

Public Document Pack



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa,
Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0PA
ceredigion.gov.uk

26 June 2023

Dear Sir / Madam

I write to inform you that a Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at the HYBRID - NEUADD CYNGOR CEREDIGION, PENMORFA, ABERAERON / REMOTELY VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE on Monday, 3 July 2023 at 10.00 am for the transaction of the following business:

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)**
Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
3. **Recruitment Challenges in Through Age Wellbeing Services (Pages 3 - 16)**
4. **Direct Payments Support Service (Pages 17 - 32)**
5. **A report on the Housing Register (Pages 33 - 52)**
6. **To consider the Forward Work Plan 2023/2024 (Pages 53 - 58)**
7. **Minutes of the previous Meeting and any matters arising therefrom (Pages 59 - 64)**

Members are reminded to sign the Attendance Register

A Translation Services will be provided at this meeting and those present are welcome to speak in Welsh or English at the meeting.

Yours faithfully



Miss Lowri Edwards
Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

To: Chairman and Members of Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The remaining Members of the Council for information only.

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	3rd July 2023
LOCATION:	Hybrid
TITLE:	Recruitment Challenges in Through Age Wellbeing Services
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To present to Committee an update on the Recruitment and Retention of Social Care staff. To seek feedback on activity to date and suggestions for any other options. And to seek commitment from the Elected Members to endorse working in partnership with Hywel Dda UHB to explore innovative and creative opportunities to provide longer term solutions.
REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:	To be sighted on the current challenges and service actions

Context

The Council has a legal duty to provide safe statutory services for those most in need within the communities of Ceredigion. Whilst responsibility for this ultimately lies with the Council's Statutory Director of Social Services (SDSS), there is an organisational responsibility to support the SDSS to ensure these responsibilities are discharged effectively and in a manner that results in a safe service.

The risk of not having a safe service would at worst present a risk to life in terms of service users, and significant financial risk and toll on staff capacity should the council be placed into special measures. Whilst agency staff are used within our social care structures, where recruitment is challenging, the cost of doing so represents value for money given the safe service that they are critical to maintaining. Our agency staff are carefully selected and managed well to ensure the needs of the council and those of our service users are met. As you will see from the information throughout the report, the challenge to recruitment in social care is a national one and one which is likely to remain without a significant focus on the issues from Welsh Government.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected our adults and children's services in March 2023. Following a robust inspection, they provided an extremely positive report providing many

examples of the significant good work that takes place every day and citing the strong senior leadership that is in place. They also acknowledged areas for improvement that we presented to them and confirmed that there were no areas of no compliance.

The recruitment and retention of an appropriately sized workforce is one of the most significant challenges facing local government and the public sector in general, with increasing vacancy rates across all areas. As well as explaining the challenges in detail, this report also captures the ways in which the council is being innovative and creative in attempting to respond to them.

The ability to attract and retain talent is critical to maintaining a skilled workforce capable of delivering quality services to our communities. The Council employs a workforce of around 3,700 employees, to a fulltime equivalent workforce of around 2,600 employees, largely female based at approximately 66 percent.

The recruitment and retention in our Through Age Wellbeing social care services has proved to be increasingly challenging, especially over the past 18 months, post-Covid period. These services employ a workforce of around 700 employees, a full-time equivalent workforce of 500 and a higher than the corporate average female workforce percentage of 74%.

Of these roles 240 are supporting statutory services and vacancy levels in these roles is currently at 45 (19)%, and 21 of these are occupied by agency staff. Of the remaining 460 roles, vacancy levels are at 88 (19%) but only 9 of these are occupied by agency staff, in our residential homes and Enablement team.

The agency staff covering statutory services includes the eight members of the managed team arrangement through Innovate Services. Their appointment was following a procurement exercise and the contract was awarded on an initial 6-month contract, with the option of extensions of up to 6 months in three-month blocks. Whilst this team isn't included in the financial scope of the report, the added value they provide to the organisation and their role in helping to maintain a safe service is clear to see.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the recruitment and retention issues facing these services, as well as outlining the work currently being undertaken to address these challenges.

Financial Considerations

There are several areas within Social Care where external resources have been needed to supplement core staff employed directly by the Council. Not all these areas are within the scope of this report. For clarity this report does not cover either the Statutory Director post (which has already been the subject of separate reporting to Full Council) nor a dedicated Contracted team working in Planned Care as mentioned above, which is a specific commissioned contract (which Members have been already received a separate briefing on).

The remaining areas within scope are Professional Social Worker posts covered by agency resource and Care & Support worker posts mainly within the Local Authority Care Homes (with some use in Targeted Care & Enablement Services). Most data has been taken from a snapshot in April 2023.

i) Professional Social Worker Posts

On the Social Worker posts, there were 21 agency workers covering Social Worker related posts. The average cost was £32k per week and the hourly rates being paid varied from £41.00 to £56.25 per hour. There is clearly an additional cost to using agency workers, however there is a partial offset from the saving from the associated vacant post. There is a typical additional cost on an annualised basis of £20k to £30kpa for using an agency Social Worker:

	Social Worker £'000	Senior Practitioner £'000
Cost as an Employee (with oncosts)	49	54
Cost with Agency (based on 44 weeks)	69	84
Difference	20	30

The additional cost to the Council is the premium paid for an agency worker (noting that they do not get paid if they are off sick or on annual leave nor is any employer pension contribution made) versus the original budget for the post they are covering, plus a wider saving from the level of overall vacancies, as not every single vacant post is filled by an agency.

	Per Week £'000
Gross Saving from 42 vacant posts within Social Care (excluding 3 Business Support posts which are part of Democratic Services)	37
Less Vacancy factor in base budget	-9
Net Saving available	28
Weekly cost of Agency staff (Currently 21)	32
Net Difference / Shortfall	4

The overall total net cost in this area has also further benefited from some grant funding in 22/23 which has been maximised wherever possible (although this is not necessarily re-occurring so should be considered a one-off).

ii) Care & Support Worker Posts

Within Local Authority Care Homes, it is the operational side of 24/7 shifts needing to be filled. The current typical level of usage is a net cost of c. £20k per week, although this varies from week to week depending on operational requirements. Agency Hourly rates being paid for Care & Support Worker roles and Senior Care & Support Worker roles vary from £25.99 to £47.00. The reason for the large differential is the higher end hourly rates cover Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays working.

In this area whilst there is a partial financial offset already included within the net cost per week (as the base budget provides for the core operational hours required to run each Home), it is not as significant as there is no wider vacancy position that assists, because each shift is required to be filled to maintain adequate staffing ratios. The agency cost premium also varies depending on the type of shift being covered – it is at its highest for a basic weekday daytime shift - an 85% premium (£14.03 including oncosts v £25.99 agency), but this reduces to only 11% for a Bank holiday night.

Therefore, there is a significant net cost to using agency staff in Local Authority Care Homes and this is only being mitigated at present through underspends in other parts of Porth Gofal - namely Day Services and Targeted Care & Enablement Services.

Recruitment Issues in social care

Recruitment issues in social care in Wales have been a growing concern in recent years. Some of the key challenges faced in the social care sector include:

- 1. Workforce shortages:* There is a shortage of qualified and experienced social care professionals in Wales. The demand for social care services has been increasing due to an aging population, rising complex care needs, and legislative changes. However, the number of people entering the profession has not kept pace with the demand.
- 2. Lower pay and poor working conditions:* Social care roles are often associated with low pay and challenging working conditions. Many care workers are near the minimum wage, which makes it difficult to attract and retain skilled professionals. Additionally, the nature of the work can be physically and emotionally demanding, heavy workloads and high caseload, which can lead to burnout. Social workers in Wales often face lower pay compared to other professions requiring similar qualifications and responsibilities. Inadequate pay and benefits packages can deter potential candidates from considering social work as a career or lead to social workers seeking better compensation in other sectors.
- 3. Lack of career progression and development opportunities:* Limited career progression and professional development opportunities within the social care sector can discourage individuals from pursuing long-term careers in this field. The lack of clear pathways for advancement and professional growth can make the sector less attractive to potential candidates.
- 4. Negative perception of the sector:* The social care sector has often been undervalued and stigmatised, leading to a negative perception of the profession. This can discourage individuals from considering social care as a viable career option, contributing to the recruitment challenges.
- 5. Geographical disparities:* Recruitment issues may be more pronounced in rural and remote regions. Limited access to training and job opportunities can make it challenging to attract and retain social care workers in these areas.

6. *Work-life balance and stress*: Social work can be emotionally demanding and stressful. The nature of the work, dealing with challenging situations and providing support to vulnerable individuals and families, can impact the work-life balance of social workers. High levels of stress and limited work-life balance can make the profession less appealing to potential recruits.

Retention Issues in social care

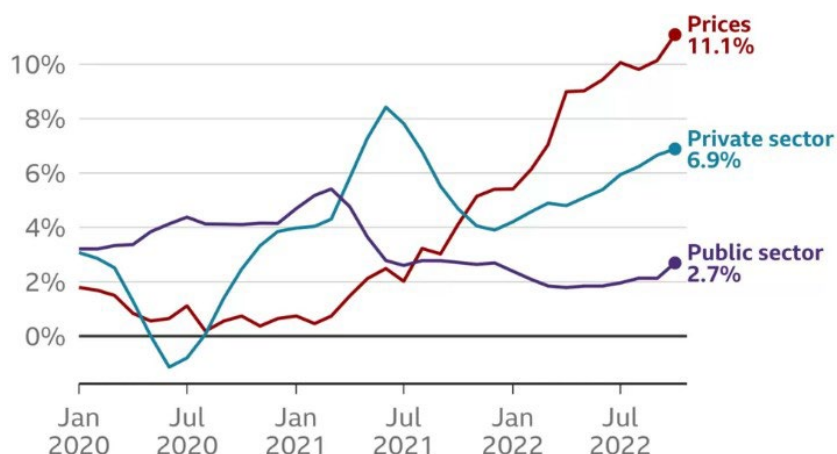
Keeping our employees is as important as recruitment but there are several challenges in retaining our employees. Retention issues in social care are closely tied to the recruitment challenges faced by the sector as set out above. Some of the key factors contributing to retention issues include:

1. *Lower pay and inadequate rewards*: Social care roles in Wales often come with low wages compared to the level of responsibility and demands of the job. Many care workers are paid at or near the minimum wage, making it difficult to retain skilled and experienced professionals. Inadequate rewards and recognition for the hard work and dedication of care workers can lead to job dissatisfaction and turnover.
2. *Challenging working conditions*: Social care can be emotionally and physically demanding, requiring care workers to provide support to individuals with complex needs. The challenging nature of the work, including long hours, heavy workloads, and limited resources, can contribute to stress, burnout, and a desire to leave the profession.
3. *Lack of career progression and development*: Limited opportunities for career advancement and professional development can lead to a lack of motivation and job satisfaction among social care workers. Without clear pathways for growth and development, individuals may feel stagnant in their roles, which can contribute to turnover.
4. *Emotional toll and compassion fatigue*: Caring for vulnerable individuals can take an emotional toll on care workers. Continuous exposure to difficult and traumatic situations without proper emotional support can lead to compassion fatigue and psychological strain, causing care workers to leave the profession.

