

## **CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 2 November 2021

**Title:** Ceredigion PSB Poverty Sub-group - Tackling Hardship Strategy progress report July 2021

**Purpose of the report:** To present the Tackling Hardship Strategy progress report for consideration

**For:** Information

**Cabinet Portfolio and Cllr Ellen ap Gwynn  
Cabinet Member:**

The Tackling Hardship Strategy 2020-22 was published in August 2020 as a successor to the Ceredigion Combatting Poverty Strategy 2016-20. The Strategy has three key objectives and the Action Plan includes 65 actions which are delivered by a range of PSB partners.

The Tackling Hardship Strategy is monitored by Ceredigion PSB Poverty Sub-group which meets four times per year. The accompanying report shows progress of delivery of the strategy and proposed next steps, these are set out below:

1. The PSB Poverty Sub-group will continue to develop the data dashboards to ensure we have a shared understanding of the evolving impact of COVID-19 on hardship in Ceredigion through the collation and analysis of data.
2. There is a need to review the list of contributing partners (see Appendix B). We know that there are opportunities to work collaboratively with more partner agencies in order to promote and take advantage of all available help and assistance.
3. The Action Plan is a live document designed to be updated during the life of the Hardship Strategy. Some contributing partners have completed their actions while other actions are still in progress. The Action Plan will be reviewed to ensure that we continue to work together effectively to strengthen individual and community resilience as we adjust to the impact of COVID-19.
4. The framework established to monitor delivery of the Hardship Strategy does not include a mechanism for partners to flag up specific issues of concern. In particular, those that the PSB may be able to address effectively on a multi-agency basis. The monitoring framework will be adapted so that it includes a clear way of proactively identifying specific issues of concern that can be raised by support providers, citizens and PSB Sub-group members.

**Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? Yes**

**If, not, please state why**

**Summary:**

**Long term:**

The Strategy addresses the short, medium and long-term. Both immediate and long term effects on hardship are outlined in the Strategy.

**Collaboration:**

Collaboration is a key part of the Strategy. Membership of the PSB Poverty Sub-Group has been reviewed resulting in increased working with the Third Sector.

**Involvement:**

We engaged with and received hardship data from 23 organisations. This data has helped to provide the local evidence base to forge this Strategy. Continuous engagement is mainstreamed through delivery of the Action Plan.

**Wellbeing of Future Generations:**

**Prevention:**

Examples of preventative work are included in the Tackling Hardship Strategy. The Strategy also seeks to lever in and to signpost to resources and funding streams.

**Integration:**

The Strategy complements the Local Economic Recovery and Resilience Strategy. The Strategy will also make a key contribution to the Council's Phase 3: Adjustment and Long Term Resilience Plans in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Strategy also links with Ceredigion County Council's Corporate Strategy, Ceredigion PSB's Local Well-being Plan, A Fair and Equal Ceredigion 2020-24, (Ceredigion County Council's Strategic Equality Plan), and the Socio-Economic Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

**Recommendation(s):**

To receive the Ceredigion PSB Tackling Hardship Strategy progress report July 2021.

**Reasons for decision:**

The report is for information.

<b>Overview and Scrutiny:</b>	CCC Overview and Coordinating Scrutiny committee is designated to take an overview of the overall effectiveness of the PSB by scrutinising decisions made or other action taken by the Board. The Ceredigion PSB Tackling Hardship Strategy progress report was presented to Scrutiny on the 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2021.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Ceredigion Tackling Hardship Strategy 2020-2022
<b>Corporate Priorities:</b>	Boosting the Economy Investing in People's Future Enabling Individual and Family Resilience Promoting Environment and Community Resilience Within existing budget
<b>Finance and Procurement implications:</b>	
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	None
<b>Staffing implications:</b>	None
<b>Property / asset implications:</b>	None
<b>Risk(s):</b>	Risk of non-compliance if this Strategy is not developed and approved.
<b>Statutory Powers:</b>	Section 2 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 puts a statutory duty on Welsh authorities to prepare and publish a strategy that will contribute to the eradication of child poverty in Wales.
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Appendices:</b>	Tackling Hardship Strategy progress report July 2021
<b>Corporate Lead Officer:</b>	Alun Williams
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Cathryn Morgan
<b>Date:</b>	12/10/2021



# **CEREDIGION TACKLING HARDSHIP STRATEGY 2020 - 2022**

## **PROGRESS REPORT JULY 2021**

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## Introduction

This report sets out the steps taken by Ceredigion Public Services Board (PSB) to provide a co-ordinated response to the increased risk of hardship in Ceredigion due to the impact of Covid-19. It outlines the work that partners and colleagues have delivered so far to maximise support with essential living costs, gain optimal physical and emotional wellbeing and to ensure supportive and connected communities throughout Ceredigion.

The Tackling Hardship Strategy 2020-22 was published in August 2020 as a successor to the Ceredigion Combatting Poverty Strategy 2016-20. The Strategy has three key objectives and the Action Plan includes 65 actions which are delivered by a range of PSB partners.

Three key objectives:

- To develop a **shared understanding** with partner agencies of the evolving impact of COVID-19 on hardship in Ceredigion through the collation and analysis of data.
- To co-ordinate and **consolidate collaborative efforts** with partner agencies in order to promote and take advantage of all available help and assistance
- To **identify gaps** in support and evolving hardship needs in order to develop early effective intervention that will strengthen individual and community resilience as we adjust to the impact of COVID-19.

The Action Plan is divided into 3 separate pillars for implementation:



We wish to acknowledge the commitment and support that colleagues and partners have demonstrated and thank them for their continued recognition of the importance of working collectively to tackle hardship in Ceredigion.

