

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Social Services Annual Report 2018/19 and 2019/20 Priorities



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If you are reading this report online there are links in the last section that give you further information about our services, initiatives and key documents. There is also a glossary at the back that may help explain unfamiliar words and terms.

The report sets out our improvement journey in 2018/19 and demonstrates how we have promoted well-being through our services. If you receive a service from us please let us know if you think this report is a fair reflection of your experiences over the past 12 months.

We welcome any comments you have and your views are crucial if we are to continue to improve services to achieve your outcomes.

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Section 1: Introduction



This is our third Social Services Annual Report as prepared under the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, both of which place a statutory requirement on the Council to report annually on its social services functions.

The focus of this legislation is on well-being, and our report summarises the key things that we are doing in Flintshire to support our most vulnerable residents. It describes our challenges, provides our stakeholders with a picture of how we have performed and improved over the last year, and sets out our priorities for the coming year. Stakeholders include the people using our services, our staff, elected members, the general public, our partners, regulators and Welsh Government. Engagement with stakeholders is fundamental to what we do, and informs the development of our services and future plans.

In the report we evaluate our performance against last year's improvement priorities and set out our priorities for next year. These focus on well-being and are linked to the six National Outcomes Standards, which are:

NQS 1	Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve
NQS 2	Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being
NQS 3	Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm
NQS 4	Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society
NQS 5	Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships
NQS 6	Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

Section 2: Director's Summary of Performance

Welcome to the eighth annual report for social services in Flintshire and our third under both the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. The purpose of the report is to reflect on how we have performed during 2018/19, and to highlight our priorities and intentions for 2019/20.

Increased life expectancy and complexity of need have a huge impact on demand for social care services and are much-talked-about. Economic austerity is likely to continue indefinitely, and the challenge we face is to provide **high quality services that are both cost-effective and sustainable. Across all council portfolios, and through our elected governance, there is wholehearted support for these objectives.** 2018 saw the launch of our **Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2018-2023**, which sets out how we will work together to ensure that looked after children and care leavers get the support they need and deserve. Early achievements for care leavers include the offer of a work-place mentoring scheme and a landmark discount in council tax. Working smarter is key to our work across all service areas, and our new **Digital Strategy captures our corporate objective to use digital technologies to improve services.**

Last year we had many notable successes. In September, we were delighted to win a prestigious **Social Care Wales Accolade** for our work in improving quality of life for older people living in care homes. Awarded for **'excellent outcomes for people of all ages by investing in the training and development of staff'**, the accolade recognized our innovative and partnership approach to service development. We are equally proud of our involvement in the development of the **North Wales Safeguarding Board's self-neglect protocol**, which was **highly commended** at the accolades ceremony in Cardiff, and for the award that our **Early Help Hub** received at the North Wales Police Problem Orientated Partnerships (POP) awards in August. Our **corporate commitment to building resilient, age-friendly communities** was also acknowledged in the spring when the Older People's Commissioner officially recognized Leeswood and Pontblyddyn as the **first age-friendly community in North Wales.**

Other highlights include the introduction of the **Community Support Initiative** for people living with disabilities, a flagship new service that demonstrates our focus on **prevention and early intervention.** 2018 also saw the launch of the **North**

Wales Integrated Autism Service. Offering advice and support that was previously unavailable to people with autism, this service also gives guidance across council services and partner agencies, **helping us all work together** to support those affected. To achieve greater structural capacity in meeting the demand for social care services, we have **continued to invest in our capital programme.** Llys Raddington Extra Care Scheme opened its doors in Flint in October and plans for the development of a further scheme in Holywell, to be named Plas Yr Ywen, are underway. We have invested in a new 32-bed residential facility adjacent to Marleyfield House residential care home for older people in Buckley, and in Hwb Cyfle, a new day centre in Queensferry for people with learning disabilities. Addressing the housing needs of vulnerable groups in our communities will be a continued focus for us next year.

None of these improvements would be possible without a **hard-working, dedicated and loyal workforce.** Teams across our services have striven to improve their outcomes-based practice, and their personal well-being has been supported corporately through the introduction of an employee assistance programme **Care First.** Guidance for managers on supporting social care staff through traumatic events has recently been published, and the **Council's Working & Caring Policy** helps staff balance caring, home and work life responsibilities.

Next year, **our innovation and desire to improve services** will see us take the lead in a **regional programme to transform learning disability services** across North Wales, giving us the opportunity to pool resources to meet demand. Recognising that our fostering service needs investment, **we will be the first Council in Wales to introduce the internationally-endorsed Mockingbird model.** Across Council services, we will continue to build **resilience within our communities**, and will work to embed a social value approach into our work to bring additional community benefits. Inclusion is endorsed at a corporate level, and our goal is to become the **first Dementia-Friendly Council** in North Wales.

The year ahead will present significant challenges, not least in our commitment to ensure that residential placements for our looked after children are closer to home. We fully endorse the First Minister's emphasis on safely reducing the need for children to enter care and will continue to expand our preventative and early intervention services to support families and children to stay together. In facing this challenge and others, **we will look for innovative and creative solutions.** We see the **funding flexibilities** extended to us by the consolidation of Welsh Government programme grants as an exciting opportunity to be more strategic in **developing services that are preventative, integrated, cost-effective and sustainable.** Working to take this forward in early help and prevention services will help us manage demand for services and be more responsive to the needs of local people.

The priority of our Senior Management Team is to continue to safeguard and provide support to the most vulnerable members of our community, ensuring that ongoing budget pressures do not place people at risk. Reporting annually on our improvement journey gives us the opportunity to reflect on the challenges we face in doing so, and to acknowledge the hard work that makes our achievements possible. We look forward to further success in the year ahead, and sincerely thank all of our staff and partners for their contribution in improving the outcomes and well-being of adults, children, carers and families across Flintshire. Our thanks also go to the individuals who have allowed us to share their stories to help bring to life the difference that our work is making.



Neil Ayling
Chief Officer Social Services



Councillor Christine Jones
Cabinet Member for Social Services

“None of these improvements would be possible without a **hard-working, dedicated and loyal workforce.**”

Section 3: How are people shaping our services?

In the spirit of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 we want to develop our services by involving the people who use them, and here we give you a flavor of how we are doing this.

Helping young people participate

Corporate Parenting is the phrase we use to describe our responsibility for children who become looked after. This corporate commitment is shared between Council staff, elected members and other people who provide support to children in our care. 2018 saw the launch of our **Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2018-2023**, which outlines what we will do to ensure that looked after children and care leavers get the support they need and deserve. **The Strategy was informed by the views and experiences of our young people**, and focusses on the importance of stable home placements, education and learning opportunities, promoting health and well-being, and leisure and employment opportunities. Knowing and understanding what children and young people need is crucial if we are to improve their outcomes, and here are some of the ways we go about this.

Bright Spots

We support a programme called **Bright Spots**, which is funded by the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Early in 2018 all of our looked after children aged 4-18 years were asked to participate in an online survey. We wanted to find out how they feel about their support, relationships and opportunities. 61 (36%) responded, and here are some of the key findings:

What we are doing well:

- The majority feel safe and settled in their placements and trust their carers
- More young people (96%) in Flintshire feel they are being taught life skills compared with young people (86%) in other local authorities.
- School is working well for all the youngest children aged 4-7 years.

What we need to improve:

- Making sure that reviews of contact arrangements consider the views of all children.
- Providing opportunities for young people aged 11-18yrs to build self-esteem and positive self-image.
- Considering how young people might be reassured about the support they can expect to receive in the future.