Local Government Pay

One of the most significant challenges is salary levels in local government. All local authorities are tied into national pay bargaining arrangements, which are not automatically linked to funding from central government. There are also job evaluation scheme considerations across local government which make it difficult to offer more competitive salaries and benefits packages in specific roles. This can lead to a higher turnover as employees seek better-paying positions elsewhere, often in the private sector, and in comparable paying roles but with less work demands.

Comparison of Public Sector pay, Private Sector pay and Price (CPI) increases during up to Oct 2022



Source ONS

There is a project currently being managed by the Association of Directors of Social Services (Cymru) to work towards reducing reliance on agency social workers across children’s social care. It is envisaged that there will be scope to look at the same approach with adult social workers in the future. The project having produced the All-Wales Pledge to reduce the number of agency social workers employed by local authorities. The steps to be taken within the Pledge include not employing social workers who have left local authority employment to join an agency, reducing the hourly pay rate offered to agency social workers to be more aligned with local authority pay rates and to re-negotiate the pay rate of existing agency employees to a lower amount.

ADSS (Cymru) recognise that change has be incremental and there is a need to give local authorities alternatives to using expensive agency solutions. To date there are no obvious solutions coming forward from the project.

However, to sign up to the All-Wales Pledge is an undertaking to stop using agency workers therefore creating is a risk that agency staff will move on to maintain their income. This would place local authorities in a position where there was insufficient qualified social worker capacity to fulfil statutory duties to the community.

The basic salaries paid for social worker roles vary across all local authorities in Wales as each authority will have individual pay polices and banding in place. The differences can be up to £4k for a qualified social worker, when comparing Ceredigion salaries to that of larger authorities. Furthermore, as a recruitment and/or retention tool, local authorities have introduced market forces supplements which has exacerbated these differences with authorities paying between £2k and £6k per annum. Having a national pay spine for qualified social workers would remove the internal market influences currently in place between neighbouring authorities.

Regional picture overview

A detailed review of the current challenges in relation to the social care workforce was completed on behalf of the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board (Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, and Powys) in December 2022, titled *Analysis of Workforce Risk Factors in Recruiting and Retaining Children’s Services and Adult Services Social Workers*. This review confirmed the inherent difficulties in tackling workforce problems in this sector are both persistent and resistant to remedial action.

The report highlighted some key messages which are consistent and compelling. There were serious workforce risk factors found across the four local authorities in a wide range of areas, including:

- high vacancy levels and difficulties in recruiting to posts such as safeguarding work, in part because of increased workloads arising from issues such as more complex case management processes.
- problems in securing a sufficient supply of social workers at all stages of their careers but especially in roles which involve specialist skills.
- dependence on destabilising levels of agency staffing.
- a high proportion of staff in the upper age range.
- high turnover levels when social workers have completed their post-qualifying period.
- sickness absences often attributed to stress, anxiety, fatigue, or mental health concerns.
- fears about worker burn out and other challenges to their well-being.
- significant upheaval caused by changes in working conditions, especially those which have occurred because of the pandemic.
- increasing demand for services and rising workload levels.
- remuneration concerns.

The review concluded that it was crucial that any improvement plans take into account the work being done at a national level through the Social Care Wales *Social Work Workforce Plan 2022 to 2025*. The plan contains five principles.

“We want to have a social work workforce that:

- *feels valued and is valued.*
- *has the right values, behaviours, knowledge, skills, and confidence to assess care and support needs and provide support when needed.*
- *is sustainable and has enough people to provide responsive health and social care that meets the needs of the people of Wales.*
- *works in an environment where supporting employee well-being is essential so that people and organisations can thrive.*
- *reflects the population’s diversity, Welsh language, and cultural identity.”*

Increasing use of agency workers

On a national scale, the number of social work graduates and experienced professionals entering the field has not kept pace with the demand and therefore the use of agency social worker staff is increasing across the sector. This is reflected in Mid and West Wales.

Over the last six months, and in response to the increasing instability in the recruitment market, local authorities in Wales have been working together to develop a joint approach to the use of agency social workers in children's services.

There is a project currently being managed by the Association of Directors of Social Services (Cymru) to work towards reducing reliance on agency social workers across children's social care with scope to look at the same approach with adult social care.

ADSS (Cymru) recognise that this change must be incremental and give local authorities alternatives to using expensive agency solutions. Of 22 local authorities in Wales there are 20 signed up to an agreement to support the project. The premise of the agreement is to develop and to manage the agency supply chain, improve the quality of staff and regulate pay rates within agency Children's Social Work. The key stakeholders are social care and finance managers, human resources teams, trade unions, agency providers and agency social workers.

Current Position in Ceredigion

The review produced for the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board, mentioned above, included reference to evidence-based research undertaken by the Local Government Association on two relevant areas: (a) when Social Workers would stay in local authority employment, and (b) when Social Workers would leave local authority employment. These have been set out in the first column of the two tables below. The second column records the response in place in Ceredigion to either promote the relevant area (in the first table) or to address the issue (in the second table).

<i>There is research that states that Social Workers stay in Council employment when they:</i>	The situation in Ceredigion County Council:
<i>feel valued and supported with good management, good supervision, good initial and post qualifying training</i>	Ceredigion achieves this through a robust Through Age, Wellbeing management structure, which ensures that supervision, reflective practice and training opportunities are available for all social care staff
<i>have a supportive team and colleagues providing advice, expertise, and emotional support</i>	We achieve this through a programme of regular team meetings, team social activities, access to a wellbeing support service and counselling service

<i>have good work-life balance and career progression</i>	The Through Age Wellbeing services have developed team structures and training opportunities that support career progression as well as flexible working opportunities in line with our local policies and procedures
<i>have clear priorities and appropriate caseloads</i>	We achieve this through the Signs of Safety supervision policy focusing on strengths and positive outcomes, regular supervision enables the worker to prioritise and identify clear goals and techniques to manage caseloads
<i>operate in an environment where reflective practice is the norm</i>	Our teams and managers achieve this through individual and group supervision, action learning opportunities and case reviews
<i>have effective administrative back up and IT systems</i>	Corporate systems have been developed to enable access and support from all corporate services including IT and business support
<i>have job security</i>	The Team Ceredigion ethos is promoted across all the services and through regular communications to all staff the aim is to create a 'family' approach reinforcing the importance of job security and being part of the Ceredigion community
<i>have access to flexible working</i>	New ways of working post pandemic has enabled further flexibility for staff working for the council, in addition to existing relevant policies and procedures.

<i>There is research that states that Social Workers leave Council employment when:</i>	The situation in Ceredigion County Council:
<i>referral rates rise</i>	Post pandemic we have seen the number of referrals rise and complexity of cases increase, this is managed through regular monitoring of data and performance and re directing individual staff and teams to support in those areas of greatest need.
<i>individual caseloads increase</i>	we manage this through supervision and case allocation, supporting staff to manage their caseloads effectively and where

	appropriate providing additional staffing resource
<i>the support they've previously received diminishes</i>	Support is consistent and delivered as per previous comments above
<i>the control which they believe they should have over their working lives is reduced</i>	Flexible working has been key in supporting staff in maintaining a positive work life balance
<i>they cannot use their own professional judgement</i>	Staff are supported to work autonomously and use their professional judgement; this is a key requirement within social care practice and is supported through good supervision and management
<i>local policy changes result in reduced allowances</i>	This has not been applicable in Ceredigion
<i>local pay rates are uncompetitive compared with those available nearby</i>	This is an area of concern and is addressed further within the report.

Recruitment and retention initiatives

With the aim of making Ceredigion self-sufficient with a regular supply of qualified social workers the following action are being taken:

- Social work trainees have been recruited to enrol on the Open University (OU) course sponsored by the local authority. Three newly qualified social workers will be ready to commence statutory duties in October 2023, with more students due to qualify in 2024, 2025 and 2026 from the OU program.
- Ceredigion host practice placements to students from other universities to support the qualifying program and expose students the benefits of working for the local authority. There is strong evidence to suggest that student social workers take up employment with the host local authority in which they had a positive experience whilst qualifying.
- Work is at an early stage in partnership with Aberystwyth University to develop a Mid and West Wales Social Work Master's Degree program. Ceredigion and the University are jointly exploring this development with oversight from Social Care Wales. The aim is to commencing delivery of the new MSc in Social Work from September 2025. For course to be viable a minimum of 30 students are required but the required in-practice placements is proving to be a limiting factor. At present, there is only provision for 20 placements (students) and therefore we are contacting other organisations with a view to increasing number of placements so that 30 students can be accommodated.
- Growing our own:
In the five years up to 2022, a successful programme of developing our own social workers has resulted in the following:

- 12 Trainee Social Workers recruited. 5 other employees sponsored on an independent route to qualify as Social Workers. As a result, 16 employed as Social Workers by Ceredigion County Council.
- 5 Swansea University Social Work students completed hosted placements and were employed as Ceredigion County Council Social Workers.
- 80 student Social Work placements provided.
- 22 employees have been supported to undertake a Certification in Higher Education, out of which 9 have continued onto the Social Work degree.

Over the next three years the following are due to qualify:

- 2023: 3 members of staff will qualify as SWs this year. SDSS currently undertaking team allocation process. Cert HE sponsorship (1st 2 modules of SW degree) – hoping to sponsor 3 or 4 employees.
- 2024: 3 members of staff due to qualify (subject to successful completion)
- 2025: 6 members of staff due to qualify (subject to successful completion)

Apprenticeships:

- There is no Social Worker apprenticeship available in Wales. However, we've recruited Health and Social Care apprentices and Youth Work apprentices which provide linked career pathways.

As a part of its employment offer we promote the following benefits to recruit, retain and support the whole workforce:

- Relocation package of up to £8k for hard to fill roles
- Market forces supplement to qualified social workers
- Hybrid and flexible working opportunities
- Access to employee health and wellbeing support
- A clear and robust supervision policy
- Annual appraisals
- Access to a wide range of mandatory and specialist training
- Care First – Employee Assistance Package
- Car leasing and cycle to work schemes
- Lifestyle savings card

Using recruitment agencies for permanent recruitment

Following a procurement exercise we have been working with Sanctuary Personnel recruitment agency to recruit permanent social workers both from within the UK and internationally. Work is currently being undertaken to finalise a 'Social Work Hub' microsite to promote our employment offer. When finished the site will include including blogs, testimonials, lifestyle offer and videos, development support.

- International: Relocation campaigns across Africa, Caribbean, Australasia, the US and other geographical regions. We are adopting a 3-stage process for assessment: CV, Candidate Assessment Form & Interview.
- UK: In addition to the microsite the UK marketing campaign will include the following: Indeed; Social Work News; British Association of Social Workers, Social Work Today, Community Care
- Placement of International Social Worker: As a pilot we have a staff member on a fixed-term contract as a Social Work Assistant who previously qualified as a Social Worker in Hong Kong. To be able to register as a SW in Wales she is undertaking a placement to demonstrated currency in practice in Wales. Subject to SCW assessment/approval she will then be able to register and commence employment as a practicing SW with us.