## The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010

Section 2 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 puts a statutory duty on Welsh authorities to prepare and publish a strategy that will contribute to the eradication of child poverty in Wales. The broad aims for contributing to the eradication of poverty are:

- to increase income for households with children;
- to ensure that children are not materially deprived;
- to promote and facilitate paid employment for parents of children;
- to provide parents of children with the skills necessary for paid employment;
- to reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children;
- to support parenting of children;
- to reduce inequalities in health between children and between parents of children;
- to ensure that all children grow up in decent housing;
- to ensure that all children grow up in safe and cohesive communities;
- to reduce inequalities in participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities between children and between parents of children;
- to help young people participate effectively in education and training;
- to help young people take advantage of opportunities for employment;
- to help young people participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.

Public Services Boards may publish their strategy as an integral part of their Local Well-being Plan. However, Ceredigion Public Services Board has chosen to publish a separate strategy in order to keep a specific focus on issues relating to poverty in Ceredigion.

The Tackling Hardship Strategy is monitored by Ceredigion PSB Poverty Sub-group which meets four times per year. Each 'Pillar' of the Action Plan is scrutinised separately on a rolling programme during the year. Pillar 1 was reported to the Poverty Sub-group held 22/01/2021, Pillar 2 was reported on 23/04/2021 and Pillar 3 on 23/07/2021. Reports from each partner is collated before each meeting (see Appendix A). Key points from these reports are shown in the infographics below.

Matters relating to Child Poverty are scrutinised by the Children & Young People Services Provider Forum that meets one week before the PSB Poverty Sub-group in order that issues can be escalated immediately.

# Action Plan progress: Pillar 1

## Help with Essential Living Costs

Synopsis of report to PSB Poverty sub-group January 2021

	<p><b>17</b> days taken on average to process new claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme.</p>		<p><b>98</b> people were helped by the Care Society to access temporary accommodation.</p>
	<p><b>129</b> (14%) of new applications to the Housing Register cited financial reasons as an area of concern.</p>		<p><b>63%</b> increase in Free School Meals claimants who receive a voucher or payment of £19.50 per week when schools are closed.</p>
	<p><b>£356,593</b> was paid out in Discretionary Housing Payment (100% of the 2020/21 allocation plus £9,000 Council reserves).</p>		<p><b>4,400</b> letters were sent out to targeted households with information about schemes that address fuel poverty to reduce household bills.</p>
	<p><b>953</b> applications were made to the Housing Register and <b>218</b> new tenancies were supported.</p>		<p><b>30</b> community groups received feminine hygiene packs to distribute to those in need.</p>
	<p><b>Free School Meals</b> assessments are now made alongside assessments for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction scheme to simplify the process for parents/carers.</p>		<p><b>5</b> new community outreach advice bases were established by Citizens Advice across Ceredigion and <b>10</b> new volunteers were recruited.</p>

## Action Plan progress: Pillar 2 Physical & Emotional Well-being

Synopsis of report to PSB Poverty sub-group April 2021



**20,437** food parcels and well-being packs have been distributed by early intervention services in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector and the Council.



**1,068** unpaid Carers are now registered with the Carers Information Service. **56** Carers benefitted from **1,053** hours of respite.



**64** young people registered for counselling with Area 43 (funded by Hywel Dda Health Board)



More than **750** bags of rubbish were filled during kerb side litter picking activities in March 2021.



Emotional Literacy Support Assistance was provided to school staff and a range of well-being resources provided to pupils and school staff.



**25** disabled children and young people with the most complex needs had some time out with a DASH support worker, providing a respite break for **19** families.



**583** National Exercise Referral Scheme clients were supported with **29,986** welfare calls.



**600** children, young people and their families received welfare calls from the Council's Support and Prevention service.



**7** assistant social workers were recruited to support with Discharge to Recovery and Hospital Prevention.



Theatr Felinfach developed a Welsh medium digital platform offering creative activities to children and young people who may be feeling lonely and isolated.

# Action Plan progress: Pillar 3

## Community Resilience – access to services

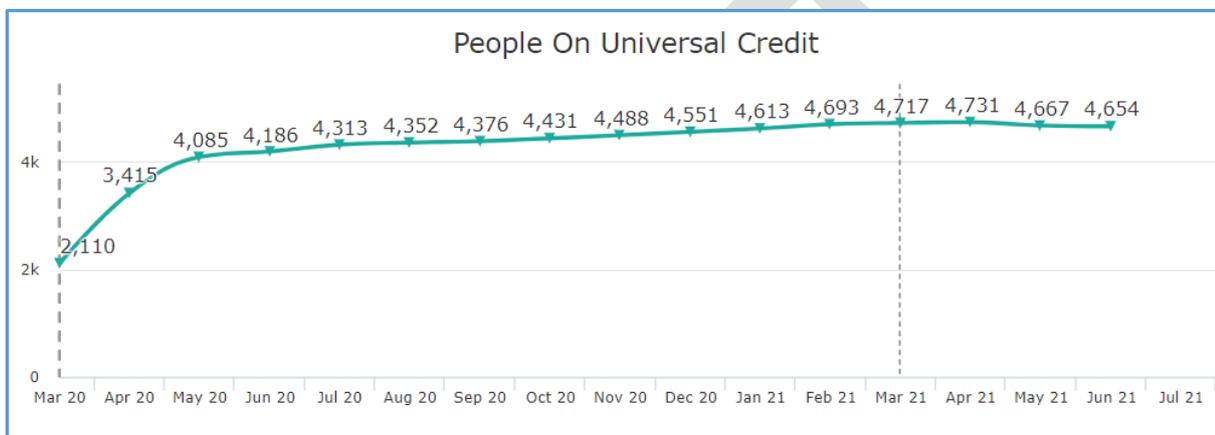
Synopsis of report to PSB Poverty sub-group July 2021