Young Voices Out Loud

Members of our Participation Group for looked after children and care leavers were amongst those who took part in the **Bright Spots** survey. This group meets regularly with our Participation Officer and in 2018/19 changed its name to **Young Voices Out Loud**. It has participated at various forums, including the regional Voices from Care, and met with notable people and bodies including Care Inspectorate Wales and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. The group assists with the planning and hosting of our annual **Pride of Flintshire awards**, an event that celebrates the achievements of our looked after children and care leavers and recognises the contribution of their carers. The Group has also created a 'do's and don'ts list' concerning the treatment of children in foster care, and is working with TGP Cymru, a leading children's rights charity, offering ideas about how children and young people in care can be reached with advocacy support.

We are developing a **Corporate Parenting Action Plan** with our colleagues in health and education so that we can be specific about how we will deliver the commitments outlined in our Corporate Parenting Strategy. In doing so, we will continue to engage with children and young people and will use the key findings from Bright Spots when developing the Plan. The experience of one member of Young Voices Out Loud is captured in the Strategy:

"I've had a positive experience in care and I have felt supported and listened to." *(Young person)*



Engaging with local people: from service design to delivery

Designing new services

In section 4 we tell you about our **new community services that support people living with disabilities**. Having reviewed our existing commissioned services, we met with local groups and users representing young and older people to find out what they needed going forwards. Key themes emerged, included integration with others, transport, community facilities, services for deaf people and support for people with autism. During the commissioning process, these views were represented on the scoring panel, and they informed the development of the service specifications for the new contracts that were awarded. Some of the things that people told us were:

“We should get out to our community and mix, it would stop us being lonely.” *(Older person)*

“I’m fed up of being asked to bring a member of my family.”

(Person with a hearing impairment speaking about access to interpreters)

“I had to google what my child had.”

(Parent talking about support for children with autism)

Reviewing service delivery

The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Wales Act (2016) came into operation in April 2018. It focusses on quality and the impact that services are having on the people using them. The Act has prompted us to consider how we can better involve the people who use our care and support services and how we review how well these services are performing. We have asked Taith, an independent organization, to help us with this. By meeting with users of our services, staff and others, we hope to find out how positive outcomes for people are being achieved, and to identify barriers we must overcome. Starting in April 2019 within in-house services, quality review meetings will be held, and our engagement feedback will help us make judgements about how well our services are operating. We will report on our progress next year.

Future plans

Engagement with users and other stakeholders will be key in the development of our new regional programme **‘North Wales Together: Seamless Service for People with Learning Disabilities**. This will further enhance learning disability services across the region, and we will tell you more about this in Section 4. We will also tell you about **our goal to become the first Dementia-Friendly Council in North Wales**. This will involve significant co-production and engagement work with local people and third sector partners, and across all council services. The process will be led by a multi-representative **Dementia-Friendly Steering Group** and will be a key focus for us in 2019/20.

Section 4: Promoting and Improving the well-being of those we help

NQS 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.

Continuing to meet the requirements of The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Wales Act (2016)

The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Wales Act (2016) (RISCA) puts people receiving care and support at the heart of the inspection process. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) now assesses how well services are meeting people's well-being outcomes, and the Act enhanced the role and reporting functions of the Responsible Individual (RI) within provider organisations. In both in-house services and the independent sector, our workforce development team is supporting both the registration of the domiciliary workforce and the improved knowledge required for the enhanced role of Responsible Individual. In Section 3 we told you about our engagement strategy for the development of our services, and we will continue to focus on ensuring that users' voices are at the heart of how we progress and support the successful delivery of RISCA.

Developing outcomes-focussed practice

Across our social work teams, we have continued to develop our processes and practices to make them outcomes-focussed. In adult services, peer group supervision sessions consider good examples of outcomes and how the person can be supported to meet them, and creative practice groups meet to examine innovative and bespoke ways of meeting identified outcomes. Our quality panel considers social work applications for funding of services, ensuring that all paperwork is person-centred and written where possible in the persons own words, and small changes made to the format of our assessments and care plans have assisted our practitioners to focus on the person rather than the process. This example demonstrates the benefit of outcomes-based practice:

Following a lengthy hospital stay, a gentleman and his social worker agreed that a period of rehabilitation in a residential home would be beneficial. Being wheelchair dependent, the gentleman took a keen interest in tending to the home's raised plants, and soon became known as the unofficial gardener.



His work, which was valued by others, gave him a sense of purpose and contributed to his physical recovery. Now living independently, the gentleman has plans to transform his own garden into a co-produced fruit and vegetable growing area, explaining "I want to get the community together and give a chance to people like me who are stuck in the house all day to get out there."

Improving quality of life for older people

We continue to support residential care staff to use person-centred practices that promote the well-being of older people. Our programme introduces an accreditation scheme within care homes and uses the self-assessment tool **Progress for Providers** to evidence change. This partnership approach doesn't demand more money, but simply requires everyone involved to do things differently.

One manager told us about a gentleman with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's who had left the residential home several times without informing staff, causing significant concern for his safety. Using the one-page profile, communication chart and learning log, it soon became apparent that this gentleman had always been very practical. He was matched with the home's handyman and supported to assist with weekly maintenance checks. The manager reported that staff are now working together to support this gentleman to make some sense of what is happening to him, seeing him as a person in need of purpose, and not someone they have to stop leaving the building unaccompanied.

In September 2018, we were delighted when the programme **won a prestigious Social Care Wales Accolade** and was a finalist at the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) awards. The Social Care Wales Accolades recognize excellence within social care in Wales, and the award won was specifically for **excellent outcomes for people of all ages by investing in the training and development of staff**. Reflections from people involved certainly concur with this:

“Staff have an increase in confidence as they recognise and adapt their support based on what matters to people. As a manager I have seen the programme give real empowerment to the individuals living here, ensuring that their thoughts and wishes are at the forefront of all we do.” *(Clare Roberts, Manager of Haulfryn Care Home in Cymau),*

“Progress for Providers has been invaluable in raising awareness amongst managers, owners and staff of care services about what person-centred care is and how it should be delivered. This has resulted in an improved quality of life for people using care services.” *(Officer from Care Inspectorate Wales)*

[Click here to find out more about Progress for Providers.](#)

Promoting the Welsh Language

It's essential that our services take into account the language and cultural needs of local people. We recognize that language is a key factor in building positive relationships and have made changes such as developing our IT systems to record language choice. Welsh language use amongst Council staff is a corporate commitment and work is ongoing towards fulfilling all of our Welsh Language Standards (WLS), which replaced our Welsh Language Scheme in 2016. Completion of the Welsh language skills assessment is now high at 87% and we are working towards this becoming 100%. We continue to work hard to ensure that all employees have completed basic Welsh language skills awareness training, and that public-facing staff receive more specialist training when required.

Improving services with digital technologies

Improving on-line services

Helping local people find the right information to improve their well-being is a corporate objective, and our new **Digital Strategy** sets out how we will use digital technologies to improve our services. Early work has focused on the availability of on-line information and services, including the development of a simple online eligibility checker allowing people to determine whether they are eligible to pay for social care services. We plan to invest in digital apprentices, who will update and improve web content across all Council services. To support the local care sector, we have developed [Care@Flintshire](#), an online resource hub which provides a portal for providers of residential and domiciliary care for older people to share knowledge, access resources and keep up to date with local developments.

Although we are committed to using digital technologies to improve our services, we are equally committed to ensuring that we do not exclude people who do not have technological access or skill. Continued support for these people will be available from frontline officers and via our **Flintshire Connects** offices located across the County.

Improving our data

Working smarter by improving our data is another corporate commitment captured in our Digital Strategy, and one way we are achieving this is by using Graphical Information Systems (GIS). The social services brokerage team, responsible for recording domiciliary care allocations and providers, has historically used a manual mapping process to do this. Our new digital mapping process is helping us support our domiciliary providers by creating more efficient routes and increasing the availability of care.

