continue to be a priority for us going forward.

Caerphilly are active partners in the Gwent wide Children and Families Partnership which continues to prioritise the development of integrated approaches to supporting children and young people including the development of Windmill Farm, a regional residential assessment resource managed by Newport City Council in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board serving the five Gwent Local Authorities.

The Gwent wide Attachment Trauma Service has continued to offer advice, consultation and training to Caerphilly social work teams with the aim of supporting children and young people to remain living at home or remain in stable foster placements.

In response to the Welsh Government's policy to 'Eliminate Profit in Children's Residential Care' Children's Services gained Corporate and Political approval to expand in-house residential care provision including additional children's homes, supported accommodation for young people Leaving Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

Across Adult Services, we continued to develop services to prevent unnecessary admission to hospital and facilitate a safe timely discharge for individuals who have to be admitted. The Community Resource Team (CRT) has placed community staff in Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) to work with individuals, their families and Health professionals. Other initiatives include access to the Health Board's Domiciliary Care runs and the development of 'step closer to home' beds in care homes for temporary placements to prevent people staying in hospital once they are medically stable. CRT staff are now operating an in-reach therapy model at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan to enable Caerphilly residents to be assessed in hospital and followed up at home by the same staff member.

We have recognised that increasing numbers of people are experiencing lower level mental health issues and they were falling between existing services. In response we have developed a Team to address this gap. The Team work with people with anxiety, low mood, low self-esteem and related issues. The Mental Health Workers provide

emotional support throughout interventions and individuals are able to access the service by telephone during office hours. The service also supports individuals with housing, income, benefits, employment and healthy living where necessary, all utilising a wide variety of statutory, voluntary and third sector agencies.

As part of the Council's Place Shaping Programme, Cabinet agreed to allocate capital funding to develop two new respite facilities – one for adults and one for children. These developments will replace and increase existing provision to continue to support parents and carers in their unpaid caring roles.

How we addressed our priorities for 2023/24

- We worked with the Health Board and other local authorities to develop a two year plan to look at embedding practice to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and facilitate timely discharges . This included admission avoidance schemes such as falls response vehicle, first responder for mental health referrals, provision of specialist equipment and implementation of the trusted assessor model on the stroke ward at YYF.
- We undertook works of adaptation at a property to increase capacity for unplanned respite for children with disabilities and have commenced the process for registration with CIW.
- Demolition work on the site for the provision of two new respite houses has been completed. This now forms part of the Council's Place Shaping Programme.
- We developed and registered a one/two bedded children's home in Aberbargoed.
- We developed and opened a third House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) for our children aged 16 Plus including UASC, in Caerphilly Town

Our priorities for 2024/25:

- To progress the work of the two new respite houses by securing funding from the Regional Integrated Capital Fund to fund a projected shortfall due to ongoing increasing costs of materials.
- To open an additional property to provide unplanned respite for children with disabilities to support parent/carers.
- To work regionally with the Health Board and other Local Authorities to review the operating model at the front doors of hospital to improve the experience for people.
- To open a further one/two bedded children's home in Cefn Fforest

- To refurbish a large property to develop a 6 bedded supported accommodation property for children aged 16 Plus
- To confirm plans for a new build 4 bedded children's home as part of a new housing development in Rhymney

6. Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm

Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults is one of the highest priorities for the Council and the Corporate Safeguarding Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Social Services.

Safeguarding is everybody's business and is a key theme running through the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. Consequently, we make sure that our staff, contractors and partners are aware of their responsibilities in this area. A Corporate Safeguarding Policy is in place and a programme of training and awareness raising is ongoing. Each service area has an identified Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) to offer first line advice and support and periodic practice development groups are held to support the DSO's.