	<p>Over <b>1,600</b> Ceredigion focussed services are now registered on Dewis Cymru website.</p>		<p><b>584</b> people had joined Ceredigion's 'Connect to Kindness' social media group</p>
	<p><b>3</b> communities (Llandysul, Borth and Penparcau) are working with CAVO on targeted community resilience projects.</p>		<p><b>100%</b> of eligible Coleg Ceredigion students were provided with IT equipment so that they could access on-line learning.</p>
	<p><b>£194,705</b> Sports Wales grant aid was distributed to community sports groups to help them return to community provision as soon as possible.</p>		<p><b>250</b> young people have been supported online and face to face in schools and within the community since January 2021.</p>
	<p><b>26%</b> of Ceredigion properties can connect to Fibre to the Premises broadband. UK average is 25%. Wales average is 23%.</p>		<p><b>269</b> families were supported by Ceredigion Family Centre Network with regular online contact and support sessions.</p>
	<p><b>380</b> parents with young children were helped to get online with support from Ceredigion Family Centres, Flying Start and Families First.</p>		<p><b>85%</b> of Ceredigion properties have access to a Superfast connection (&gt;24 Mbps), this is below the UK average (97%) and Wales average (96%).</p>

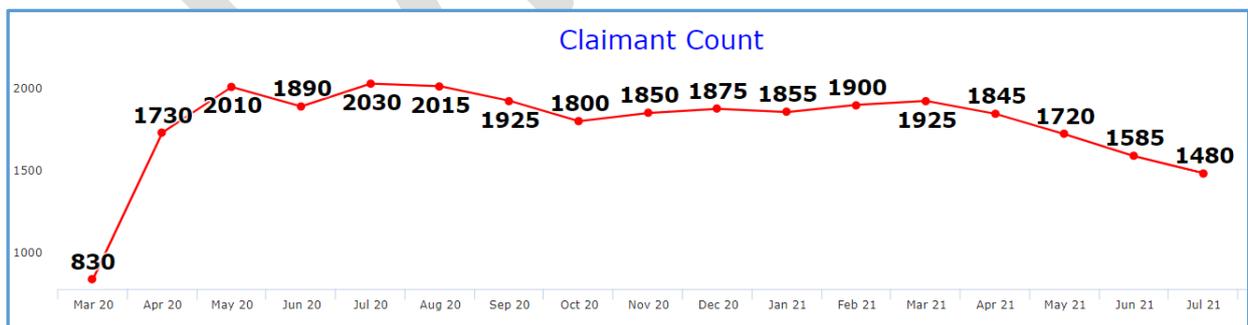
## What the data tells us

A great deal of support has been provided by colleagues and partners to mitigate the impact of hardship caused by the pandemic. We must rely on hard data to tell us if we are making a difference however. A series of data dashboards have been created that enable the PSB Poverty sub-group to monitor the efficacy of the support provided. These capture live data from websites such as DWP and Office for National Statistics.

The number of people on Universal Credit in Ceredigion saw a sharp increase in March/April 2020, they continued to increase gradually to March 2021 but numbers have started to decrease. The figure at June 2021 is 121% higher than recorded back in March 2020.

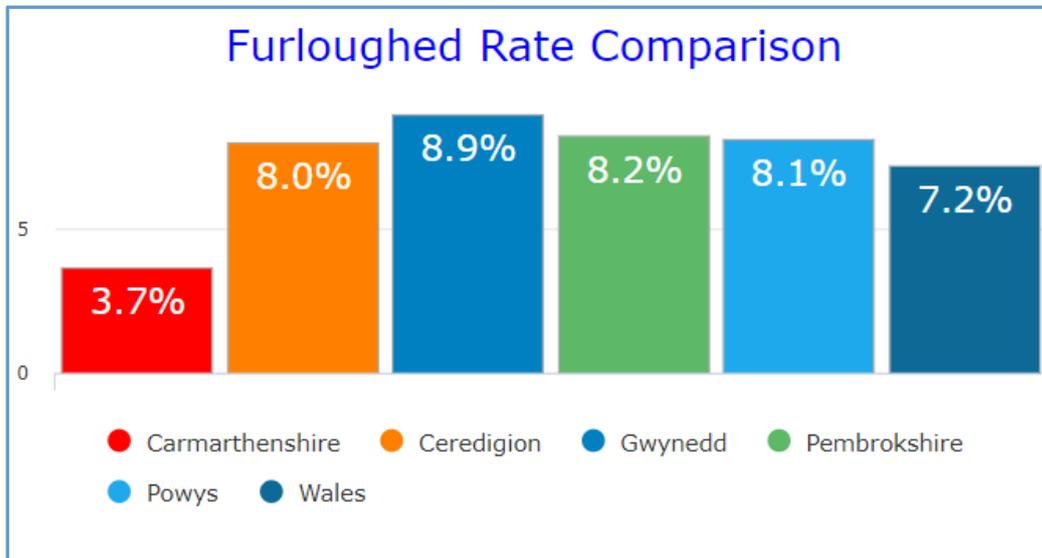


The Claimant Count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. The number of claimants also increased when the pandemic first impacted the UK, this is now decreasing but the July 2021 figure is still 78% higher than at March 2020.