[Click here to find out more about how the modernisation of this process has resulted in other benefits.](#)

Exploring assistive technologies

Another early objective of the Digital Strategy is the exploration of assistive technologies as an alternative method of support to the traditional model of home care visits. This might, for example, involve using Alexa to remind a person to take medications, or the embedding of sensors in kettles and doorways to sense movement and give safety assurances.

Our priorities for 2019/20 will be to:

- Expand the Progress for Providers Programme to include older people who are living at home with domiciliary care services
- Implement objectives set out in the Digital Strategy and explore new technology and assistive technology solutions to support improvements in services
- Support the delivery of the Children's Transformation Programme - integrated early intervention and intensive support for children and young people

NQS2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental and emotional well-being.

Additional services for people with autism

It's estimated that Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) affect 1 in 100 people, with many falling into a gap between services. In Section 3, we told you how local people have raised this issue. Welsh Government has committed £13 million up to 2021 to the development of an Integrated Autism Service across Wales, and in June 2018 the **North Wales Integrated Autism Service (IAS)** was launched. This is jointly hosted by Flintshire Council and the Health Board on behalf of the North Wales region and offers advice and support that has historically been unavailable for people affected by autism. This includes new adult diagnostic services, support in meeting personal outcomes for adults who do not receive statutory mental health or disability services, and advice and support for families and carers of children with autism. The IAS also offers training, consultation and advice to other Council services and partner agencies, **helping us all work together to support people with autism**. One person told us:

“There is some very valuable work being done with this service in terms of helping those who have fallen through the gaps in services in the past. Diagnosis is being speeded up, sign-posting, awareness raising and so on.” *(Person using the IAS)*

Community support for people with disabilities

In Section 3 we described how we consulted with local groups in the development of integrated community support services for children and adults living with disabilities. From October 2018 four organizations became collectively known as the **Community Support Initiative**, a new service that demonstrates our continued focus on **prevention and early intervention**. Leonard Cheshire Disability, KeyRing Living Support Networks, Deafness Support Network, and Centre of Sight, Sign and Sound are the organizations that make up the Initiative. They provide advice and support relating to sensory loss, community enrichment and transport, and technology and equipment. Support is focused on children and adults who do not currently meet the threshold for Council services, including those without a formal diagnosis. The Community Support Initiative has strong links with our **Single Point of Access (SPOA)** service and works closely with other third sector organizations and support groups in supporting people to meet their personal outcomes. The Partnership Coordinator is Leonard Cheshire Disability which can be contacted via csi@leonardcheshire.org.



Transforming services for people with learning disabilities

Flintshire Council is to host a regional programme that will transform learning disability services across North Wales. By sharing regional resources and best practice, the aim of **North Wales Together: Seamless Services for People with Learning Disabilities** is to provide integrated support for people with learning disabilities, engaging fully with them and other stakeholders from design to delivery. The project will focus on five key work-streams, including developing integrated assessments and records, and supporting the regional workforce with value-based skills. Regionally, we want to use our resources effectively by working together to produce services and meet future demand, and to develop inclusive communities in which people with learning disabilities can make friends, build relationships and



develop social and work opportunities. The use of **assistive technology** will be integral to this work, and we want to develop skills, knowledge and training about the potential of technologies such as smart phones and voice-controlled personal assistants to support people with learning disabilities.

Developing age-friendly communities

Flintshire has the largest elderly population in North Wales, and we are committed to developing communities that are 'age-friendly'. This commitment was recognized last spring when **Leeswood and Pontblyddyn became the first community in North Wales to gain accreditation from the Older People's Commissioner as part of the 'Ageing Well in Wales' programme**. Here, local people have driven actions that support participation in community life, including developing a "what's on" newsletter and a community café. Similar work is now underway in two further Flintshire communities, Holywell and District and the Alyn Villages of Hope, Caergwrle and Abermorddu. Given that many activities now rely on **digital connectivity**, poor service in some rural areas and community buildings is an issue, but **opportunities for improvement are being explored through the Council's Enterprise and Regeneration Team**. Access to learning and employment opportunities for older people presents another challenge. Informal learning and volunteering opportunities are shared regularly through our older people's network, but funding for education is focused primarily on statutory and further education, and national employment and training programmes target the 16-25 age group. Tackling ageism and discrimination needs to be driven at a national level in order to achieve real equality of opportunity for older people.

Tackling loneliness and social isolation

Loneliness and social isolation are issues that affect people of all ages and are linked to a string of psychological and physical problems. People who need care and support are particularly vulnerable, and **we can't address these issues in isolation**. Across all Council services we have responded to the Welsh Government consultation on **Connected Communities - Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation**. Locally we have set up a focus group to help identify older people who might be at risk and to consider how we might improve their 'connectedness' within local communities. Together with our housing colleagues, community groups and partners organizations (including Age Connects, Flintshire Local Voluntary Council, Public Health Wales and North Wales Fire & Rescue Service), we have developed a **Creating Connections** referral tool for use in **home fire safety checks**, helping people to access local activities, community transport and specialist support.

Building resilient communities

Some communities require particular support to help prevent loneliness, social isolation and other challenges. **Community resilience** is a term which broadly refers to the ability of communities to withstand and recover from adverse situations, and here are some of the ways we are strengthening resilience in Flintshire:

Community regeneration

The challenges facing some Flintshire residents, including those who live on the Holway housing estate in Holywell, include poverty, substance abuse, crime and anti-social behavior. Together with our third sector partners, we want to make sustainable improvements that are driven by community members and leaders. In Holywell, these include arranging weekly play sessions for children, and providing nutritious hot meals during school holidays. We are investing in the maintenance of properties, gardens and communal areas, and want to redesign the way we deliver some of our advice and support services so that people can access these in the hub of their communities. In doing so, we will use what we have learnt from the development of our successful Early Help Hub, which we tell you about later.

Let's Get Moving Flintshire

Through its **Let's Get Moving** initiative, Public Health Wales is encouraging communities and workforces to be more active. The Council has taken this on board and is supporting its workforce to incorporate physical activity into the working day. One example is the publication of walking maps for office locations. A community-based project targeting schoolchildren in Flint is another initiative being progressed, with an emphasis on walking routes to school and use of green spaces during the school day.

Social prescribing

In partnership with Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and funded through the Integrated Care Fund, we have embedded a **Third Sector Coordinator within our Single Point of Access (SPOA) service**. This role focusses on supporting people to identify what matters to them and on achieving these outcomes with support available within the third sector. In March 2019, a second post holder was appointed to the team as a **Social Prescriber** with a specific remit to make links with community GP Practices, encouraging them to signpost patients presenting with non-clinical issues to SPOA. **SPOA can be contacted on 01352 804443**



Developing our dementia-friendly communities

With dementia prevalence increasing, our **Dementia Action Plan** continues to help us target the issues impacting most on those affected. Stigma, isolation and participation are among these issues, and our Plan is directing actions that promote **community, corporate & social responsibility** in tackling them.

Our **seven dementia-friendly communities**, representing the whole of Flintshire, host a number of activities and initiatives that have been made possible due to partnerships between organizations and local people. Examples are film screenings at Theatre Clwyd and Flint Cinema, and our **eight community Memory Cafes**. Other developments include intergenerational projects that have funded dementia awareness sessions for local schools, and the provision of alternative therapies such as animal-based activities. Links with care homes ensure that their residents are able to participate in these activities, and the valuable contribution of volunteers is recognized via the Tempo Time Credits rewards scheme.

For one lady we know, participation in dementia-friendly activities with her husband helped sustain her caring role prior to his deteriorating cognition and admission to a care home. She remains involved and is an active member of her dementia-friendly community steering group, giving her purpose as she adjusts to living alone.