Outreach

- We've attended careers fairs, job centre days, and supported We Care Wales campaigns - both regionally and nationally
- Promoted employment opportunities across the Through Age Wellbeing services to Aberystwyth University Students
- Virtual information sessions held with Swansea University students

Current recruitment campaigns

We have revised our candidate attraction material to improve the marketing of our brand and employment offer which has seen the following developments:

- Developed 3 'showcase videos' for the purpose of sharing on our socials, careers site, info sessions etc: (i) Lifestyle (ii) Mixed testimonials (iii) Case Study. These have been shared as part of sponsored campaigns on our social media channels achieving over 75,000 reach. In addition, there are weekly 'non-sponsored' awareness raiser posts shared on our social media platforms.
- Social Work Week campaign: videos of the Chief Executive and Statutory Director of Social Services recognising the value of social work and social workers, social work teams introduction and gratitude posts on Facebook and LinkedIn
- Staff testimonial quotes shared on our social media platforms
- Social Work Online Info Session campaigns x 2 (led to 1 successful appointment)
- Additional marketing: radio advertising, road side banners, British Association of Social Workers (BASW) listings, Sponsored Indeed advertising
- Vacancies promoted to all Universities that deliver SW courses
- Following poor response to traditional recruitment methods appointed SOLCAE to undertake executive search for CLO Porth Cynnal vacancy

Conclusion

Addressing recruitment and retention issues requires a multi-faceted approach. It includes improving pay and working conditions, investing in professional development and training, promoting the value and importance of social care roles, focussing on improving job satisfaction, employee wellbeing, promoting a positive and supportive work culture, and implementing targeted recruitment strategies to attract and retain social care professionals in Wales.

Collaborative efforts between the government, social care providers, educational institutions, and professional associations are crucial in finding sustainable solutions to these challenges. Additionally, addressing the underlying recruitment challenges and improving the overall perception of social care as a valued and rewarding profession can also contribute to better retention rates.

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed?

No

If, not, please state why – Report for information only

Summary:

Long term:
Recruitment of key staff is the aim to provide a long-term solution to the current difficulties

Integration:

Opportunities for integration are continually explored.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Collaboration:

A collaborative approach is taken in developing the strategy for OT provision which is overseen by the Though Age Wellbeing Board

Involvement:

N/A

Prevention:

Prevention is a key focus of the service

RECOMMENDATION (S):

1. To note the current position about the important use of agency workers within our social care services.
2. To note the activity already taking place in responding to the challenge of recruitment in this sector.
3. To provide feedback and suggestions of any other possible solutions to the recruitment challenge.
4. To endorse Officers working with partners in HDUHB to explore creative and innovative opportunities to provide longer term solutions.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

N/A

Reporting Officers: Audrey Somerton-Edwards and Geraint Edwards

Designation: Interim CLO Porth Cynnal, CLO People & Organisation

Date of Report: 19 June 2023

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 3/7/23

LOCATION:

TITLE: Direct Payments Support Service

PURPOSE OF REPORT: Direct Payments Support Service Progress Report for information

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: Update on DPSS

BACKGROUND:



1.1 Direct Payment Support Service

The Direct Payments Support Service under the management of the local authority was created on 01/04/21 when 4 staff were transferred under TUPE into the local authority from the former commissioned provider. The Service was re-designed as part of the Through Age and Wellbeing programme and established in this new structure at the end of 2021/22. The first year was consolidated The Service under local authority governance and ensured The Service provision was effectively maintained to service users so that they saw no changes to their support during the transition.

The year 2022-2023 set very clear objectives to review all aspects of The Service model and to develop The Service structure and ensure a programme of improvements. An additional Support Officer was appointed in July 2022 and a Team Manager was appointed to oversee the next phase of development from August 2022 to drive The Service forward.

1.2 Legislation

Direct Payments are governed by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Care and Support (Direct Payments) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

1.3 What is a Direct Payment?

A Direct Payment is money awarded by a Local Authority to allow Service Users to arrange their own package of care. Direct Payments can be offered to anyone who has been assessed as eligible to receive community care services. Once assessed an individual must be offered the choice of a direct payment. The amount allowed will depend on how much and what assistance is required and this will all be included in the care plan produced by the assessor.

Direct Payments can help meet an individual's eligible need for care and support, or a carer's need for support. They are an alternative to local authority- arranged care or support. The aim of Direct Payments is to give people more choice, greater flexibility, and more control over the support they get. Direct Payments can be provided to people of all ages if they have been assessed as needing social care services to support them with daily living, consent to receiving a Direct Payment and they (or their representative) can manage the payment.

Many people use their Direct Payments to fund a Personal Assistant to help them with various tasks. In these instances, Direct Payment recipients become employers and must meet the associated legal obligations. The individual's family member or representative can also employ a PA where the person requiring support does not have capacity to be an employer. Some choose to use a care agency instead. Local authorities are required to provide support and assistance to people to manage their Direct Payment and employment responsibilities. This is the role of the Direct Payments Support Service.

Direct Payments can be used to purchase a wide variety of services or equipment if these contribute to meeting an individual's agreed wellbeing outcomes. Payments can be made for day-to-day things such as dressing, cooking, driving and support to facilitate discharge from hospital. They can also be used for social activities – visiting friends, evening classes and gardening – as well as for assistance to access training and employment. The main benefit of Direct Payments is their adaptability. Service users can use them to organise their care in a whole range of new and more effective ways and local authorities are encouraged to explore innovative and creative options for meeting people's needs.

1.4 Audit Wales

Audit Wales have described the benchmark characteristics of a local authority that effectively encourages, manages, and supports people to use Direct Payments.

The redevelopment of the Direct Payments Support Service now firmly established within the local authority has been designed around the following characteristics as the foundation principles. The new service has been embedded in Targeted & Short Term

Services as part of Porth Gofal, to support the Through Age and Wellbeing programme. These characteristics will direct the development and improvement activities over the next few years and build the evidence these characteristics have been fully embedded.

1. Local authorities who are good at promoting Direct Payments

- Have simple and concise public information that is made available in a wide range of mediums and has been tested to ensure it is effective and tells people what they need to know
- Offers and encourages people to use independent advocacy to help people make informed choices
- Uses the 'What Matters' conversation in the assessment process to explain Direct Payments
- Direct Payments are promoted as an option at least equally with other choices

2. Local authorities who are managing Direct Payments effectively

- Help people to access and use Personal Assistants 'Demystify' what Direct Payments are and provide sufficient support to assure people on employment requirements, liabilities, and fallback processes. Bureaucracy is kept to a minimum
- Clearly set out what Direct Payments can be used for giving examples of the type of support that is available and, wherever possible, encourage innovation
- Have regular and ongoing contact and provide support and information to adults using Direct Payments to clarify responsibilities and ensure people remain safe
- Work to shape the 'market' and by improving access to Personal Assistants, encouraging more providers, managing costs, and encouraging the pooling of budgets
- Jointly agree with NHS bodies on how best to address the needs of clients who use Direct Payments and Continuing Healthcare, so they are not disadvantaged

3. Local authorities who are delivering positive outcomes for people using Direct Payments

- Evidencing that people's wellbeing is maintained or improving because of Direct Payments
- Have a comprehensive system for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of Direct Payments
- Involve and value input from all stakeholders/partners in evaluating the impact of services
- Compare and benchmark individual and collective performance with others and use the findings of evaluation to shape current plans and future approaches
- Know what works and whether the approach of the authority is delivering the aspirations of the Act

1.5 The Direct Payments Support Service (DPSS)

The Direct Payment Support Service provides information and support as well as practical help to services users to become employers, assisting with recruiting and employing staff, providing support to arrange Employer Liability Insurance, paying PA wages via employer confirmed hours and helping with Income Tax, National Insurance

and Pensions payments. It is important to note that all PA's working with DP service users are solely employed by the service user and are not employees of the council.



Working with the Porth Gofal team and across the corporate functions of Team Ceredigion, The Service has sought to provide help and support in understanding what is available through Direct Payments to promote Voice, Choice, and Control for service users within the Through Age Wellbeing programme.

CURRENT SITUATION:

2.1 Promoting Direct Payments & creating a Direct Payments Support Service brand improving access to information



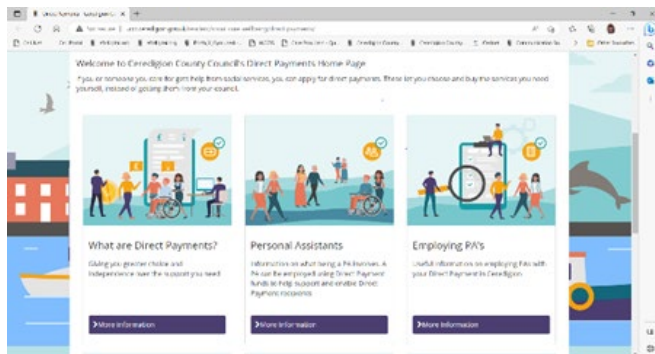
A website has been co- created to offer help and advice to those considering or already receiving a Direct Payment and it allows potential PAs to register their interest in being employed. The website was launched on 31/3/23 following extensive testing within the council domain.



Logos and images were commissioned from a local company Four Cymru to reflect some of the key images of Ceredigion and to represent groups of people accessing DP's and creating a welcoming and friendly space to find all the Direct Payments information in one place.

This provides a link to access the website.

[Direct Payments - Ceredigion County Council](#)



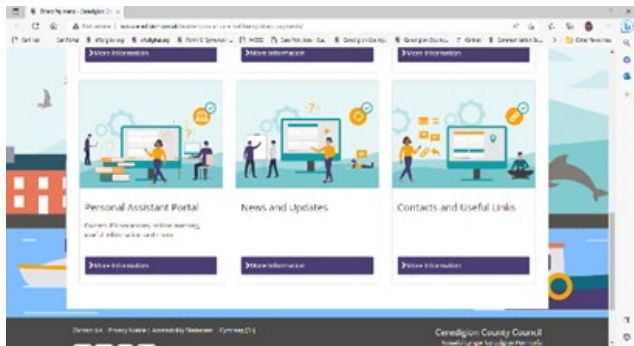


In addition to the available resources in DEWIS, and in response to service user feedback the Service is currently developing an information sheet to be issued to service users with signposts to the support that is available in their communities e.g., Age Concern, informal carer's groups etc. and these will also be added to the website. Creating Easy Read Documents and digital short clips to explain how the process works in Direct Payment terms, are also in development.

Once the new payroll software (Staffology) system is embedded the Service will be offering training to those service users who wish to learn how to manage their accounts themselves while still providing detailed support for those that wish to have greater levels on active support.

The ethos of Team Ceredigion has been hugely effective with the implementation of the Staffology system with Finance, IT, Procurement and DPSS along with the other Pwrth's all coming together to ensure that the payroll bureau project has been delivered on time and enabling the next phase of development to progress effectively.