The Corporate Safeguarding Board produces an Annual Report for Elected Members and the 2023/24 report was shared with Scrutiny Committee on 16th July 2024. The report can be accessed via the following link:

[Link to Corporate Safeguarding Report](#)

The arrangements for improving safeguarding policies, procedures and practice across the region are led by the South East Wales Safeguarding Board for both Adults and Children (SEWSB) and the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Board. These Boards are supported by a Business Unit funded by the statutory partners and hosted by Caerphilly. The Boards have clear governance structures and their work is supported by a range of sub groups. Caerphilly are active partners on these Boards.

Within the Council, responsibility for children's and adults safeguarding sits within Children's Services. Although discrete service areas, they are managed by one Service Manager and capacity and resilience has been improved as a result. The Wales Safeguarding Procedures are fully embedded across the Directorate and decisions are made on all children's referrals within 24 hours ensuring full compliance with statutory procedures.

Despite delays, the National Safeguarding Training Framework is now scheduled to be fully implemented by the end of 2024/25. The Framework identifies the training requirements for 6 various 'groups' of staff. Group A is mandatory for all employees, Councillors, volunteers and contractors employed by the local authority. Group B is for staff with direct contact with the public who are likely to 'report concerns' and

Group C is for staff who will be expected to 'respond to concerns'. The three further groups (D, E and F) are for managers and strategic leaders.

How we addressed our priorities for 2023/24

- We continued to embed any relevant learning from adult and child practice reviews
- We responded to the changing requirements of the National Safeguarding Training Framework by:
 - Developing e-learning packages for Groups A and B
 - Working with the other Gwent local authorities to plan the joint commissioning of regional training for Group C Social Care staff.

Our priorities for 2023/24:

- To continue to respond to any relevant learning from adult and children's practice reviews
- To monitor compliance with the Group A and B safeguarding training across the Council
- To implement Group C training for Adult and Children's Services staff

7. Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

Supporting Children Looked After and young people Leaving Care to reach their full potential and achieve positive outcomes is a key priority for Children's Services and the Council's Corporate Parenting Group. Educational and vocational attainment is therefore monitored, promoted and celebrated.

Caerphilly has a proven track record of supporting young people into further and higher education and a number of Care Leavers have gained Degrees and similar or higher qualifications. 50% of Care Leavers continued to be engaged in education, training or employment 12 months after leaving care. Although our aspiration is to improve this figure, it is consistent with previous years and takes into account various factors which prevent young people from engaging including disability, mental health, parenthood and criminal activity.

We recognise that it is important for people to be more self-reliant and maintain their independence enabling them to participate fully in society and their local community. We have embedded the DEWIS information system so people can access information for themselves 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Enabling all adults to achieve their outcomes has been a key feature in the delivery of alternative day services. The learning from delivering services in a different way that meets individual needs was key in developing the new model of day services.

The coffee shop staffed by individuals who previously attended day services is now a real part of the community with positive feedback in relation to customer service and experience from local residents and visitors. The coffee shop frequently hosts plant sales and themed events to show case other aspects of the service. This is a great example of what can be achieved by delivering services differently.

How we addressed are our priorities for 2023/24

- We expanded employment opportunities in catering for individuals accessing day services. 8 people are now employed under the Council's terms and conditions whilst several others are currently choosing to remain as volunteers

Our priorities for 2024/2025:

- To continue to explore supported employment and training opportunities for individuals.

8. Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

We want to support children, young people and adults to be as socially active as possible, to feel they can make decisions for themselves and keep themselves safe.

We have embedded the “what matters conversations” across the Directorate and trained staff to enhance their skills to focus on outcomes and the strengths and assets of people, their families and networks.

Within Adult Services, we continued to recruit carers to our Shared Lives Scheme to enable us to offer more choice and increase the number of placements we can offer in family homes to people of all client groups. During 2023/24, Rhondda-Cynon-Taf became a partner which has further increased capacity and opportunities for short term, long term and emergency placements.

We have continued to facilitate Carers Groups across Caerphilly to enable carers to meet socially over a coffee. The Carers Team attend many events to promote their service and unpaid carers’ rights to an assessment.