Our challenge is to give our dementia-friendly communities a structure that will help them share resources, sustain what's been accomplished and achieve much more. Promoting inclusion through understanding extends to staff across all Council services, many of whom regularly come into contact with people affected by dementia. To seal our commitment to supporting people affected by dementia, **we propose to work with our partners and local people to become a Dementia-Friendly Council.**

Our priorities for 2019/20 will be to:

- **Work towards becoming a Dementia-Friendly Council supporting intergenerational work and alternative therapies**
- **Host the Regional Learning Disability Service to transform services for people with learning disabilities and play a leading role in the Regional Transformation Programme for mental health, children's services and community support**
- **Support the building of resilient communities by developing the social prescriber role within SPOA**

NQS3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm.

Improving our safeguarding processes

Our Safeguarding Unit continues to give information, advice, guidance and support to independent and public sector organizations, internal teams and the public, and provides regular training on child protection case conferences, adult safeguarding, mental capacity and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). We have improved our referral pathway for adults from our Single Point of Access (SPOA) through to the Unit, helping robust and consistent action to be taken to protect and safeguard individuals.

Regional developments include the successful implementation of hoarding and self-neglect protocols, developed by the **North Wales Safeguarding Board**. The Hoarding Protocol sets out a framework for social care and other relevant agencies to work in partnership using an outcomes-focused, solutions-based model, offering clear guidance to staff working with people who hoard. The **North Wales Regional Self-Neglect Protocol** was developed to assess risks and agree co-ordinated action between partner agencies in cases where people neglect themselves. It has given a common template for assessing levels of neglect and ensures agencies work together and share information in such cases. The protocol was one of three projects shortlisted for the award **effective approaches to safeguarding** at the

prestigious **Social Care Wales Accolades in September 2018**, where it was **highly commended**. We are proud that our Adult Safeguarding Manager was interviewed as part of the presentation video for the ceremony.

[Click here to find out more about the North Wales Regional Self-Neglect Protocol](#)

Improving our safeguarding practices

Reflecting on our professional practice has been a key focus for us, and in December 2018 the Regional Safeguarding Board held its first multi-agency event to share learning from adult, child and domestic homicide reviews. This allowed practitioners to share key lessons learned from local, regional and national cases, and to make improvements to working practices. The Regional Safeguarding Board ensures that all recommendations that arise from reviews are progressed, and its website holds information on child and adult practice review key themes.

One child practice review highlighted that GPs don't always contribute to information sharing in child protection case conferences. This is of particular significance when considering medications prescribed for children and is extremely relevant in cases of neglect. As a result of this review's recommendations, the Health Board amended the GP report format presented to child protection conferences and added a specific question about medication. This report template has since been embedded into Flintshire practice.

Developing advocacy support

Making important decisions is only achievable for some people with the support of an independent advocate, and this support is particularly important within safeguarding. Here, advocacy services are used as Relevant Person's Representatives (RPRs) when undertaking DOLS assessments, and in child protection case conferences for parents who may have no other means of support. When adult safeguarding reports are received, consideration is always given to whether or not the subject of the referral needs an independent advocate to ensure their voice is heard.

The importance of advocacy is reflected in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which considers that wider groups of people should have access to advocacy support than has previously been the case. The Act developed the idea of an **Independent Professional Advocate (IPA)**, and we have worked with Age Cymru to embed the statutory IPA service into our commissioning arrangements. In doing so, we listened to the people who use our advocacy services, who told us they need better quality advocacy information. Providing good information is a requirement of the Act, and we incorporated this into our contract service

specifications. Whilst we previously had numerous advocacy contracts in place, we now have three, and each provider is invited to our practice team meetings, a development that is contributing further to the provision and sharing of good advocacy information.

Working to prevent child sexual exploitation

Praise for our Victim Contact Team

The professionalism and commitment of our Victim Contact Team has been praised by both North Wales Police and Cheshire Police. The Team has played a key part in ensuring the conviction of people involved in trafficking children for the purpose of sexual exploitation and has supported victims to maintain the care of their children and to access suitable housing.

Missing Exploited Trafficked

The Missing Exploited Trafficked (MET) Strategic Group was set up in Flintshire and Wrexham in February 2018 in recognition of the need to broaden the discussion around Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The Group is supported by two operational groups and brings together partners from statutory agencies and the third sector to share data and analysis on patterns and trends. This has given us a broader understanding of the specific issues affecting us regionally and enables us to identify hot spot areas for targeting by North Wales Police. Another key development is the creation of a **Flintshire Missing Coordinator** post. Introduced in January 2019, the Coordinator carries out all **return home** interviews for missing children, alongside gathering data and reporting missing episodes through to North Wales Police and the MET Strategic Group.

Our priorities for 2019/20 will be to:

- **Ensure that all children who are reported as having run away or go missing from home or care have a return interview.**
- **Embed the new All Wales Safeguarding Procedures for Adults and Children**

NQS4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society.

Reviewing how we commission and purchase

North Wales Domiciliary Care Agreement

In response to the new legislative framework in Wales, we envisaged local providers of domiciliary care contributing to outcomes-focussed assessment and care planning, supporting enablement and helping to reduce reliance on managed care and support wherever possible. We wanted to help them to achieve these aims by clustering packages of care, reducing travel time and offering some degree of business certainty. Together with the six other North Wales health and commissioning authorities, we have contributed to a project that has established a **North Wales Domiciliary Care Agreement**.

When one of our domiciliary providers faced difficulties, use of the Agreement enabled us to swiftly and safely recommission packages of care with alternative providers, with the outcomes for individuals being minimal disruption and stress.

We are working hard to make other contractual arrangements more robust and have completed a **residential pre-placement agreement for children and young people**. Next year we will examine our contractual arrangements for **adults living in supported living settings**, part of our commitment to enhancing learning disability services in Flintshire.

Direct payments

April 2019 saw the launch of our **new Direct Payment Support Service**. This is being delivered by a new in-house team which is supporting people to look at creative and innovative ways of using their direct payments. The new service will provide a digital platform, connecting people with personal assistants and carers and providing 24-hour access to legal advice and support.

New models of care

To help meet the demands of our ageing population, we have been considering new and innovative ways of developing the local care sector. This includes exploring the feasibility of **micro-care support services**, small organisations that provide person-centred care and support. Next year, we will work to develop an environment in which micro-care enterprises can thrive.

Social value

Social value is a concept that asks us to think about the things outside of financial value that are important to us. It involves looking beyond the price of each individual contract that we award and considering the collective benefit to our communities in choosing to award it. We have developed a cross departmental **Social Value Implementation Group** to assist in meeting our social value legislative duties and understand the importance of considering and measuring social value from the perspectives of those affected by our work. Our **Social Value Strategy** will help us do this and will also enhance our efforts to build community resilience in Flintshire.

Supporting families with free childcare

Our **Early Years and Family Support Service** has continued to lead the way in ensuring that working parents are able to benefit from the Welsh Government funded free childcare offer for 3- and 4-year-olds. The Service has been funded to implement the scheme in Denbighshire and Wrexham, and has had a busy year ensuring full roll-out across the counties. Over 3000 applications have been received, and the initiative is supporting families to participate in the workplace across the region.

Providing day and work opportunities for people with learning disabilities

In February 2018 Hft, a national learning disability charity, began delivering our day and work opportunities for people with learning disabilities, and providing job coach support for more than 100 people in work placements across Flintshire. Through engagement with local businesses and charities, eleven people have been supported into paid work and others have secured new volunteer placements in local hospitals, shops and businesses. Hft is developing partnerships with public, private and voluntary sector organizations to create new work, education and leisure opportunities for people with learning disabilities, and has generated more than £30,000 in additional fundraising income for reinvestment in services. Plans are underway to establish an employment support programme known as **Project Search**, which will run in partnership with Pennaf Housing Group, Coleg Cambria and other partners. With a proven track record, this will support a group of young people aged 18-24 year with learning disabilities to become interns and train in work placement roles for twelve months, with the aim of finding paid employment.