We know that young people have taken the brunt of the impact and monitor the number of 18-24 year old claimants. This cohort shows similar trends to the overall claimant count which is welcomed. 185 young people were claiming benefits for reason of being unemployed at March 2020, this had increased to 445 young people at March 2021 but reduced to 290 at July 2021.

8% of eligible employees in Ceredigion (2,000 of 23,700) have taken up the furlough scheme. This is generally in line with the mid-Wales region (see chart below). The furlough scheme has been extended until 30 September 2021 but the level of grant available to employers begins to taper from July 2021 and employers will then be asked to contribute towards the cost of furloughed employees' wages.



It is more difficult to measure impact on well-being. National data is collected by Welsh Government (National Survey for Wales) and we are confident that attitudes nationally are generally reflected at a local level.

The latest survey report (January to March 2021) covered a representative random sample of over 3,000 people aged 16+ across Wales. It included people who are more difficult to reach and people who don't use the internet. The results on well-being and loneliness are shown below.

16% of people report being lonely. This is up from 12% in the months October to December 2020, but similar to 2019-20, when 15% of people were lonely. This could be an indication that lockdown during the first part of 2021 was felt to be more isolating than the first coronavirus lockdown.

This apparent winter lockdown effect is also reflected in the well-being results. 70% of people report high or very high satisfaction with life (*January-March 2021*). This is lower than in the months October to December 2020, when 78% of people said the same. 79% of people say they feel that things they do in life are worthwhile, down from 85% in the previous three months. 24% of people say they had high levels of anxiety the previous day, the same as during October to December 2020. 70% of people say they felt happy the previous day, compared with 76% in the previous quarter.

(source: [gov.wales/national-survey-wales-quarterly-survey-january-march-2021](https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-quarterly-survey-january-march-2021))

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Wales now has the worst child poverty rates after housing costs of all the UK nations, with 31% of children living below the poverty line. Research carried out by Loughborough University for the UK End Child Poverty Coalition shows that the child poverty rates in Ceredigion have increased above the Welsh average. The research covers the period before the pandemic.

## Next Steps

1. The PSB Poverty sub-group will continue to develop the data dashboards to ensure we have a shared understanding of the evolving impact of COVID-19 on hardship in Ceredigion through the collation and analysis of data.
2. There is a need to review the list of contributing partners (see Appendix B). We know that there are opportunities to work collaboratively with more partner agencies in order to promote and take advantage of all available help and assistance.
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## Appendix A: Detailed Action Plan reports

### Ceredigion Tackling Hardship Strategy Action Plan report to PSB sub-Group 22/01/2021

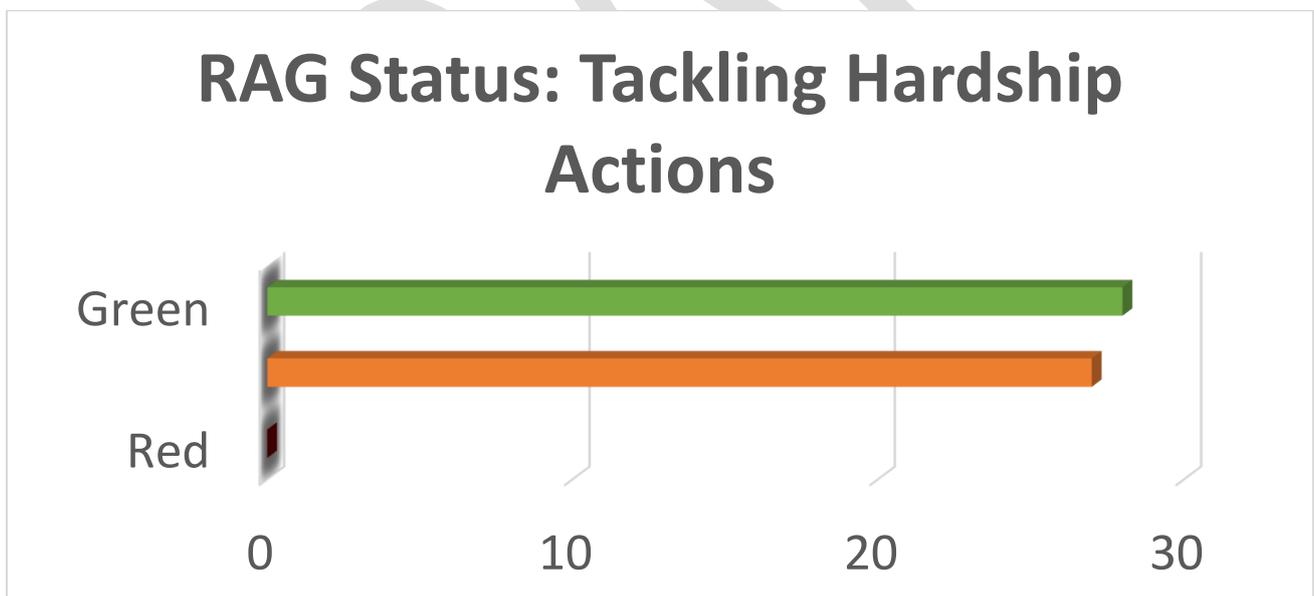
#### Pillar One: Financial Resilience

##### Tackling Hardship Strategy: Monitoring Framework

The Tackling Hardship Strategy and Action Plan are in place. The plan will be monitored by the Poverty Sub-group. Matters relating to Child Poverty will be scrutinised by the Children & Young People Services Provider Forum. Forum meetings are one week before the Poverty Sub-group to support this process.