The Directorate recognises that people having fulfilling relationships with those they are close to is really important for their well-being.

Within Adult Services, this has been prioritised through the expansion of the My Mates Club where adults with additional needs are supported to make appropriate relationship choices.

Within Children’s Services, wherever possible and whenever safe to do so, we ensure children are placed as close to their home communities as possible in order to support their links with their family and home. We recognise that for Children Looked After, maintaining contact with their families and their home communities is really important and we do everything we can to ensure family time arrangements (contact) meet the needs of everyone involved and are positive events.

There are increasing demands being placed on us to recruit more foster carers in order to meet the needs of children and we are fully engaged in the Foster Wales campaigns that support the recruitment, retention and support of foster carers.

Recruitment of all staff but particularly Qualified Social Workers is a significant and ongoing challenge and Caerphilly supports the national approaches being undertaken

by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) and Social Care Wales (SCW) to review national pay and terms and conditions.

How we addressed our priorities for 2023/24:

- Rhondda-Cynon-Taf joined the South East Wales Shared Lives Scheme which increased capacity for sessional, short term, long term and emergency placements
- We participated in the national work to review pay and terms and conditions for Registered social workers – the final report is expected in 2024.

Our priorities for 2024/25:

- To promote the use of direct payments for people to have choice and control over meeting their own outcomes
- To complete the refurbishment of Family Time centres at Woodfieldside in Blackwood and Ty Caledfryn in Caerphilly.

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

As stated above, Children's Services actively support Children Looked After to engage in education and training and provide individual support wherever necessary. In addition, children are encouraged to make the best use of their leisure time and are supported to engage in community activities wherever possible.

Children's Services has a well established operational protocol with Housing to ensure we can provide appropriate support to young people facing homelessness. We have a range of supported accommodation available including shared living provision, supported lodgings and supported tenancies. As stated in Section 5, we intend to expand our in-house provision of children's homes and other accommodation options to meet the needs of our children and young people.

For Adults, the Council is committed to developing dementia friendly communities so people can be supported to participate in daily living activities such as shopping, banking and eating out. You will see the dementia friendly signs in local establishments and many people wearing the blue flower badge indicating they have been trained as a 'dementia friend'.

Adult Services residential care homes ensure there are displays that reflect residents earlier lives to invoke and provoke memories. These displays change regularly and can be used to reflect current affairs and national events. The homes are now divided into small house units each with its own staff team so that personal relationships can be promoted for the benefit of the residents. The physical environment within some of the homes has also changed with the introduction of primary colours reflecting people's choice of their bedroom door and communal areas being brighter and more defined.

With our partners we expanded our Shared Lives Scheme to look at a health initiative which provides placements with families to prevent people going into hospital and/or facilitating them being discharged to a family home. This enables people to have time to recover, receive more therapy interventions and have an assessment of their needs in more appropriate surroundings. We are committed to this alternative model of accommodation.

How we addressed our priorities for 2023/24:

- We have developed employment opportunities for people in catering , in terms of making sweet and savoury products which are sold in Islwyn Coffee Shop
- We have made progress in respect of registering an additional property for unplanned respite for children with disabilities, appropriate works of adaptation have been completed and the environment is now child friendly

Our priorities for 2024/25:

- To develop further self-contained flats for adults with a learning and/or physical disability to enable them to live independently and increase their social networks
- To develop a six bedded supported accommodation property for young people Leaving Care and UASC's.

10. How we do what we do?

Our workforce and how we support their professional roles

Our staff are our greatest asset; a skilled and motivated workforce are essential to safeguard and support vulnerable people, promote independence and enhance service delivery. Ensuring that frontline practitioners and managers are supported and well trained is crucial to the success of our service. Our workforce has been relatively stable with good staff retention. However, we are seeing increasing challenges in recruiting to specific posts across both Adult and Children's Services and increasing pressures around retention due to the Council's current salary scales no longer being competitive with neighbouring Local Authorities.