[Click here to find out more about the work of Hft](#)

Helping care leavers

Boosting career prospects

Looked after children and children leaving care remain one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. We have been working hard to improve the experiences of young people leaving care with a particular focus on promoting work opportunities. BOOST is an acronym for **'Be Optimistic about Opportunities for Support and Training'** and was introduced in April 2018. A corporate mentoring scheme for care leavers aged 16 and over, it offers them work experience of one day a week over a twelve-week period. This gives the young people a taste of working in an area of interest, and provides them with mentor support. After completion, the young person has experience for their CV, a reference and an opportunity to practice interview skills, all of which boost their chances of gaining employment. To date we have secured five placements with support from Aura Leisure, Streetscene, Marleyfield Care Home and County Hall, and one young person has gained paid employment. Four placements broke down through non-attendance, though we are still working with the young people to secure further work experience through the BOOST scheme. We now know that pre-placement support work would be beneficial to the young people to increase their chances of success.



Council tax discounts

Managing budgets can be very challenging for most people, but particularly so for care leavers who are typically characterized by limited family support networks and who are faced with paying bills at a young age. The Children's Commissioner has highlighted this issue, and we are leading the way in responding to it by agreeing **a landmark policy to secure council tax discounts for young people who have left care to live independently**. Most care leavers are entitled to some level of reduction on their council tax, and awards have totaled £1,900 to date.

Our priorities for 2019/20 will be to:

- **Ensure social value is included in the commissioning process**
- **Support the development of micro-care organisations within the domiciliary care sector**
- **Support families to access free childcare and extend the provision through the use of a capital grant**
- **Ensure that our commissioning practices are SMART, including digital mapping of domiciliary care needs**

NQS5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

Intensive support for families

Children can enter the care system at different points in their lives and for a variety of reasons. These can range from family breakdown, abuse or neglect, to voluntary arrangements to support children's welfare whilst work is undertaken to rebuild relationships or parenting capacity. There are over 200 looked after children in Flintshire. Whilst the majority live with their parents, foster parents or kinship carers, a small proportion of around 10% have more complex needs and need supportive residential placements. We are committed to delivering safe, high quality, local placements for these children and young people, but there are significant challenges in doing so. Our **Children's Services Placement Strategy** sets out how we will overcome these challenges and **improve outcomes for our looked after children**. As with many other areas of our work, the Strategy focusses on **prevention and early intervention**. We want to reduce and manage the demand for residential placements, and one way we are doing this is through providing **intensive family support services**.

Early Help Hub

Research shows that investment in early help services can prevent children entering the social care system and help manage needs within families to avoid them escalating. Established in July 2017, the **Early Help Hub** is a partnership between the Council, North Wales Police, the Health Board and Flintshire Local Voluntary Council, and is a key initiative in our investment in **preventative family services**. The Hub aims to give families of children who exhibit **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** access to the right information and advice at the right time, enhancing their resilience and reducing demand on statutory services. The agencies that make up the Early Help Hub share information and co-ordinate an early response, supporting families without the need for statutory intervention. **We are delighted that the work of the Hub was recognized when it won an award at the North Wales Police Problem Orientated Partnerships (POP) awards in August.**

[Click here to find out more about our Early Help Hub](#)

Therapeutic support for mental and emotional health

The help available for children who need support with mental and emotional health is consistently being raised as a concern. Across North Wales there is high demand for specialist Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), with the volume of referrals exceeding the service's capacity to respond. The situation is compounded by the high proportion of referrals relating to young people who have emotional, behavioral and mental health issues, with a particular increase in children experiencing issues with attachment and self-harm. These needs fall outside the threshold for specialist mental health support from CAMHS and, regionally, there is a clear recognition that there should be appropriate **therapeutic support** for these children and their families. North Wales Councils and the Health Board have secured funding from the Welsh Government to develop integrated services in registered settings, termed as 'assessment and support hubs'. These will support those young people who have emotional, behavioural and mental health issues but do not have a diagnosable mental health disorder. These young people are at high risk of entering statutory care services, residential schools or the criminal justice system, and the new service will give them and their families intensive, targeted support. The service will be established in 2019/20.

Short residential breaks

Families and carers of children who have complex physical needs are often under great physical and emotional stress. Offering short residential breaks for children can help prevent the breakdown of family situations and the need for emergency or long-term residential placements. **Arosfa offers respite care for children with profound disabilities** in a safe and secure environment, enabling them to build

independent skills, mix with peers and maximize their opportunities for the future. Work is underway to develop the services delivered at Arosfa and we hope to expand the service in the near future with the addition of two additional bedrooms.

Parenting programmes

The **Flintshire Parenting Framework (2018)** outlines a structure for the further development of our parenting programmes, and forms part of our wider strategy for **early intervention and prevention**. The programmes aim to work with parents and carers to support the development of parenting techniques, strengthening family relationships and resilience, and preventing the breakdown of family units. These interventions involve input from the Team Around the Family, Family Group Meetings and the Family Information Service.



Developing an 'Edge of Care' service

Within statutory services the work of the **Targeted Support Team** is invaluable in supporting families whose needs cannot be met by early support services. The team stabilises family relationships and prevents escalation to higher level services, and this year will progress the development of an **Edge of Care Service**. The aim of this will be to provide structured, evidence-based interventions that develop problem-solving skills within families, build resilience and achieve positive, sustainable behaviour change. The prevention of further escalation and referral to care proceedings will give positive outcomes, enabling children to remain safely living within the family home on a sustainable basis.

Strengthening foster care

We recognise the value of our fostering service in **reducing and managing the demand for residential placements**, and our Children's Services Placement Strategy's underpinning analysis highlights that we need to invest in new fostering models to improve placement stability and carer retention.

The Mockingbird model

There are particular challenges in finding foster placements for older children and sibling groups. In September 2018, our fostering service secured funding to help us research and develop a model of foster care known as the **Mockingbird Model**. This model creates a community of foster carers whose members provide support to each other as well as to the children in their care. **We will be the first Council in Wales to introduce this innovative and internationally-endorsed fostering model.**

The Repatriation and Prevention Service (RAP)

We continue to support a small number of looked after children through the work of our **Repatriation and Prevention Service (RAP)**, which is **funded by the Integrated Care Fund (ICF)**. A partnership between the Council, Health Board, CAMHS and Action for Children, and supported by experienced foster carers, the RAP provides an **early intervention and preventative therapy service** for young people and their carers. It aims to stabilize placements that are at risk of breakdown, repatriate young people to Flintshire's care and reduce demand for out of county residential placements. Solutions focus on enhancing the emotional well-being and resilience of young people, and developing their social and communication skills.

Working to provide residential placements for children close to home

Despite our commitment to preventative services, there will always be a small proportion of looked after children who need residential placements, and we want to make sure that these children and young people can remain **close to home**.

The challenge

Last year we said that **providing high quality, stable local placements** was a key priority for us, but this is a commitment that **presents us with significant challenges**. Increased demand and insufficient supply locally has resulted in a providers market in which residential care providers are able to be selective of the young people they accept. This often results in young people with higher levels of complex needs and behavioural challenges being more difficult to place. When scarce beds do become available, a number of local services may be seeking to secure them, resulting in intense competition. Such high demand puts pressure on the Council's finances, with providers able to dictate the cost of the provision. Flintshire Council's budget for looked after children in 2017/18 was approximately £7.8 million, with 65% of this having been spent on residential placements outside of Flintshire.