There is work to be done on an engagement plan to make sure that we engage effectively with all stakeholders, particularly those with protected characteristics.

Ceredigion Economic Strategy 2020 – 2035 is out for consultation (closing date 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021). The Economic Strategy will be aligned to the Tackling Hardship Strategy.



Red: 0 (0%); Amber: 27 (44%); Green: 28 (45%)  
55 out of 62 reports (89%) returned

## Ceredigion Family Centre Network

**269** families have been supported by the **Family Centre Network** with regular online contact and support sessions.

Activity and wellbeing packs have been distributed to families every 3 months this year, also food parcels and slow cookers to those in need.

Information on financial aid, health and wellbeing, parenting, child development and ideas for activities is regularly shared with families.

**94** families have been referred for targeted support: **7** to Team around the Family; **48** to Food Banks; **20** for a Baby Bundle; **17** for a 'Coat & Wellies' grant; **2** to Citizens Advice.

### **Porth y Gymuned and Team around the Family (TAF)**

**419** referrals were made to Porth y Gymuned (July - Dec 2020) and **171** cases assigned to Community Connectors.

**Porth y Gymuned** have created lists of food deliveries, food banks and resources including help with finances and debt. These are published on the Council website. Plans are underway to deliver virtual Community Connector surgeries to offer Information and Advice.

**46** referrals were made to **TAF** (July-Dec 2020). They've delivered a 'Talk Money Do' session to 3 families. Their Young Parents group regularly benefits from Citizens Advice support.

## **Housing Financial Assistance**

Details of various grants/loans are on the Council website: [Housing – Financial Assistance](#)

- Warmer Homes Fund (Cozy Caron scheme) - 107 first time central heating systems installed
- Warm Homes Fund (revenue scheme) – 19 broken boilers replaced
- ECO Flex – 171 applications received
- Emergency Repair Assistance grants – 15 completed to January 2021
- Safe, Warm and Secure grants – 31 (decrease as face to face visits could not take place)
- Disabled Facilities Grants – 20 (decrease due to decrease in face to face visits by OT)
- Home Improvement loans – 5 applications approved
- Empty Property loans – 2 applications approved

### **Case study**

Family A lived in poverty. They lived rurally and had no access to a car and no possibilities to increase their income.

Team Around the Family (TAF) supported them with a housing application and facilitated the conversation with a housing provider. Financial help was provided for the moving costs. The family were helped to make the school application and to register with a GP.

**Result:** improved housing conditions. Increased school attendance. Less isolation. Better access to services.

Fewer applications were received and fewer installations undertaken due to lockdown. A targeted mailshot of 4,400 letters was sent out to vulnerable households September 2020 in partnership with Nest.

The Housing Options website is well used; Housing Register applications can be made 24/7. 953 applications were made to the Housing Register and 218 new tenancies were supported (April 2020 – January 2021). 25 homelessness approaches were made due to rent areas.

129 (14%) applications to the Housing Register cited financial reasons as an area of concern (*figures are for new applications only*).

All applications citing financial concerns are contacted to clarify the situation and the urgency. Tenants are signposted to Support providers and Advice organisations for help. Information about the Discretionary Assistance Fund for fuel purchase is shared where appropriate.

The Social Housing Grant delivery programme has blended various different funding streams to better target and increase the number of affordable units delivered. Welsh Government is currently consulting on plans to give stock transfer authorities like Ceredigion the potential to acquire and develop their own social and affordable housing in the future.

### **Housing Support Provider – Care Society**

Care Society offers practical support to those who are homeless or potentially homeless – food parcels, income maximisation, advice on the Social Housing Register and temporary/private rented sector housing options. In the period March – August 2020 they:

- Helped 98 people into temporary emergency accommodation
- Made 405 'food runs' to get essential food to their clients and also provided 218 emergency food parcels
- Carried out 9,027 remote support contacts and 658 welfare and safety checks
- Collected and delivered 253 prescriptions
- Provided support with 2,260 benefit queries
- Provided 849 additional community support services

### **Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme (HB & CTRS)**

The pandemic has seen an increase in those seeking financial support. At its peak in the summer approximately 300 extra claimants were receiving Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme (HB & CTRS).

July 2020 - 6,030 people are currently in receipt of these benefits (*5,737 at Feb 2020*) It's taking an average of 17 days to process new claims and 3 days to process any changes needed. (*2019/20 comparison: 18.5 days and 4 days*). £282,953 worth of Discretionary Housing Payments have been paid out.

Incorporating Free School Meal assessments alongside HB & CTRS has benefited those entitled.

## Free School Meals and Pupil Deprivation Grant

Free School Meals claimants have increased from **953** (Sept 2019) to **1,557** (January 2021). All claimants are receiving either a Tesco voucher or BACS payment of **£19.50** per eligible pupil per week per child when schools are closed.

A cashless catering system was implemented in all schools in September 2020 and a system to pay out the Pupil Deprivation Grant was set up before the start of the new Academic year (Sept 2020).

## Childcare

Only **£197,030** funding was provided to settings via the Childcare Offer (June – Nov 2020); a decrease of **44%** on the same period last year.

Most childcare providers closed during the first lockdown, apart from Childcare Hubs. **82%** are now open but only **6 out of 13** Out of School clubs. Two clubs have closed permanently as a result of Covid.

Just 1 child with disabilities accessed support to attend Out of School childcare. The funding will be used instead to provide training to the childcare sector about hidden disabilities. All DASH schemes and support for children with disabilities have been available free at point of use for all users during the pandemic (there is usually a small charge).