2.2 Manage Direct Payments effectively and creating a proactive approach to recruiting Personal Assistants



The new Personal Assistants (PA) Portal enables people to see the current vacancies PA's and how to apply. For existing PA's it provides access to all the information they need in regards of their role. More will be added to the Portal in the coming year.

2.3 Paying PA's as a managed service through the DPSS Payroll Bureau Software redesign and development

Following identifying payroll software governance and compliance concerns with the previous software contract inherited at the point of transfer into the local authority, on a three counties basis it was agreed to seek a new software payroll solution for payroll functions to be managed. Ceredigion Procurement and Commissioning Service led this process on behalf of the 3 local authorities and this was completed with the implementation of the Staffology payroll suite on 01/4/23. This was an incredibly significant project and required a Task and Finish project team operating for many months to implement a new system, training and to ensure a safe transition, testing and onboarding the new system whilst continuing to ensure payroll was maintained until the

switch over. The teamwork of Tim Ceredigion has been outstanding to bring this project in on time. It is hoped in the future to be able to give the service users access to input their own timesheet information if they wish to while still offering full support to those that don't. With the benefit of automated processes, most of the administration is now digital so pay slips are now emailed to the PA and their employer, The service user. This has had a tremendous benefit significantly reducing the spend on the postal costs and reducing the resource impact on the corporate post room every pay period.

2.4 PA Recruitment, Training and Peer Support

With the appointment of the new Team Manager and the creation of the PA Coordinator function within the Team Leader post, the impetus to recruit new PAs has started to become more focused with new links built with Jobcentre Plus to attend local jobs fairs.

With the new branding now embedded the DPSS have been able to promote the Service with new Pop-Up promotional banners at community events to draw individuals to the team to discuss opportunities. A brief PA Information leaflet has been developed to share at public events (See attached leaflet). This, together with several Employer, PA and General resources, can be found on the website links.

In 2023 to date 5 jobs fairs have been attended and more than 20 PAs recruited. The Team Manager has also encouraged the wider Council recruiters to take part in these events and this has proved highly successful and has been recognised by the Employment Lead at JCP. The Team Manager has also instigated building links with the farming community as a means of increasing recruitment within this group, encouraging the development of care provision within local communities, promoting eco-friendly reduced travel from local working, and keeping money local. It is also a positive and proactive approach increasing the income stream into a farming sector which is experiencing difficult times and needing to further diversify.

Local support for employers to recruit PAs is essential; previous issues reported, such as a lack of experience in recruitment and variable support, can make it difficult to recruit PAs. Routes to recruitment most frequently referred to by PAs include conversations with friends or colleagues, a direct approach from a potential employer, already knowing their employer (friend/family member), and 'word of mouth.'

Recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges within the whole social care sector and PA's is no different to the wider social care workforce. There is no single solution to increasing the supply of PAs.' The website and PA Portal is a key link to making connections with existing PAs and ways to support them and encourage PAs to look for additional roles. Developing a proactive PA register has the potential to be more than just a recruitment tool and may assist efforts to make the PA workforce more visible or even start to develop a 'community' of PAs at a local level.

2.5 PA's role, skills, importance, and value

Social Care Wales defines the role of a PA as providing 'person-centred care and support for individuals, so that they can achieve personal well-being outcomes where the individual lives. PAs utilise numerous high-level skills (autonomy, communication, co-ordination, assessment, and decision-making) and undertake a variety of duties including support with personal care, mobility, particular health needs, household tasks such as cleaning and shopping, attending college/university, and socialising. Having more than one employer is typical.

2.6 PA's Recruitment

Period	PA's Total Recruited
2021-2022 Full Year	122 (12 months)
2022-2023 Full Year	133 (12 months)
2023-2024 1st April -1st June 2023 New website	56 (first 2 months)

2.7 PA's and the Active Offer

In line with the Welsh Language Standards the Service actively promotes service users to be able to choose the language they prefer to use at home and allocates a Welsh speaking Support Officer and actively recruiting a Welsh speaking PA.

2.8 PA's and Peer Support



The Service is to reintroduce Peer Support meetings where service users and PAs can meet to have training and support. In partnership with the Fire Brigade, Police they will be available at the sessions to give advice to attendees. With cooking demonstrations and craft classes also to be added. It is hoped by offering a wide range of options it will encourage more service users and their PA's to attend to share ideas and begin to develop interest in pooling resources. The Service has received a grant from Learning and Development to provide courses for the PAs at the same time. It is hoped that by encouraging these meetings it will help to alleviate the isolation that many carer's and cared for experience.

2.9 “Engaging with the Social Care Personal Assistant workforce” Collaboration with Aberystwyth University Employability Placement Scheme - Student Placement

In September 2022, a collaboration between the local authority Learning and Development service and Aberystwyth University under the Work Placement scheme, provided the opportunity to place a student with the Direct Payments Support Service. Mentored by the Team Manager the project assigned was “*Engaging with the Social Care Personal Assistant workforce*”

- *Carry out research to establish a picture of personal assistants (PAs) working across health and social care in Ceredigion.*
- *Consider this research in the context of how the council can encouraging engagement with communities to promote the role of Personal Assistants and increase interest in provision of care to individuals, building strong partnerships to develop and embed local connections.*

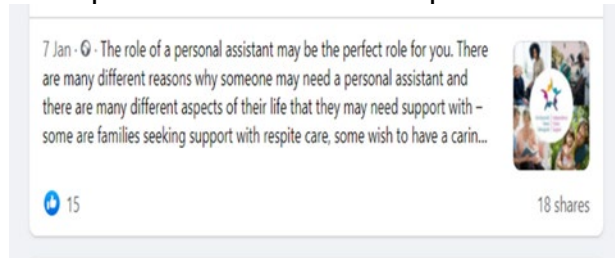
At the end of the work placement the student produced a report and presentation which provided a baseline to commence the PA workforce development. The key outcomes have been built into the PA Peer Support plans for 2023/24. The outcomes for the student were also hugely valuable in terms of developing the individual and introducing them to the wide-ranging value and benefits of Direct Payments. The student reported that the experience had been “interesting, enjoyable, and educational which I hope will help me in my chosen career. I have really enjoyed creating the survey and working on the results and hope that they will offer you an insight into how the team can improve their assistance to Service Users and their PAs.”

2.10 Communication Plan

The DPSS is taking a holistic approach to recruitment including using word-of-mouth via peer networks and working with the local authority Press Office to increase the social media presence to actively harness this as a resource for the promotion of the PA role.

The new website was extensively promoted at the launch and will have repeated campaigns, and plans are in place to have a monthly feature including videos encouraging community members to become PA’s highlighting the number of vacancies in particular areas, these will also be added to the website including a list of the areas where posts are based each month.

Example of a communication post on Facebook



Linked to this is the power of hearing from people already in the PA role and those employing PA's and work in ongoing to encourage PA's and Service Users to share their stories to improve the profile and appreciation of the difference a PA can make to someone's quality of life and enhance their job satisfaction.

2.11 Reaching out to the community and promoting the value of DPs on social media

Outcomes impact example



Anna's story - how a Personal Assistant can change not just an individual's life, but the life of their family too.

Philip is Anna's son. He has diagnoses of autism, global developmental delay, and Crohn's disease. Anna has been Philip's full-time carer for 20 years and now would like the chance to give focus on her own personal development with the aspiration of becoming a nurse after securing a place to study at Aberystwyth University from September 2022.

However, she can only undertake her studies with additional care and support in place for her son. With the help of the Ceredigion Direct Payments Support Service, this dream could soon become a reality as Anna is in the process of recruiting assistants to care for Philip. Philip's needs are significant and complex, and with his special dietary requirements, caring for him is a full-time job. As the family are not ready to place Philip in residential care, having Personal Assistants look after him full time will allow Anna the freedom to study and follow her career.

This will not be the first time Anna has used the Ceredigion Direct Payments Support Service to employ personal assistants. When Philip was younger, local schools were unable to meet his needs, so instead of placing him in a special residential school far from home, Anna opted to home-educate him. She used Direct Payments to employ carers part-time to play with Philip and provide social experiences which gave Anna some respite.

Anna said, "Many wonderful and caring people have come through our door over the years. Some stayed and became part of Philip's life for three years, six years, or even ten years or longer. Others only stayed a few months, but many of them became lifelong friends and became like family. Having a child with additional needs can be hard work and challenging, but I'm so grateful for all the amazing people who came into our lives to care for Philip. I'm also excited to get to know the new personal assistants I've recruited who will look after Philip full time so that I can have a life of my own now."

2.12 PA Training

The Service is working to maximise the strengths and potential of existing PAs – Filling emerging gaps, including the need for more PAs who can perform complex tasks, is not just about growing the supply of new PAs. This requires systems which enable existing PAs to develop their skills. In an innovative partnership with the local authority's Learning and Development service, a new training process has been set up to ensure that all PAs undertake training early in their career with options for extra training available should it be requested. It is important that the PAs offer the best support possible. An example of training courses includes Introduction to Care and Personal Care, First Aid Awareness for PAs and Health and Safety in the Home for PAs. All courses are taken online, and the PAs are paid for the time taken to complete.

2.13 Delivering positive outcomes for people using Direct Payments

Service User Feedback



I am extremely grateful to have found out about the Direct Payment scheme! Most of the time it's used to give me a chance to get something done without needing to check on mum for a couple of mornings per week. However, I love the fact it's so flexible and can also be used to help with appointments and even to ensure mum is safe if I have to go out for a day. (Agreed between myself and the PA). From mum's perspective, it gives her a different person to chat with a couple of times each week. Our PA has become her good friend and they chat about family and mutual interests, as well as being able to have extra help with small household tasks like bending to get out washing from the machine and other tricky tasks. When the PA is on holiday, she is greatly missed by us both! It's a fabulous provision both for anyone who is a carer and for the one who needs care!

2.14 Training and Developmental Opportunities for the Direct Payments Support Service Support Officers to deliver positive outcomes

Staff are encouraged to undertake personal development training and are offered opportunities to take a lead on a range of projects with the Team Manager and Team Leader. All staff are currently involved in undertaking *NVQ Level 4 Advice and Guidance* to help improve the service offered to service users. One member of staff is undertaking an Aspiring Managers course and has also completed the Easy Read course to assist with producing documents for public dissemination. Welsh Language training courses are underway for team members working to develop their language skills. The staff have undertaken a broad range of topic specific training including Autism Awareness, Transgender Awareness and Dementia training and are actively encouraged to take full advantage of the range of social care training available.

2.15 Awareness Training for Through Age and Wellbeing Teams

To increase awareness of the roles, functions, and the operational responsibilities within the Direct Payments Support Service and to understand the processes involved from start to finish a new Awareness Session presentation has been developed. These sessions will commence in June 2023.

2.16 Performance Reporting

The DP Steering Group oversees an Action Plan to monitor the improvement and development objectives, meeting monthly chaired by the CLO for Porth Gofal, with support from the corporate Project Office. A key development area for 2023-24 is the design of an appropriate suite of performance indicators and measures to better illustrate the impact of Direct Payments.