Our response

We are responding to this challenge in several ways. Placement sourcing, previously the responsibility of Social Workers, is now centralized within our brokerage team, offering consistent and experienced practice. Our research tells us that the current level of placements is heavily reliant on the independent sector, and we are mapping the local market and establishing a co-productive approach to working with stakeholders. We will investigate the feasibility of establishing new, Council-run children's residential home provision, as well as looking to where existing providers have plans to expand, an approach that we anticipate will increase our control over

the type and quality of provision. We will also seek to work with the existing local housing provision to develop an 'assessment and support hub' to support children and young people who become looked after and do not want to move out of their local area due to their strong friendship networks and links to education, leisure and other local facilities and services. We have now joined the 4C's consortium and will be working at a local, regional and national level to develop placement choice and enhance quality of provision for looked after children.



Funding flexibilities: facilitating a strategic approach for early help, prevention and support services

Welsh Government has announced that, from 2019/20, several Local Authority programme grants will consolidate into two overarching grants encompassing children and communities, and housing support. The intent is for Councils to have better scope and flexibility in the design of services that are integrated, sustainable and cost-effective, and that enhance a preventative approach in supporting vulnerable people. In Flintshire, we view this change as an opportunity to be more

strategic in how we plan, commission and review the impact of our services, and work is already underway to streamline processes to manage the extended flexibilities for early help, prevention and support grants. A Chief Officers Group will be operational from April 2019, and from April 2020 there will be a single budget approach to the two grants that is supported by a single delivery plan.

The benefits of bringing together key funding streams and having greater funding flexibilities include a reduction in overlapping areas of work, the pooling of knowledge and resources, greater transparency in resourcing decisions, better understanding of emerging need, more integrated support pathways, and an opportunity to address funding inequalities (where applicable). This new strategic governance will also give us an **opportunity to develop an Early Help and Prevention Strategy**, which will direct us on what is needed from our workforce and from wider council and partner initiatives if we are to achieve our objectives.

Our priorities for 2019/20 will be to:

- **Implement the Mockingbird foster care model in Flintshire**
- **Reduce the need for children to enter care and improve outcomes for children**
- **Continue to improve local placement options for children**
- **Work with Education and Youth to deliver the Additional Learning Needs reforms and support individuals through Transition**
- **Develop a Pathfinder Role to guide individuals through the Early Years Services**
- **Implement the recommendations contained within the North Wales Carers Strategy**

NQS6: Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

Developing Extra Care



Supporting independent living is a key priority for us, and following on from the success of **Llys Eleanor** in Shotton and **Llys Jasmine** in Mold, **Llys Raddington** extra care scheme opened its doors to tenants in Flint in October 2018. A partnership initiative between the Council, Welsh Government, and Pennaf housing group, the scheme offers 73 purpose-built one-or two-bedroom apartments for local people aged 60 and over. The Council provides the care and support to tenants, whilst Pennaf manages the building and delivers the catering. As with our other extra care schemes, Llys Raddington gives people a safe, social and supportive home environment that promotes independence, and includes apartments that have been adapted specifically to meet the needs of people living with dementia.

Construction work continues on the new extra care scheme in Holywell, which is being developed in partnership with Wales & West housing association. Located near the town centre and close to the local hospital and health centre, this scheme will offer 55 apartments for people aged 50 and over. It will be named **Plas Yr Ywen** in reference to the large yew tree and ancient woodland on site, and is scheduled to be open to tenants in spring 2020.

Expanding the Council-owned Marleyfield House residential care home

To achieve **greater structural capacity in meeting the demand social care services**, we have committed to investing in a new 32-bed residential facility adjacent to Marleyfield House residential care home in Buckley. Construction on the building is scheduled to begin in November this year and it is anticipated that the new facility will be fully operational by early 2021. A partnership between the Council and Health Board, it will offer additional residential care beds for older people, some short-term stay options and centralised intermediate care/discharge to assess beds. An innovative design is being developed in collaboration with our construction partner and in consultation with existing residents and members of the local community, and we hope the details will be finalised in the next few months.

Investing in a new day centre for people with learning disabilities

Despite significant financial challenges, the Council has invested £4m from its capital programme in an exciting development that will provide a state-of-the-art day centre for people with learning disabilities. The building will replace the nearby ageing day centre at Glanrafon, Queensferry, and will be named **Hwb Cyfle**, which translates to Hub for Opportunities. This name encapsulates the centre's ethos to provide equal opportunities for people with learning disabilities to work, learn and build social relationships in an inclusive environment. The new building is due to open in July 2019 and has been designed with input from service staff and from people supported in the service and their families. Accessibility has been a key focus for the design, and people with additional needs have played a significant role in this. Personal care facilities, accessible to all members of the community, have been included to meet the 'Gold Standard' defined by the Changing Places campaign, meaning that they will be suitable for use by people with disabilities for whom standard accessible toilets are unsuitable. The result will be a modern and highly efficient building for use by learning disability services, health colleagues and the wider community.



Developing suitable accommodation for adults with disabilities

We have been full partners in the development of the **Council's Housing Strategy** and recognise the need to develop suitable accommodation for adults living with disabilities in Flintshire. A shortage of appropriate, temporary accommodation has been a particular concern for people who have had an acute illness or injury resulting in a lengthy hospital admission. Often in such instances, the person in question has been unable to return to their own home until significant adaptations have been made, limiting them to either an extended hospital stay or a short-term residential placement. Neither of these options are appropriate. As part of our main capital programme in 2018/19 we have begun to work on the development of a new transition house at **Glan Y Morfa**, Connah's Quay. Funded through the Integrated Care Fund, this ex-warden's accommodation will be converted into a three bedroom, fully accessible property for short-term use.

Our priorities for 2019/20 will be to:

- **Develop the Extra Care Strategy with the completion of Plas Yr Ywen in Holywell and the exploration of options for a 5th extra care scheme in the south of the county**
- **Expand Council-run care home provision through an extension to Marleyfield House in Buckley**
- **Work to transition the Hft commissioned day and work opportunities service to the new Hwb Cyfle site**
- **Address housing needs for vulnerable people, with a particular focus on people with a learning or physical disability**

Section 5: How we do what we do

Our workforce and how we support their professional roles

Working regionally

Our Workforce Development Team continues to strive to make sure that the local workforce has the skill, knowledge and competence to meet the requirements of social care legislation in Wales. We remain committed to the North Wales Workforce Strategy, which is aligned to the priorities of the North Wales Regional Partnership Board and continues to focus on embedding the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. From this work, strong relationships have developed between workforce development managers across North Wales, encouraging an integrated approach when addressing challenges and opportunities.

Sharing outcomes-based practice

With the focus of our work being on supporting people receiving care and support to achieve their personal outcomes, we know that this approach must be reflected within our own organizational culture. Across both adults' and children's services, we are developing working practices that support staff to identify and achieve what matters to them at work. Working with other Councils, we are sharing experiences and ideas about how best to embed this outcomes-focused approach.

We are also providing **outcomes-focussed training** for social workers and the residential provider managers who are participating in our Progress for Providers programme. This will take place between May 2019 and February 2020 and is being supported by the development of a good practice guide. 'Quality matters' meetings and quality panels take place regularly and give professionals the opportunity to develop, share and reflect on their outcomes-based practice.

Values-based recruitment: a new approach

Across the care sector there are difficulties in recruiting care and support staff and we have made changes in response to this. Our new **values-based approach** to recruitment involves using a range of techniques to help us recruit staff who have the right attitudes and values for the job, attributes that are especially important in social care. We are also supporting Social Care Wales' national recruitment



campaign **We Care Wales** by working closely with Job Centre Plus to promote and publicize opportunities in our growing local care sector.

Nurturing our leaders: programmes for manager

We continue to develop and support our managers along with staff who have leadership potential. These programmes include Step Up to Management, Social Services Practitioner, Middle Manager Development and Team Manager Development. Succession plans are key to our improvement journey, and our senior managers, along with colleagues in Human Resources, have identified business-critical roles and undertaken an analysis of staff in those roles to create a risk assessment. Work continues to match the information contained within our appraisal process to develop our existing staff to meet those succession plans.