## The Local Economy

The Council's Public Protection Team have advised a wide range of businesses on measures required to comply with coronavirus restrictions by means of inspections, written and verbal advice. **2,659** advisory visits have been made to premises since March.

The Council's Employment Support team saw an increase in referrals when CamNesa project finished on 31<sup>st</sup> December.

Dysgu Bro have delivered training in MS Teams and Zoom, Paediatric 1<sup>st</sup> Aid to the childcare sector and Health & Safety level 1 to help people get a CSCS card so they can work on construction sites.

## Employment

DWP numbers have increased significantly.

Customers have been receiving support – either face to face when the situation allows or via electronic means. Virtual events have been delivered where employers, providers and customers were able to discuss best options and offer/receive support.

The Kickstart programme financially supports employers to take on young people into paid positions giving them essential work skills and additional information for their CV. This is increasing the number of vacancies appearing for Work Coaches to discuss with their customers.

## **Affordable and Accessible Transport Links**

Active Travel Network Maps are being reviewed and are currently out to consultation. New Active Travel schemes are planned on the A44 and A487.

The new railway station in Bow Street will open mid-February. Local bus services and taxis will contribute to this improvement to the public transport infrastructure in Ceredigion.

## **Reducing Household bills**

The Council provides financial support to charitable re-use organisations in Ceredigion, reducing the cost of good quality household items that some residents would otherwise struggle to afford. We will seek to grow this sector by making relevant stakeholders aware of potential funding opportunities.

DRAFT

**Ceredigion Tackling Hardship Strategy  
Action Plan report to PSB sub-Group  
23/04/2021**

**Pillar Two: Physical and Emotional Well-being**

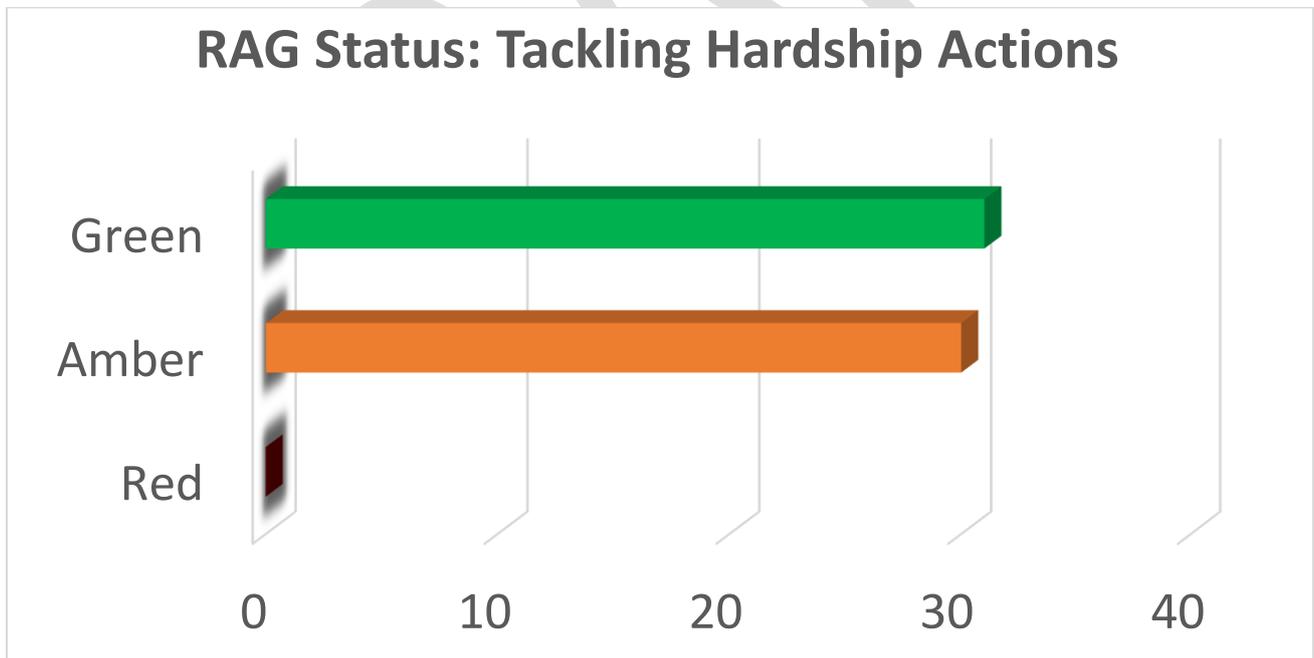
**Action Plan – The Framework**

The Tackling Hardship Strategy and Action Plan is monitored by the Poverty Sub-group. Matters relating to Child Poverty are scrutinised by the Children & Young People Services Provider Forum. The Forum meets one week before the Poverty Sub-group in order that feedback is timely.

The Action Plan is divided into the 3 Pillars described in the Tackling Hardship Strategy:

- Pillar 1 – supporting those who are experiencing financial hardship.
- Pillar 2 – supporting those experiencing exhaustion, stress and anxiety.
- Pillar 3 – making sure that people can access services, face to face or online

Pillar 1 was the focus of the Poverty sub-group meeting's January 2021 meeting, this meeting will focus on Pillar 2.



Red: 0 (0%); Amber: 30 (46%); Green: 31 (48%)  
65 reports  
94% returned

**Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Early Intervention services** provided 20,437 food parcels, wellbeing/respite packs, reading packs, resource packs and Actif Family packs to targeted groups.

Quote, “Loved receiving my wellbeing packs in the post really did make feel that someone cared and made me realise that I’m not just a Mum and I need to look after myself too”

30 community groups received feminine hygiene packs to distribute to women and girls.