We have a joint Workforce Development Team with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council who are responsible for delivering a training and development strategy that supports opportunities for staff at all levels in Social Services.

The Team has workforce development responsibility for the whole care sector which employs over 3,000 staff with approximately 50% employed by the local authority and 50% by independent and third sector. There are significant demand and supply challenges for staff to deliver Domiciliary Care and this is a UK wide crisis.

We continue to second staff to undertake the Social Work Degree.

Our financial resources and how we plan for the future

Budget management is embedded as a core function of Divisional Management Teams (DMTs) and the Senior Management Team (SMT) with the Financial Services Manager being a member of the Senior Management Team. Budget reports are discussed at DMT's and SMT on a regular basis and are periodically reported to Scrutiny Committee and Council.

The most significant growth in demand during 2023/2024 has continued to be in the following areas:

- Independent sector residential care for children
- Nursing care for older people
- Supported living for people with learning disabilities

The financial pressures being faced by the UK Government, Welsh Government and subsequently Local Government are significant and likely to grow. The budget position for 2023/24 was challenging but the pressures for 2024/25 and beyond are significant within a context of the Council needing to make savings in order to address projected deficits.

Ongoing reliance on time limited Welsh Government grant funding streams undermines longer term service sustainability. The Regional Integration Fund (RIF) has afforded a short period of stability to the current funding arrangements however, plans for this funding to cease in 2 years will have a devastating impact on services. Work is currently underway to review the schemes and projects funded locally and regionally to identify the risks and develop potential exit plans.

Our partnership working, Political and Corporate leadership, governance and accountability

Part 9 of the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act places a key emphasis on partnership working and to this end the Directorate is a key partner of the Greater Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) with the other four local authorities in Gwent and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

The work of the RPB has a major influence over the work of Social Services in Caerphilly and in particular with Health. Since its inception the RPB has produced:

- An Area Plan
- A Market Position statement which outlines the provision of existing services and what services may be required in the future.
- An Annual report which pulls together all of the work of the RPB.

Further information on the work of the RPB and copies of the above reports can be found at its website at www.gwentrpb.wales/home.

However, our partnership working is not limited to the RPB. We have a significant range of services provided with other local authorities and partners including:

- A joint workforce development team with Blaenau Gwent
- A Gwent frailty Service developed in conjunction with the four other local authorities and the health board
- A joint Regional Safeguarding Board covering all partners across Gwent.
- A Shared Lives scheme run on behalf of seven local authorities and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

- A joint regional Adoption Service
- A Regional MyST Programme
- An integrated equipment service and
- A joint Emergency Duty Team

Political support for Social Services in Caerphilly remains strong. The Director of Social Services is a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team which meets weekly to consider key decisions on strategic and operational priorities, prior to these issues / decisions going onto Scrutiny / Council.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services attends the Social Services and Education Scrutiny Committee supported by the Director, Heads of Service and relevant senior managers. Scrutiny Committee consists of sixteen elected members and meets every six weeks to oversee the performance of the Directorate and to consider any policy / service developments prior to them being considered by Cabinet.

11. Looking forward – the new Annual Report format for 2024/25

Under the new guidelines, we are required to assess our performance against the four components of the National Performance Improvement Framework – People, Prevention, Partnerships and Well-being. Each component includes two high level quality standards and these are set out below for information:

People

- All people are equal partners who have voice, choice and control over their lives and achieve what matters to them.
- Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled, well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision

Prevention

- The need for care and support is minimised and escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring the best outcomes for people are achieved
- Resilience within our communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively encouraging and supporting people who need care and support including carers, to learn, develop and participate in society

Partnerships

- Effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for people
- People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners

Well-being

- People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm
- People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own informed decisions so that they can achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible

This revised annual reporting structure addresses the Performance Improvement Framework and as a result, will form an integral part of the Care Inspectorate Wales' performance evaluation of Caerphilly Social Services.