Consistency for Social Workers

To support our social workers, we are using **The first three years in practice. A framework for social workers induction into qualified practice and continuing professional education & learning**. This was published in 2017 by Social Care Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales. To promote consistency across North Wales, regional workforce development teams have agreed learning outcomes for all the training proposed in the framework. This will help when social workers transfer to

work across Councils in North Wales, supporting consistency of skill, knowledge and competence. The workforce development team will also be providing a mentoring programme for senior social workers to ensure there is effective support for newly qualified social workers during this first three years. The Council has committed to a support plan for all new social workers to ensure that they receive adequate support and training particularly during their first year after qualifying.

Supporting frontline staff

For staff who provide direct care and support, our priority has been the launch of the **All-Wales Induction Framework**. Whilst developments on the content of Framework's core modules have been delayed, in partnership with Social Care Wales we have delivered **Getting it Right** sub-regional workshops to support care providers with the potential challenges. We have also delivered briefing workshops for in-house and independent sector providers. The changes within the induction have impacted on the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and our assessors have been working regionally and locally to support providers with this. We have also worked sub-regionally in partnership with Llandrillo College to offer a social care level two award to new staff so they have the required qualification to register with Social Care Wales. These will continue into 2019-20, as will supporting staff in achieving levels 2, 3 and 5 in dementia care and autism.

Complying with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act

Our role remains crucial in providing support for the registration of Flintshire domiciliary care workers and managers as required by RISCA. We have delivered registration workshops in partnership with Social Care Wales, and intend to continue this support both locally and regionally. To support improving the knowledge required for the role of the Responsible Individual and the expectations within it we have delivered both regional and local workshops. A key focus from these sessions will be to support the training and development needs of Responsible Individuals to ensure they are equipped and competent to deliver the role effectively.

Promoting the well-being of our workforce

The well-being of our workforce is fundamental if we are to improve our services. In conjunction with the recognised local trade unions, we are pleased to have reached an agreement on an **updated pay model** which ensures that **all directly employed Council employees are paid a Minimum Foundation Living Wage** with effect from April 2019. The recently introduced Employee Assistance Programme **Care First**, gives staff and their family members emotional and practical support for issues at home or in work, signposting to outside agencies when additional specialist advice and support is needed. Guidance for managers on supporting social care staff through traumatic events has recently been published, and the **Council's Working**

& Caring Policy helps staff balance caring, home and work life responsibilities, allowing for paid and unpaid time away from work in such situations. An **Employee Well-Being Strategy** is under development, aiming to provide staff with a safe and healthy working environment, improve physical and emotional wellbeing, encourage and support employees to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles, and improve employee satisfaction, recruitment and retention.

Our priorities for 2019/20 will be to:

- **Support the domiciliary care workforce to prepare for registration and support the roles of Responsible Individuals.**
- **Ensure delivery of the national training programme to support VAWDASV (Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence)**

Our Financial Resources and How We Plan For The Future

The importance of scrutiny

This year we began the roll-out of our self-service finance monitoring software (Collaborative Planning), allowing managers to view and monitor their service budgets in real-time. Running alongside this is the detailed financial monitoring undertaken by individual service managers together with their designated finance officers, senior managers reviewing their service areas with designated finance managers and the social services accountant producing and presenting detailed finance monitoring reports for the Social Services Management and the Social Services Programme Board.

In addition, Social Services held two Health & Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Budget Workshops in October. These provided Elected Members (otherwise known as Councillors) with detailed information about the social services portfolio budget, how it is constructed, how it meets its duties and the demands placed on the budget. The workshop also presented to Elected Members the cost pressures which remain on the Authority and how services are regularly reviewed for their resilience during this period of continuing austerity.

Giving value for money

Flintshire continues to be an active member in the **North Wales Pooled Budget Group**, and to work with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board colleagues to deliver the revenue costs for the expansion of residential care at Marleyfield House in Buckley through a pooled budget agreement.

We are developing a process of aligning budget monitoring information with performance data to better predict in-year financial outturn as well as contributing to our forecasting information. We are continuing to revisit existing contracts and service level agreements to ensure we are receiving value for money whilst delivering against outcomes. An example of this is the newly tendered community disability services contracts, the service specifications and outcomes for which have been co-produced with service users and their families. Providers were encouraged to work together to deliver a central point of access for people with disabilities helping them increase their independence. The contract delivers enhanced value for money with service delivery focused on the needs identified by the users of services and those involved in their care.

In children's services the local care market continues to be developed by fostering close working relationships with independent sector providers in North Wales to deliver care and support for local children. We will continue to ensure we have cost-effective ways of meeting identified needs using commissioned contracts. We will also continue to build on our existing close working relationship with our independent care providers, working with them to understand their cost pressures and acknowledging their demands through our care fee structure.

Whilst budgets remain challenging across public services with year-on-year reductions in funding for local government, we in Flintshire have continued to work hard to protect social services and to deliver quality statutory service requirements. In addition to these statutory requirements we have worked to innovate and shape the future of our service provision, as well as investing in our in-house care provision through capital projects such as Hwb Cyfle and Marleyfield House Care Home expansion.

Our priorities for 2019/20 will be to:

- **Continue to meet the annual inflationary costs of care**
- **Continue to look at other methods of delivering care for traditional high cost/low volume placements, focussing on local services that provide quality outcomes and value for money**

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

Who we are

Elected Members represent the residents of Flintshire and play an important part in the governance of the Council. They agree the Council's priorities and approve policies to deliver its continuous improvement. Flintshire Council has 70 elected members who represent their ward interests and participate in full Council meetings to oversee the performance of all aspects of the Council. One Member is elected by their peers to represent each portfolio area. These are known as Cabinet Members and together with the Leader and Deputy Leader, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officers, they form the Council's Cabinet.

How we make decisions

Each Cabinet Member is supported by Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and for Social Services this is the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Because of the close working relationship with the Education and Youth Portfolio, the Council also holds joint Health and Social Care and Education and Youth Scrutiny Committee meetings, to discuss services for children and young people that cut across both social services and education. The Council Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services are also involved in the social services work programme through the Social Services Programme Board and the Cabinet Member also attends the Social Services Management Team meetings every month.

The officers of the Council are led by the Chief Executive Officer who is supported by Chief Officers responsible for each of the portfolio areas. The Chief Officer for Social Services has the statutory "Director of Social Services" role. The Council's structural arrangements for both members and officers are clearly laid out. The constitution details how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to make sure that these decisions are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The Council also has its own internal governance through a system of internal audit. The outcomes of audits are monitored by the Audit Committee and officers can be called to give evidence to the committee should concerns be raised regarding their service areas.

Our partnership working

Flintshire has a strong record of partnership working, and in Section 4 we describe some of the services and initiatives that we have developed with other bodies and agencies. These include our Early Help Hub, and the work we are doing to promote resilience within our communities. At the heart of our collaborative culture is the **Flintshire Public Services Board**. Established in April 2016, this statutory body

is made up of senior leaders from public and voluntary sector organizations. It aims to ensure that statutory and third sector partners work together to manage shared priorities through collaboration, and these priorities are set out in the [Well-being Plan for Flintshire 2017- 2023](#).

One of these five priorities is “Healthy and Independent Living” within which are a number of partnership initiatives including the Early Help Hub.