Recognising that the inward and outward flow of service users commencing their DP journey and those for who the DP journey has come to an end on a daily/weekly/annual basis, has an impact on the illustrative data below, the increase in the volume of referrals is hugely significant, showing a *75% increase* between March 2022 and March 2023.

The development of greater insight data analysis is a key requirement in the coming year to understand the changing trends and the impact of the now fully operational new service model.

The Service is currently processing a payroll budget of more than £180,000 per month in Managed Accounts and supporting 42 service users who use Agencies or Self-Employed PAs for their care and to whom the Service pay invoices directly on behalf of the service users.

End March 2022	End March 2023	April – May 2023 (First 2 months of Q1)
508 Service Users who employed: 460 PA's	510 Service Users who employed: 464 PA's	486 Service Users who employ 520 PA's
112 Referrals - an average of 9 per week	199 Referrals - an increase of approx. 75% in 12 months	26 Referrals in the first 2 months of the new financial year
56 SU receiving intensive support	68 SU receiving intensive support	94 SU receiving intensive support

2023/2024 Development Objectives

- To revise operational procedures in the DP team to efficiently utilise the new bureau-based payroll system once fully implemented.
- To consider the contents of the WAO audit report and take development actions as necessary.
- To design and implement a Ceredigion Direct Payments policy. This will incorporate planning and delivery of a DP training programme for TAW staff.
- To design and implement a Personal Assistant strategy incorporating recruitment, training, and welfare considerations.
- To develop and implement a defined Communication and Stakeholder plan to promote the Direct Payments scheme both internally and externally.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS: Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why

Summary:

Long term:

Integration:

Collaboration:

Involvement:

Prevention:

RECOMMENDATION (S):

For information and update on developments within the Direct Payment Support Service.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

N/A

Contact Name: Donna Pritchard

Designation: Corporate Lead Officer Porth Gofal

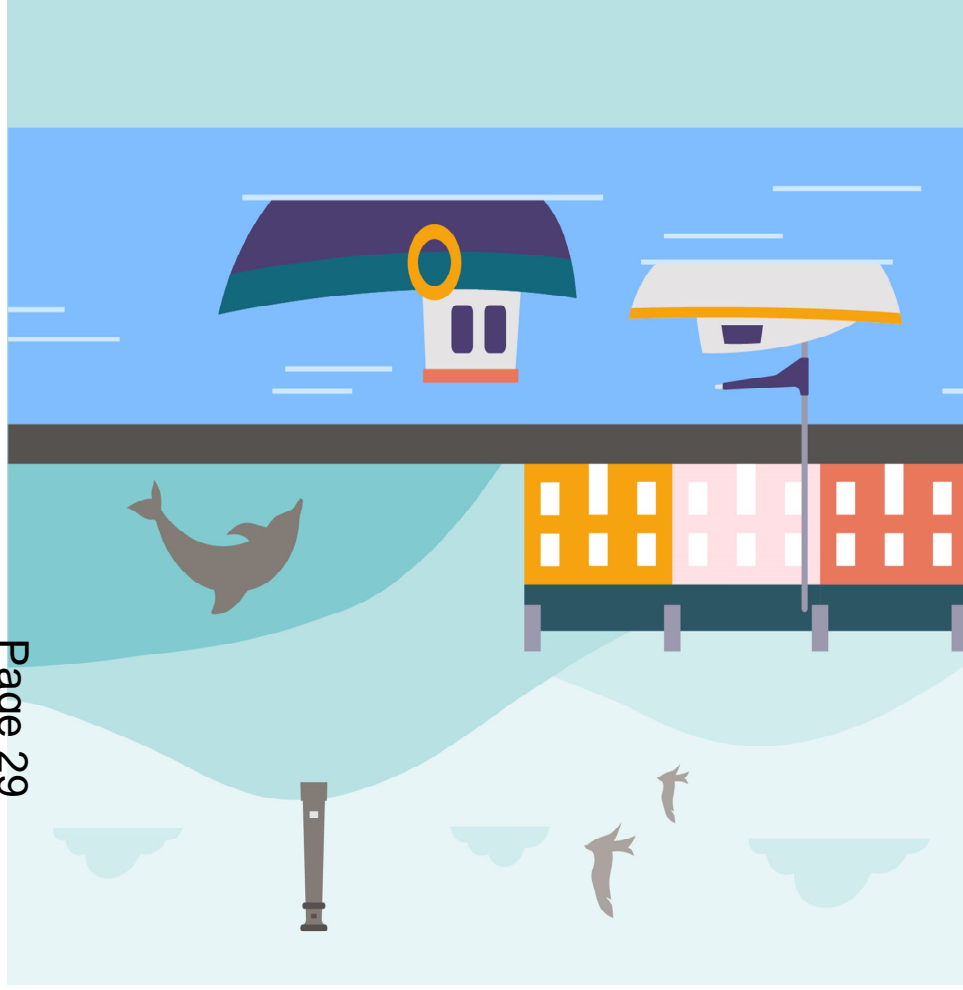
Date of Report: 13th July 2023

Acronyms:

Beth yw

Cynorthwydd Personol?

Annibyniaeth | Dewis | Cefnogaeth
Independence | Choice | Support



What is a Personal Assistant?



Annibyniaeth | Dewis | Cefnogaeth
Independence | Choice | Support





Tu_dp@ceredigion.gov.uk

Neu cysylltwch â ni trwy e-bost

www.ceredigion.gov.uk/preswlydd/iles-gofal-cymdeithasol/
taliadau-uniongyrchol/

Am ragor o wybodaeth a swyddi gweigion ewch i'n gwetan

- Drefnu apwyntiadau, gweithgareddau cymdeithasol a chortforo
- Help gyda gofal personol fel hylendid personol a gwisgo glanhau.
- Cymorth gyda thasgau cartref fel siopa bwyd, paratoi bwyd a edd ac oddi yno
- Mynd gydag unigolyn tra bydd yn teithio i apwyntiad neu weithgar-brwrdd
- Mynd allan am brydau bwyd, gwyllo ffilimiau a chwarae gemau
- Diwrnodau allan yn ymweid ag atyniadau

Mae'r dyletswyddau a gyflawnir gan Gynorthwydd Personol yn amry-wiol ac yn rhoi boddhad. Gall y rhain gynnwys pethau fel:

Nid yw pob swydd PA yn cynnwys gofal personol, mae rhai ar gyfer cymdeithasol yn unig.

Nid yw pob swydd PA yn cynnwys gofal personol, mae rhai ar gyfer cymdeithasol yn unig.

Mae'r dyletswyddau a gyflawnir gan Gynorthwydd Personol yn amry-wiol ac yn rhoi boddhad. Gall y rhain gynnwys pethau fel:

Taliadau Uniongyrchol

Mae Cynorthwydd Personol yn cael ei gyflogi gan unigolyn sy'n derbyn Taliadau Uniongyrchol

Beth yw Cynorthwydd Personol?

Gwasanaeth Cymorth
Taliadau Uniongyrchol
Ceredigion
Direct Payments
Support Service



Gwasanaeth Cymorth
Taliadau Uniongyrchol
Ceredigion
Direct Payments
Support Service

What is a Personal Assistant?

A PA is employed by an individual in receipt of Direct Payments

A PA can work for more than one employer, and will help them with various aspects of their daily life to enable them to live as independently as possible.

Not all PA jobs include personal care, some are for socialisation only.

The duties carried out by a PA are both varied and rewarding. These can include such things as:

- Days out visiting attractions
- Going out for meals, watching films and playing board games
- Accompanying an individual whilst they travel to and from an appointment or activity
- Assistance with household tasks such as food shopping, food preparation and cleaning.
- Help with personal care such as personal hygiene and dressing
- Organising appointments, social and physical activities

For more information and job vacancies please visit our website

www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/social-care-wellbeing/direct-payments/

Or contact us via email

Tu_dp@ceredigion.gov.uk



Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Healthier Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 3rd July 2023

LOCATION: Hybrid/Council Chamber

TITLE: Report on the Housing Register

PURPOSE OF REPORT: Information requested by Scrutiny

**REASON SCRUTINY HAVE
REQUESTED THE
INFORMATION:**

Background

The Ceredigion Common Housing Register has been in place since 2009 and now partners with Barcud, Caredig and Wales & West Housing. The Housing Register highlights the growing needs and demands of housing within the County, whilst enabling allocations of social housing, through a robust application and allocation process.

All social housing units within Ceredigion are allocated by the Landlord of the property in accordance with the Common Allocation Policy, whilst housing applications are managed by the Local Authority and maintained through the Ceredigion Housing Options website.

Application process

Who can apply?

Anyone who would like to apply for Housing in Ceredigion can use the service. To apply to join the Housing Register applicants must be over 16 years of age. However, some people are not eligible to register to apply for social housing. Applicants need to be British Citizens or have been granted leave to remain.

The Common Allocation Policy is followed to ensure the people most in need are offered social housing. Four registers ensure that applicants are placed on the correct register/s for their need: Accessible Housing, Affordable Housing, General Needs and Older Persons.

How to apply

All applications are made through Ceredigion Housing Options website:

www.ceredigionhousingoptions.cymru

Where this is not possible for the applicant/s, applications are welcomed over the telephone (via Clic 01545 574123) Clic Officers also input the applications through the above website, ensuring consistency and a user-friendly, streamlined approach. In other situations, we will utilise local libraries, the Housing Support Grant network of partners and Community Connectors to help and support applicants on to the Housing Register, making sure no one is excluded. The application form has been designed to only ask relevant questions to the individual case.

What we need to know

The application form is comprehensive to ensure that a vast array of situations can be captured and assessed appropriately. As a result, we will ask for the following information as a minimum to enable us to band applications:

- Address history
- Local connection to Ceredigion
- Household income and savings
- The areas applicants want to live in
- Housing conditions
- Medical needs
- Any risk of homelessness

We have given applicants up to 5 area choices to maximise their opportunities for living in areas they choose and, where possible and appropriate, remaining in their communities. Alongside the application form, a stock matrix is provided to advise applicants where there are properties matching their needs, making sure area choices are not unrealistic or wasted. In recognition of the difficulties of finding suitable accommodation for those with physical disabilities and requiring accessible housing, this is increased to 10 area choices.

Updating and Renewing applications

The responsibility of keeping applications up to date and undertaking an annual review sits firmly with the applicants. This enables us to allocate properties to the most suitable and appropriate applicant. Officers will ensure that every opportunity is given to applicants, particularly those in more difficult situations, to renew their applications and remain active on the Housing Register, in the correct band.

Housing Options Website

In addition to being home to the application form, the housing options website holds a whole host of information relating to the application process and general housing. Including, the Allocation Policies, advice and assistance for homelessness, and information on housing adaptations. The website also holds a Housing options wizard, which can advise applicants on the housing solutions available to them.

Banding

The Common Housing Register uses a banding and time-waiting system to support the allocation of housing.