Over 150 online groups, programmes and courses were delivered. 6 parents attended a ‘Building Emotionally Resilient Teenagers’ (BERT) group. Quote, “I feel confident that I am able to sit down with my son and talk to him about drugs as I have the knowledge now.”

Over 1,600 Ceredigion focussed services are now registered on Dewis Cymru website.

Ceredigion’s ‘Connect to Kindness’ social media group has 584 members. 11 Kindness Connectors have been recruited and 26 activities are registered on the Ceredigion Connect page.

1,068 Unpaid Carers were registered with the Carers Information Service at March 2021 (29% increase from March 2020). 56 Carers had benefitted from 1,053 hours respite by Dec 2020. The Carers Unit Spring magazine focused on ways to improve Mental Health and well-being

**Plant Dewi, Family Centre Network** distributed 527 activity packs to families and offered regular online courses and activities with an increase in the number of participants as both staff and participants gain confidence and skills.

137 families attended parenting courses. Family Centre staff continued regular wellbeing checks with families via phone, Messenger or WhatsApp.

**Area 43** - 64 young people registered for online counselling in Ceredigion (January – March 2021). The online counselling service continues to have a regular uptake across the county. This is currently funded by Hywel Dda Health Board - 2 days per week in South Ceredigion and 4 days per week in North Ceredigion (awaiting budget approval - hence a waiting list of 29).

20 young people have received support in the Centre (January – March 2021). The drop-in centre service is via appointment only and via social media/email and phone contact. Outreach will resume now that the weather is improving.

**Coleg Ceredigion** continues to offer a range of personal support, mentoring and counselling services for learners, either on-line or in person.

Given the gradual return to face to face teaching for the summer term 2021, it’s anticipated that more support will be offered in person in the coming months, partly in response to the pressures felt by young people over the past year.

The wellbeing team are offering weekly online wellbeing sessions, these are well attended and cover topics like coping with lockdown, exercise and sleep.

**Schools Services, Additional Learning Needs, Inclusion & Wellbeing** has shared a wide range of wellbeing resources for pupils and staff in all schools. Further ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistance) training is being provided.

Online counselling has been offered, however uptake has been poor as pupils have stated they would rather face to face counselling. This will be resumed in schools after Easter under the reviewed Ceredigion guidelines and risk assessment.

In response to the risk of young people and children feeling lonely and isolated **Theatr Felinfach** has developed a digital platform for creative activities. The platform, "Dychmygus" includes films, games and tutorials.

Specific projects offer Welsh medium participation opportunities for children and young people. These include Well-being films with a Health and Wellbeing Practitioner, Theatre and Drama Sessions, weekly drama sessions for home educated children/young people and a virtual pantomime performance project.

A project is planned with Welsh rapper, Ed Holden, this will reflect on young people's hopes for the future as social circumstances change.

Digital reach April to Sept 2020-21 was 300,000. Face-to-face participation opportunities are usually around 40,000 per annum.

### **Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Support and Prevention**

3,000 welfare calls were made to 600 children/young people and their families. 800 well-being packs were distributed and 67 young people took part in the three week summer targeted programme.

250 children/young people are being supported in schools and remotely. 15 children/young people are currently receiving at least weekly or fortnightly wellbeing visits at the doorstep.

The Youth Service's virtual activity programme has engaged with 74 young people in weekly online activity sessions covering healthy lifestyles, PE and wellbeing. Daily themes are shared on their social media pages to promote healthy lifestyles, physical activity and wellbeing. The Youth Council and Young People's Forum 'Dewis' have continue to meet virtually throughout lockdown.

A psycho-educational programme was delivered for young people in Schools, designed to promote wellbeing and prevent mental health problems. One young person said, "I believe that it has given me access to more techniques which I can use in order to improve my mental health."

Virtual 'Hafan Haul' sessions to support transition from primary to secondary schools are being provided, along with some targeted interventions in some primary schools. There is a need to adopt this in each secondary school. School bubble meetings are being held, these work well for identifying issues early.

## Schools Services, Childcare Unit

Childcare providers offer a vital service to reduce stress and anxiety for people who rely on childcare as an essential service to function.

Regular updates have been provided to the childcare sector throughout the last 12 months. Training has been delivered to 107 staff from the sector:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Speech & Language Development
- the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act. and
- Lateral Flow Tests

£484,944 WG funding has been distributed to childcare providers to help them stay open. However, 30 registered childcare places have been lost in the last 12 months.

**DASH Ceredigion** offer recreation opportunities for disabled children/young people and respite for families. 19 families have benefitted from a respite break.

25 x children/young people have enjoyed some 'time out' with a support worker. Since fewer children/young people can be supported due to restrictions, those supported are those with the most complex needs.

**Quote from a parent**, "It is difficult to discuss how respite helps all of us without dwelling on what life without respite is like. It is impossible to describe what life without respite is like - under normal circumstances it is relentlessly stressful and exhausting, and during lockdown it was a thousand times worse, so that we were reduced to struggling to get through each day. Now that school is operating again (but normal support is still suspended) we all have a bit of room to breathe again, but school days are short (P's are shorter than most as he struggles to stay for a full day) and the few hours of being able to do things, get things done, have a bit of peace, soon fly by.

Overnight respite, however, and in particular weekend respite (two nights in a row), are something else again. We are able to remind ourselves what normal life might look like. I can sleep for more than four hours at a go (or if I wake, I can luxuriate in not having to be on call), have a cup of tea, get things done, leave the house for more than a few hours, become engrossed in what I am doing without constantly watching for disaster or looking at the clock. We can spend family time together (although at the moment we have sent P's brother back to uni prematurely as life with P was so difficult).