The **North Wales Regional Partnership Board** was also established in 2016 and has a membership representing statutory bodies, third sector partners, carers and users of services. The Board works to enhance the integration, efficiency and effectiveness of outcomes-focused care and support services in North Wales, and has been successful in its bid for a new Welsh Government fund made available to transform health and social care services in Wales. In 2019/20, Flintshire will host the Regional Learning Disability Transformation Service, and will play a leading role in the regional transformation programmes for mental health services, children’s services and community support. We are also an active member of the **North Wales Social Care and Well-being Improvement Collaborative**, which includes the six councils in North Wales, the Health Board and other partners. This works to maximise resources, reduce duplication and create greater consistency in services across North Wales. Details about the regional projects and events being run as part of this collaborative programme can be found on www.northwalescollaboartive.wales.

The Council and Health Board continue to work closely together, with strategic meetings between the chief executives and leaders taking place bi-annually. Many joint operational meetings happen throughout the year, including a six-monthly special scrutiny meeting where health colleagues are invited to attend and take questions from elected members. Our relationship with the voluntary sector continues to be strengthened by our involvement with the **Voluntary Sector Compact**. This three-way partnership between the Council, Health Board and voluntary sector facilitates mutual understanding in respect of roles and responsibilities, and enables opportunities for partnership working to be fully utilised. Membership comprises the Chief Officer and Chair of Flintshire Local Voluntary Council, other voluntary sector members, the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, and a senior manager from the Health Board.

Section 6: Accessing further information and key documents

Social Care Legislation & Information

Links:

[National Outcomes Framework](#)

[Regulation and Inspection of Social Care \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)

[The Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)

[Well-being of Future Generation \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

Flintshire County Council's Key Strategic Documents

Links:

[Council Plan 2018/19](#)

[Annual Performance Report 2017/18](#)

[Medium Term Financial Plan](#)

[Corporate Parenting Strategy](#)

[Regional Learning Disability Strategy](#)

[Transformation Services Link](#)

Glossary of Terms

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - a term used to describe a wide range of stressful or traumatic experiences that children can be exposed to when growing up. ACEs range from experiences that directly harm a child to those that affect the environment in which a child grows up.

Advocacy - the act of speaking on the behalf of or in support of another person.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards - provide a legal framework that protects people living in care homes or hospitals who are vulnerable because of mental disorder and who lack the mental capacity to make decisions about their own accommodation and care needs.

Direct Payments - give users money directly to pay for their own care, rather than the traditional route of a Local Government Authority providing care for them.

Integrated Care Fund (ICF) - a Welsh Government fund that “aims to drive and enable integrated working between Social Services, Health, Housing, the third and independent sectors.

Looked After Children - a child is looked after by a local authority if a court has granted a care order to place a child in care, or a council’s children’s services department has cared for the child for more than 24 hours.

Outcomes-focused - the definition of outcomes is the impact or end results of services on a person’s life. Outcome-focused services and support therefore aim to achieve the aspirations, goals and priorities identified by service users (and carers) – in contrast to services whose content and/or form of delivery are standardised or determined solely by those who deliver them.

Glossary continued

Person-centred Care - an approach that moves away from professionals deciding what is best for a patient or service user, and places the person at the centre, as an expert in their own experience. The person, and their family where appropriate, becomes an equal partner in the planning of their care and support, ensuring it meets their needs, goals and outcomes.

Responsible Individual - someone in charge of providing the service at an organisation or local authority. This may be the owner or someone with a senior role.

Safeguarding - a term used to denote measures to protect the health, well-being and human rights of individuals, which allow people to live free from abuse, harm and neglect

Social Enterprise - an organisation that applies commercial strategies to maximise improvements in human and environmental well-being - this may include maximising social impact alongside profits for external stakeholders.

Third Sector - the part of an economy or society comprising non-governmental and non-profit making organisations or associations, including charities, voluntary and community groups, co-operations etc.

Well-being - the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXTUAL DATA AND NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Adult Services

Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, we delivered services for 4615 adults. 3327 people received advice or assistance from our adults' Information, Advice and Assistance service, and 521 people commissioned their own services through a direct payment.

56% of individuals left the reablement service having achieved their personal outcomes and requiring no ongoing social services support. A further 16% completed a period of reablement with a maintained or reduced support package.

On the last day of this year we were helping 1246 people over the age of 65 to live at home, and a further 461 older people in care homes. 86% of people with a package of support had their care plan reviewed within timescales.

40 people over the age of 75 had a delayed transfer from hospital this year for social care reasons, giving a rate of 2.94 per 1,000 population over 75.

1370 adult carers were identified and referred to our carers' service providers.

642 adult safeguarding reports were received last year, and 95% of those which progressed to enquiries under Section 126 were completed within 7 days.

At present there are 261 cases waiting to be allocated for a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards assessment in Flintshire.

Children's Services

Demand at the front door in Flintshire Children's Services is increasing in line with the rest of Wales. Referrals have increased from 1789 in 2016/17 to 2334 in 2017/18, an increase of 30% over 12 months. Figures for the first 9 months of this year are showing a further increase, with 2146 referrals.

To compound the rise in demand, we are also seeing an increase in complexity; whereas in 2016/17 37% of referrals went on to have care and support or child protection services, this rose to 43% in 2017/18.

Our rate of referrals which result in no action being taken has reduced, following the implementation of the Early Help Hub in July 2017, as more families are referred for advice and support from non-statutory services.

The percentage of assessments for children completed within statutory timescales (42 working days) was 95%; this measure includes those “What Matters?” conversations carried out at our front door. The All Wales Average in 17/18 was 88% which places Flintshire above the upper quartile for Wales.

There were 111 children on the Flintshire Child Protection Register on the 31st March 2019. 89% of initial child protection conferences and 99% of review conferences were carried out within timescales. 5 children from 3 families (3.2%) were re-registered within 12 months of deregistration, and the average time that children remained on the Register was 256 days.

241 children were looked after in Flintshire on 31 March 2019. This represents a rate of children looked after that is lower than the average in Wales. We have a pool of committed and enthusiastic foster carers, with 80 foster carers (excluding kinship carers), offering 159 placements. 135 placements are currently occupied. Where the need cannot be met in-house, children are placed with agency carers or in residential care. Placement stability for children with complex needs is challenging; last year 9.5% of children moved more than twice (the All Wales average was 9.6%), although some of these moves were planned as part of their care package.

We are also supporting 161 children and young people through edge of care services, and 98 young people up to the age of twenty five who have left care. 63% of children with a care & support plan are being supported to live at home with their family.

83 young carers were identified this year and referred to our young carers service providers.

National Key Performance Measures

(latest available data has been supplied)

NQS1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.

65% of adults who have received support from the Information, Advice and Assistance services (IAA) have not contacted the service again during the year.

95% of assessments completed for children were completed within statutory timescales.

NQS2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental and emotional well-being.

The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 of the population aged 75 or over was 2.94.

The percentage of adults who completed a period of re-ablement and had a) a reduced package of care and support six months later was 16%, and b) no package of care six months later was 56%

The average age of adults entering residential care homes was 85 yrs

71% of looked after children were seen by a registered dentist within three months of becoming looked after

97% of looked after children were registered with a GP

NQS3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm.

95% of adult protection enquiries were completed within statutory timescales.

3.2% of children on the local authority child protection registers were re-registrations.

Children were on the child protection register during the year for an average of 217 days.

NQS4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society.

61.5% of looked after children achieved the core subject indicator at key stage 2 and 12.5% of looked after children achieved the core subject indicator at key stage 4

6% of looked after children experienced one or more changes in school during periods of being looked after that were not due to transitional arrangements.

NQS5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.

63% of children were supported to remain living with their family

9.6% of looked after children returned home from care during the year.

9.5% of looked after children on 31st March had three or more placements during the year.

NQS6: Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

71.4% of care leavers were in education, training or employment at 12 months and 73.7% of care leavers were in education, training or employment at 24 months after leaving care.

6.1% of care leavers experienced homelessness during the year

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