Applications are banded according to their housing needs, determined by the information submitted on the application. The allocations policy seeks to sustain and strengthen communities through several different policy statements, for example, recognizing employment and local connection as a positive factor. Allocations of housing are made from each of the three 'reasonable preference' bands (A-C) via a quota system – Band A 40% Band B 30% and Band C 30%

Use of a banding system offers a clear message to applicants as to their position on the list. Whilst 'time-waiting' is a fair, more understandable way of allocating housing to people assessed as having similar housing need. In addition, we clearly differentiate between the 'reasonable preference' bands and the non-reasonable preference bands and sign post applicants to other housing options, as appropriate.

Links and Benefits

The Housing Register Team, through the Common Housing Register work in partnership with Housing Options and Housing Support, to identify people at the early stages and risks of homelessness, enabling early intervention and prevention work to be co-ordinated. In turn, this maximises the use and allocation of stock across the County based on need.

This partnership approach also facilitates advice and information on grants, particularly for adaptations and modifications with the Grants Team, allowing people to remain in their own homes and communities.

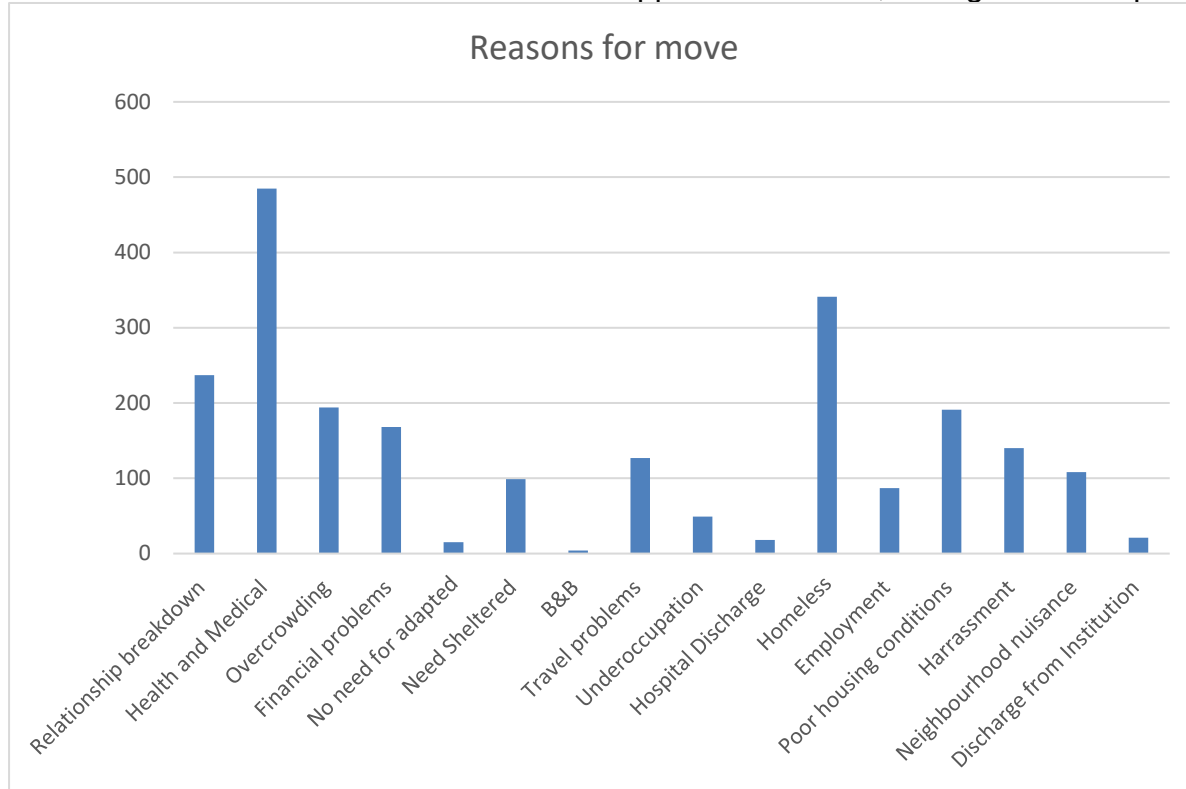
Demand is also captured from our Housing Register to highlighting needs for future housing development for social and affordable housing. Whilst also aiding the Planning Team in their decision-making process.

All of the above also helps us to identify trends, for reflection within the Policy and Housing Strategy.

Housing Register Data

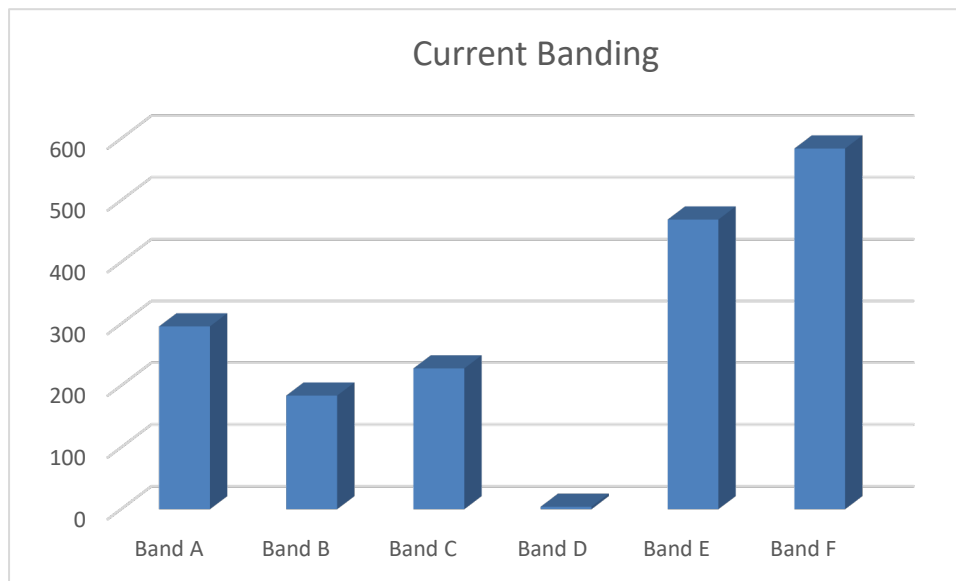
1276 new applications were received between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

The table below shows the reasons for the applications made, during the same period.



In reference to the Banding system, the following is the current breakdown on the Common Housing Register:

Band A	296
Band B	184
Band C	228
Band D	4
Band E	469
Band F	584



Between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, a total of 240 Allocations were made, 79 of those were to applicants owed a Homeless Duty

Allocations for the 22/23 year were:

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Total
99	69	62	0	9	1	240

Quotas (target 40%/30%/30%)

Band A	Band B	Band C
41%	29%	30%

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why

Summary:

Long term: N/A

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Integration: N/A

Collaboration: N/A

Involvement: N/A

Prevention: N/A

RECOMMENDATION (S):

For information only

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

As above.

Contact Name:

Llŷr Hughes / Cerys Purches-Phillips

Designation:

Corporate Manager – Housing Services
Senior Housing Officer – Strategy and Monitoring

Date of Report:

05/06/2023

Acronyms:

HOUSING REGISTER

LLYR HUGHES - CORPORATE MANAGER – HOUSING

CERYS PURCHES-PHILLIPS - SENIOR HOUSING OFFICER – STRATEGY & MONITORING

PURPOSE OF THE REGISTER/SERVICE DEMANDS

Processing Applications

General enquiries

Amending Applications

Reviewing Applications

Liaising with Colleagues in Homelessness, Housing Support, Housing Standards & Grants, Partner RSL's, other CCC Departments and external agencies

Housing demand Reports for Development Teams and Planning

PARTNERS

- Offers are made by the Housing Association
- Tenancies are with the Housing Association



APPLICATION PROCESS

- All online
 - Website: www.ceredigionhousingoptions.cymru
 - Clic – 01545 574123
- Application
 - Eligibility for Immigration
 - Employment
 - Local Connection (HM Forces)
 - HHSRS
 - Tenancy References (inc “not favourable”)
 - Owner Occupier
 - Assess Medical Priority
 - Risk of Homelessness

POLICIES/REGISTERS

**General
Needs**

**Older
Persons**

Accessible

**Affordable
Housing**



COMMON ALLOCATION POLICY



Quota System for sustainable communities: Band A 40% Band B 30% Band C 30%



Time Waiting – resets if band moves up



Multiples move the banding up



Managing expectations

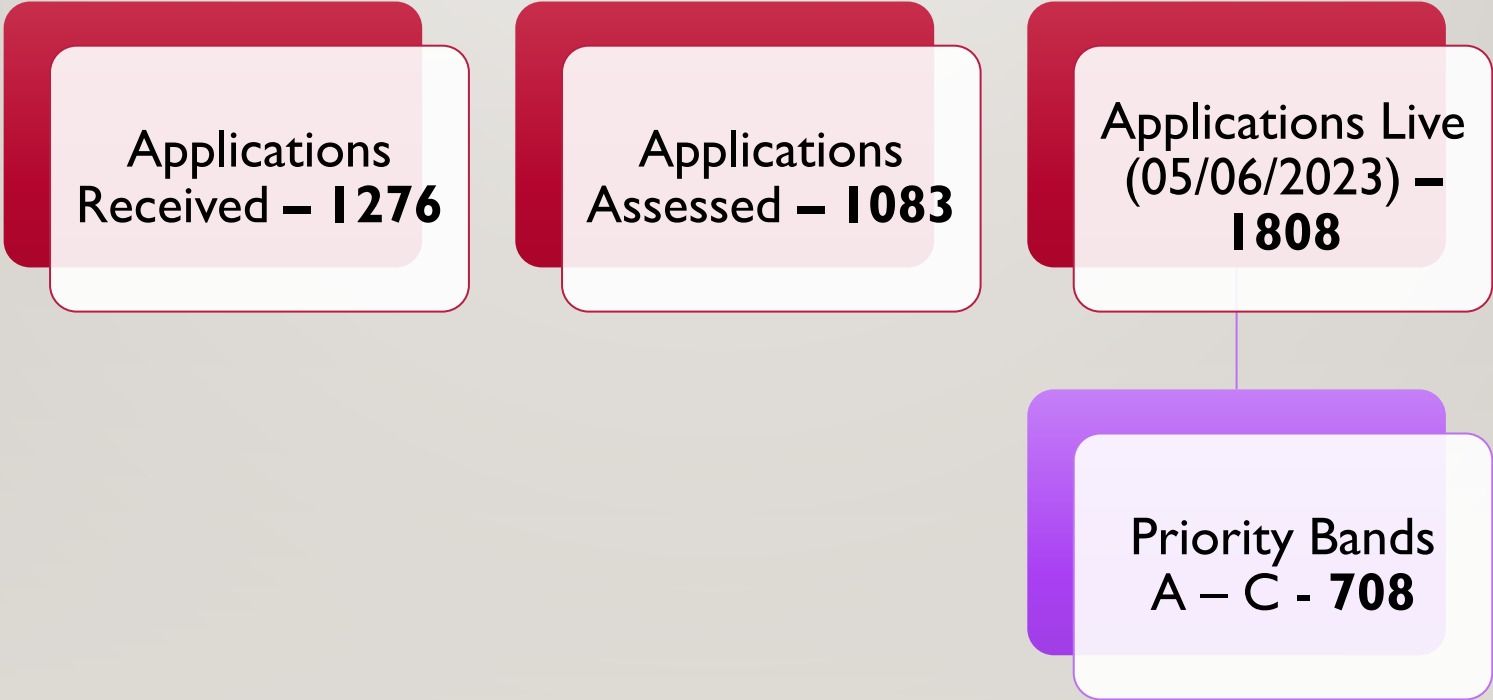


Consistent throughout all Registers and Policies

BANDING

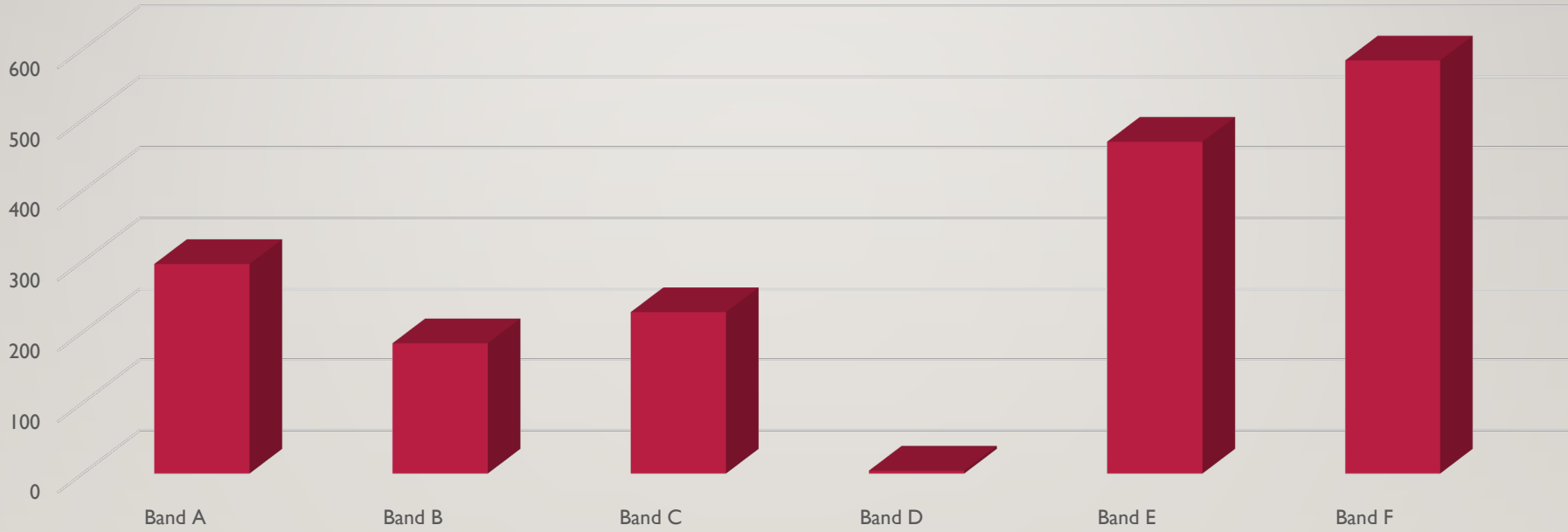
- Band A – F (No one is excluded) *British Citizens or granted Leave to Remain
- Band A – C – Priority Banding, to meet duty
- Band D – Low needs
- Band E – No identified housing need, as per our Policy
- Band F – Not suitable for Social Housing at this time (alternative Affordable Housing options)

APPLICATIONS - 01/04/2022 TO 31/03/2023

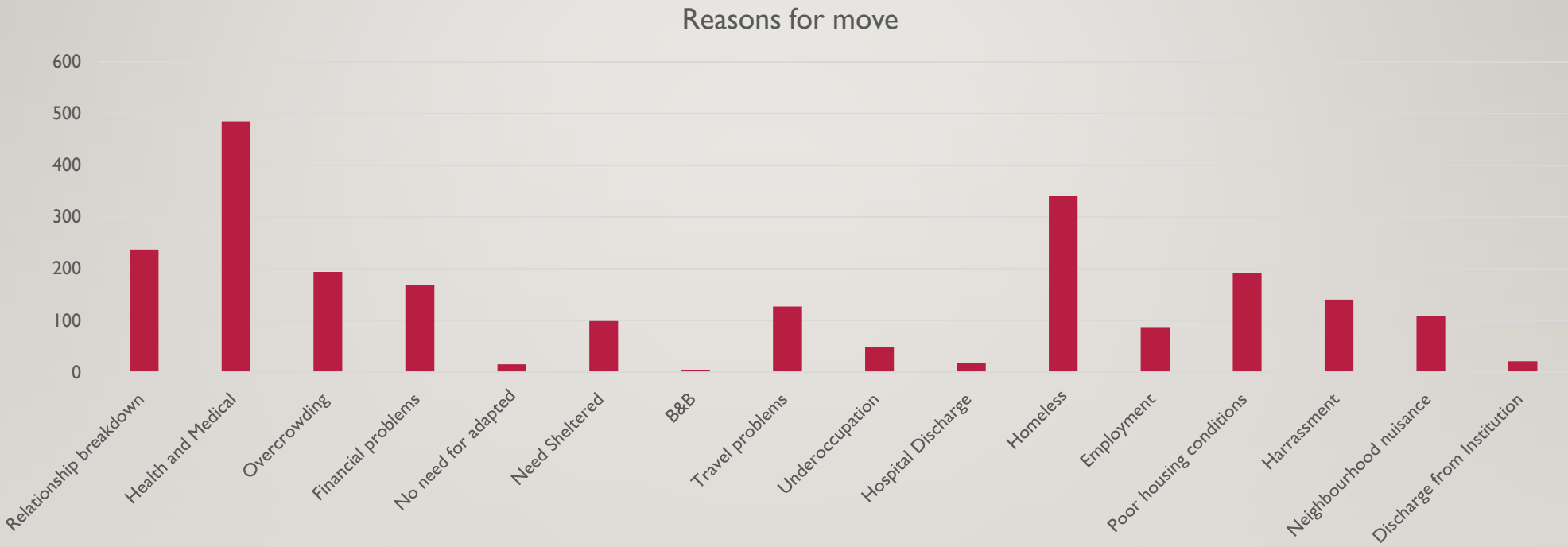


CURRENT BREAKDOWN

Current Banding

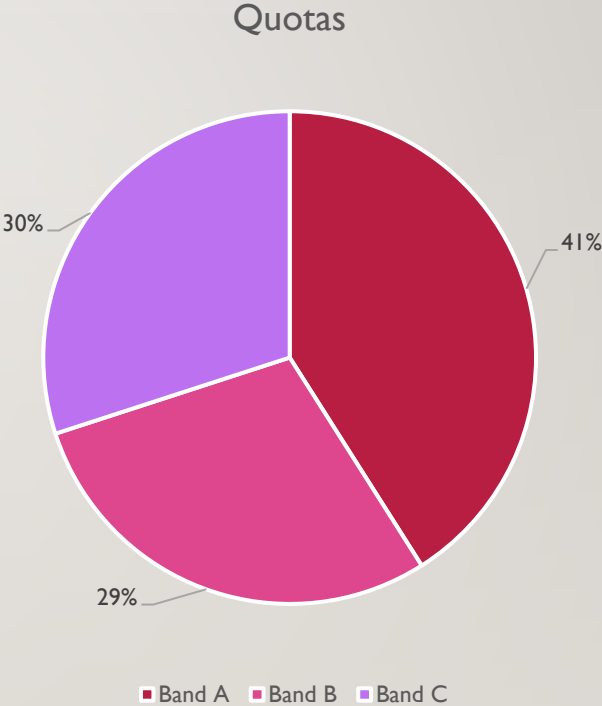


REASONS FOR MOVE



ALLOCATIONS - 01/04/2022 TO 31/03/2023

- **240** Tenancies Started
- **79** (33%) of all allocations went to Applicants with a Homeless Duty



CONTACT DETAILS

Housing Register Team – 01545 574123

Housing Options Team – 01970 633396

Barcud – 0345 606 7654

Caredig – 01239 621800

WWHA – 0800 052 2526

} Ceredigion County Council

Note:

Pre-tenancy - Ceredigion County Council

Post allocation/ Tenancy Issues/ Maintenance Issues - Landlord



ANY QUESTIONS?

This page is intentionally left blank

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	3 July 2023
LOCATION:	Hybrid
TITLE:	Draft Forward Work Programme 2023/24
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	Review the current work programme of the Committee
REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:	The forward work programme of the Committee is reviewed and updated at each meeting
BACKGROUND:	

Overview and Scrutiny Committees oversee the work of the Council to make sure that it delivers services in the best way and for the benefit of the local community.

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to look at the services and issues that affect people in Ceredigion. The process provides the opportunity for Councillors to examine the various functions of the council, to ask questions on how decisions have been made, to consider whether service improvements can be put in place and to make recommendations to this effect.

Scrutiny plays an essential role in promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in the Council's decision making process and the way in which it delivers services.

The main roles of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

- Holding the cabinet and officers as decision-makers to account
- Being a 'critical friend', through questioning how decisions have been made to provide a 'check and balance' to decision makers, adding legitimacy to the decision making process
- Undertaking reviews of council services and policy
- Undertaking reviews to develop council services and policies
- Considering any other matter that affects the county
- Ensuring that Ceredigion is performing to the best of its ability and delivering high quality services to its citizens
- Assessing the impact of the Council's policies on local communities and recommending improvement
- Engaging with the public to develop citizen centred policies and services

Effective Overview and Scrutiny can lead to:

- Better decision making
- Improved Service Delivery and Performance
- Robust Policy Development arising from public consultation and input of independent expertise
- Enhanced Democracy, Inclusiveness, Community Leadership and Engagement
- Adds a clear dimension of transparency and accountability to the political workings of the Council
- Provides an opportunity for all Members to develop specialist skills and knowledge that can benefit future policy making and performance monitoring processes
- Creates a culture of evidence based self-challenge

CURRENT SITUATION:

Questions to consider when choosing topics

- Is there a clear objective for examining this topic?
- Are you likely to achieve a desired outcome?
- What are the likely benefits to the Council and the citizens of Ceredigion?
- Is the issue significant?
- Are there links to the Corporate Strategy
- Is it a key issue to the public?
- Have the issues been raised by external audit?
- Is it a poor performing service?

Choosing topics

Overview and Scrutiny Committees should consider information from the Corporate Strategy, the Corporate Risk Register, budget savings – proposals and impact, Quarterly Corporate Performance Management panel meetings and departmental input in choosing topics and designing their Forward Work Programmes, as well as any continuing work.

RECOMMENDATION (S):

To review and update the current Forward Work Programme.

Contact Name:	Dwynwen Jones
Designation:	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Date of Report:	26.6.2023
Acronyms:	FWP – Forward Work Programme

Committee	Item (description/title)	Invited Speakers	Purpose i.e. monitoring, policy, recommendation
Healthier Communities			
24 May 2023	CSSIW Inspection report and Action Plan Update on Domiciliary Care Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy Joint Adoption Arrangements	Audrey Somerton-Edwards Donna Pritchard Iwan Davies/Elen James Audrey Somerton-Edwards	Committee's request Pre-Cabinet

3 July 2023	<p>Through Age and Wellbeing Recruitment/Retention</p> <p>Direct Payments</p> <p>A report on the Housing Register</p>	<p>James Starbuck</p> <p>Donna Pritchard</p> <p>Llyr Hughes/Cerys Purches-Phillips</p>	<p>Committee's Request</p> <p>Committee's Request</p>
18 September 2023	<p>Respite & Day Services</p> <p>Dementia Action Plan</p> <p>Housing Strategy</p> <p>Statutory Director of Social Services Annual Report 22/23</p>	<p>Donna Pritchard</p> <p>Donna Pritchard</p> <p>Llyr Hughes</p> <p>Audrey Somerton-Edwards</p>	<p>Pre-Cabinet</p> <p>Pre-Cabinet</p>

22 November 2023	Report on the delivery of food hygiene/standards and animal feed inspections in Ceredigion	Carwen Evans	Requested by Committee
22 February 2024	Budget Preparation		
11 March 2024			
Future agenda items	Update on the Support and Intervention Service April/May 2024 - Report on the 15 points referred to in the 'Pledge' – Domiciliary Care	Gethin Jones Donna Pritchard/Heather West	

This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Chamber, Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Wednesday, 24 May 2023

Present: Councillor Caryl Roberts (Chair), Councillors Ceris Jones (Vice-Chair), Amanda Edwards, Elaine Evans, Eryl Evans, Keith Evans, Wyn Evans, Gwyn James, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, John Roberts and Mark Strong.

Also in attendance: Councillors Euros Davies, Rhodri Evans and Gareth Lloyd.

Cabinet Members present: Councillor Alun Williams.

Officers in attendance: James Starbuck, Corporate Director; Elen James, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cymorth Cynnar; Donna Pritchard, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Gofal; Audrey Somerton Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services; Iwan Davies, Corporate Manager: Early Intervention; Heather West, Corporate Manager: Targeted & Short Term Services; Greg Jones, Corporate Manager: Corporate Service Support; Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer and Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 11.58am)

1 Welcome and Apologies

- i. Councillor Carl Worrall apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillor Gwyn James apologised for leaving the meeting early.

2 Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)
Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests (including whipping declarations) from Committee Members.

3 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection Report and Action Plan

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) presented the CIW Inspection Report and Action Plan. CIW undertook an intense evaluation of performance across Adult and Children's Service from 27 February 2023 to 10 March 2023. The report was published on 18 May 2023. Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the domains of the inspection evaluated were People - Voice and Control, Prevention, Well-being and Partnership.

Five Inspectors participated in the inspection, which was facilitated virtually and in person. During the evidence gathering, 14 individuals engaged in the process including officers, Elected Members, service users, carers, and statutory and third-sector partner organisations.

In addition to case file audits, key policies and developments were scrutinised. This included supervision files and the revised policy, compliments and complaints, the draft Quality Assurance Framework, the Occupational Therapy consultation and the revised Safeguarding and Mental Wellbeing and Porth Cymorth Cynnar structures. Observations of strategic and operational meetings took place online and face-to-face. There was an emphasis on the experience of children, carers and their families and how the service listens to their views and the Inspectors were actively seeking to identify the participation of service users in assessments and plans by articulating their own care requirements. The Inspectors were very keen to understand and appreciate the benefits of the Through Age Wellbeing model.

The initial feedback provided on 16 March 2023 was very pleasing, and the report was complimentary to the Services provided to the citizens of Ceredigion. There were no areas of non compliance identified during the Inspection. An overview of the key findings and evidence was provided. An Action Plan has now been formulated to respond to the recommended improvements outlined by CIW in the report. The overwhelming majority of the actions were already in play as the matters identified by CIW were being addressed before the inspection.

All staff involved with the service were congratulated on their performance as highlighted in the report.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- It was difficult to compare with other local authorities due to several factors such as population, staffing levels, number of cases and rurality. The Corporate Lead Officer for Porth Cynnal believed the service was in the upper quarter of Wales.
- Given the challenges with recruitment, every provision possible was being explored to retain and recruit staff. Employing overseas workers was an option used elsewhere to support the Social Care sector and had not been utilised in Ceredigion. The difference in cultures and languages were highlighted; therefore, caution was needed if there was an intention to explore this option further.
- As other local authorities increased the salary for Social Care staff, there was more competition, and so a pay review would need to be undertaken soon which would lead to implications for the Council's budget. Welsh Government have recognised the importance of equal pay across Wales, but this would prove challenging financially too.
- It was acknowledged that there was a mixed approach in Ceredigion at present, with a combination of Council and third-sector agency workers. To reduce the number of agency workers, not only did pay and conditions need to be considered but a successful CIW report could be used as a recruitment tool.
- It was recognised that staff learnt from one another, but officers felt that enforcing staff to attend offices would not necessarily be helpful. During the past few months, staff had learnt to strike a balance between working

from home and in the office, teams were encouraged to hold meetings face to face and staff were able to book desks together. The hybrid working model would be reviewed in July 2023.

- Prompt feedback was vital for partner agencies and would be addressed along with supporting partner agencies with understanding the Through Age and Wellbeing Model.
- Research has shown that people reverted to their first language in times of crisis. Due to this, providing training locally was key to encouraging more local people to work in the sector and remain locally. At present, the local authority worked with The Open University to train Social Workers and work was being undertaken with Aberystwyth University.
- The Service was constantly being monitored and they worked in a climate where continuous improvement was required. Being transparent with CIW around the areas of improvement was important, and if not addressed, the areas would become an enforcement issue.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed that:

- The draft Action Plan to address the issues identified in the CIW report is accepted as a proportionate response to recommendations contained in the report.
- The Action Plan to be monitored after six months through the Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee and after one year to maintain progress and momentum through to completion.

4 National Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh (Local Authority) Adoption and Fostering Services

Councillor Alun Williams presented the report for National Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh (local authority) Adoption and Fostering services. The National Adoption Service has been in existence since 2014 and has enabled significant change and improvement in adoption services across Wales. Its structure and governance through national, regional and local arrangements were agreed by all councils at that time; a review in 2018 led to proposals to streamline governance and improve accountability. Some of these e.g. creating a Combined Governance Board (bringing together the Advisory Group and Governance Board required by the legislation) and a new Partnership Agreement to replace the original functional model have been already implemented. The establishment of Foster Wales provides the opportunity to join the arrangements for adoption and fostering into one directorate operationally and the governance for both activities to be joined.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- Working regionally and nationally was considered a sensible way forward.
- Adoption numbers have reduced nationally for several reasons. The adoption service in Carmarthen and local officers were capable of working to demands and most of Ceredigion's children who were adopted remained within the region due to the number of adopters and also cultural reasons.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed:

- To seek agreement that the Ceredigion signs the Joint Committee Agreement for the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales.
- This paper progresses through the full governance processes to be fully endorsed.

5 Domiciliary Care Overview

Councillor Alun Williams presented a report on the Councils position and approach to Domiciliary care. Ceredigion County Council commissions Domiciliary Care for Service Users, who by reason of vulnerability or other circumstances have been assessed as requiring such care in line with the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The report detailed the statutory background to Domiciliary Care, the work undertaken across Wales to develop the service nationally and the situation locally in Ceredigion. Reference was given to Ceredigion's Initiatives to support the Domiciliary Care Market from 2022/23 onwards and the current situation.

Ceredigion County Council Targeted Care & Enablement Service was subject to Inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales in October 2022 and received an exemplary report published in November 2022, with the inspectors offering the highest praise for the service model and delivery.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- The Social Care workforce across Wales was recognized as challenging. Within the 15 Point Pledge as part of the new Domiciliary Care Framework 2023, the aim was to pay all domiciliary care providers a rate more aligned with the Home Care Association (HCA) recommended hourly rate.
- All providers must pay a real living wage under the legislation. The fee increase to £26.50 per hour for providers acknowledged the increase in the cost of living and fuel. This fee covered wages, pay enhancements and training costs. It was noted that different providers managed travelling costs from property to property differently and there had been various initiatives on offer to support them.
- Signing up to the 15 Point Pledge would demonstrate providers' commitment to supporting the workforce. It was suggested that monitoring providers should be key in moving forward with the 15 Point Pledge. A Quality Assurance Framework for Social Care was being developed; this would involve dedicated staff who would continually monitor providers, the delivery of the contracts and the quality of service.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to note the report, subject to receiving an update to the 15 Point Pledge in April 2024.

6 Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales

Councillor Alun Williams presented the Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales. In 2018, Welsh Government invited bids from Local Authorities and Health Boards to become pathfinders for the Early Years

Integration Transformation Programme. An application was submitted by Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion Local Authorities alongside Hywel Dda Health Board to become Pathfinder areas. Funding was secured (2019 - 2024) to pilot and test approaches to Early Years Integration Transformation and a Maternity and Early Years Steering Group was formed. In January 2021, Pembrokeshire successfully applied to join the Pathfinder Programme and therefore all Local Authorities in the Hywel Dda footprint have been involved in the Programme. In 2021/ 2022 representatives of the three Local Authorities and Hywel Dda Health Board worked together to formulate a Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales.

The strategy focused on support in the first 7 years of a child's life, recognising the importance of these formative years in shaping the child's future health and well-being and aims to promote collaboration between support services both at pre-birth and Early Years stages. The strategy is located within the Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales Website, which is a collaboration between Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire local authorities, Hywel Dda University Health Board and third sector partners. Based upon extensive consultation with Service Users and Early Years Professionals, the Strategy for West Wales was written with the intention of promoting excellent services at every stage of Maternity and Early Years.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- There were recruitment challenges generally, but vacancies were either out to advert or had been appointed to in Porth Cymorth Cynnar. When staff were appointed, training was provided as required to ensure they had the correct skills for the role.
- It was recommended that when an agenda item involved Hywel Dda University Health Board, Councillor Rhodri Evans as the elected member of the Board should be informed.
- Through Age Wellbeing, Support & Care were in the process of launching a new website which would clearly outline the services available to the public. It was suggested and agreed that a small group of Members could view the website before it became live, to provide their views and feedback.
- Staff were based in family centres across the county and the needs of the public were considered when sessions were being prepared; information on these sessions was shared widely including through the relevant social media sites.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to endorse the Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales.

7 To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising therefrom

It was agreed to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2023.

Matters arising: It was clarified that Cabinet had accepted the recommendation from the Committee Members to write to Ms Elin Jones, Senedd Constituency Member and to the four regional Senedd Cymru Members expressing concern with providing sufficient housing in Ceredigion. Any updates would need to be monitored.

8 To consider the Forward Work Plan

It was agreed to note the contents of the Forward Work Programme presented.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 July 2023

Chairman: _____

Date: _____