For P, the benefits are equally important--he can spend time with someone who isn't his mother. He can spend time in a different venue, with different people and different expectations. Given his extreme obsessiveness and rigid thinking, this is very important to him, to be exposed to a variety of experiences. He is well cared for and enjoys himself. And above all he comes home to a carer who has had a little time to recover from the extreme stress of looking after him".

## **Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Well-being Centres**

All National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) delivery has been virtual via phone calls, e-mails and the provision of exercise plans that clients can undertake at home.

Contact has been maintained with 583 NERS clients and 29,986 welfare calls have been made (March 2020 – March 2021). 9 monthly wellbeing workout calendars were created. 226 online exercise classes were delivered which have been viewed over 7,000 times via Facebook and Youtube.

## **Hywel Dda University Health Board**

3 x Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Community Development Outreach staff have been recruited. They will support Test Trace Protect and engage with communities to convey health and well-being messages and support BAME communities to minimise risks associated with inequalities in health.

## **Highways & Environmental Services**

Ceredigion's Active Travel Network improves local travel routes that provide opportunities for exercise and leisure.

A public consultation on Active Travel Network Maps closed in March 2021. This will inform the Council where improvements to walking and cycling should be made within the county.

The Caru Ceredigion umbrella seeks to further engage communities in local environmental issues which are important or of concern to them.

The pandemic has inevitably had an impact on the scope to implement projects. However preparation and planning work is in progress to support local groups once it is safe to do so. This will include the roll out of the 'Your Dog Your Job' initiative (launched March 2021) and community and beach litter picking. Over 750 bags of rubbish were filled during kerb side litter picking activities (March 2021).

## **Porth Gofal, Integrated Triage & Assessment Services**

Referrals received by the Integrated Triage team are assessed, if allocated to a worker within the team a holistic assessment, based on Signs of Safety methods, will take into account the person's physical and emotional wellbeing. Support is then provided by statutory services or 3<sup>rd</sup> sector services.

7 Assistant Social workers joined the team in March 2021 and will support with Discharge to Recovery and Hospital Prevention.

Workers continue to work with Carers to reduce the risk of Carers breakdown. Carers support services are arranged, including 3<sup>rd</sup> sector provision, depending on the outcomes of the assessment. Respite placements have been stopped due to COVID.

**Porth Cynnal – Substance Misuse** continues to offer screening and assessments for people whose wellbeing is impacted by substance misuse. Face to face visits can only be made if deemed essential. The team received 42 referrals (March 2020 - March 2021). 20 cases were closed with 16 x improved, 4 x not improved.

Work is progressing to support people to maintain their tenancies and more targeted work is taking place to enable a smooth transition by young people (18-25) into adult services.

The team is working with local and national partners to establish funding decisions on need rather than population, this is at a very early stage but is essential to meet the evidenced needs in Ceredigion.

**Porth Cynnal – Mental Health** are working with the Health Board to review the way Mental Health services are run locally. They are also working with the Health Board to support the Health led 'Transforming Mental Health' programme which includes the offer of a 24/7 service in North Ceredigion and provision of hospitality beds for people in crisis.

Approval has been gained to deliver face to face counselling in schools, something that pupils strongly wanted. This is supplemented by CAMHS delivered counselling to young people and CAMHS training for teachers.

A resource leaflet has been produced and delivered to farmers to outline Mental Health support available (sadly the farming community recently experienced a suicide).

The team is also working with Housing, Police and the Health Board to further develop early help Mental Health support pathways.

The 'Breathing Space' scheme, commencing May 2021, will provide financial respite from debts when someone is in mental health crisis or an inpatient. This scheme is being promoted widely by the team.

**The Care Society** supports individuals presenting with complex social isolation issues including those who receive some social interaction from their paid carers, cleaners, meal provision etc but require more befriending and support. Between March 2020 and Feb 2021:

- 14,054 remote contacts were made by phone, text or email,
- 1,453 welfare and safety checks were carried out
- 693 essential food runs were made, and
- 374 emergency food parcels were delivered

**Penparcau Community Forum** is now delivering food to 74 households in Penparcau (40 families and 34 elderly residents). The number of volunteers has increased and so the same volunteers deliver to the same residents every Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The most vulnerable receive a visit and a phone call at least once a week on top of the food deliveries.

They now operate 7 days a week and have signed up to the CAB scheme which has installed a phone and a laptop at the Centre in order for people to contact CAB

remotely. There has been a huge increase in community engagement in the village due to their work which will be reviewed in November 2021.

### **Policy & Performance, Public Services Board support team**

The Resilience Training PSB Project Group is mapping examples of resilience training already in place across PSB organisations. These are recorded on a shared site, allowing members to update the list as necessary and reflect on opportunities offered through partner organisations. This is a piece of work in progress and the Project Group are keen to ensure that the resource is continually updated.

A discussion is planned at the next meeting to clarify the direction of the group and establish whether there is still an appetite for shared Resilience Training across PSB organisations.

Ceredigion Well-being Objectives have been reviewed in light of the pandemic and its impact. The revised objectives focus specifically on Covid-19 response work that will be required during 2021. This includes:

- Protecting people from poverty
- Supporting citizens who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to improve their physical and emotional well-being, and
- Supporting businesses to respond to the impact of Covid-19

The review has led to a shorter but more focussed list of Well-being Objectives for the year ahead. The next report on progress against the Objectives will take place during the summer and will be published in the Annual Report in October 2021.

**Ceredigion Tackling Hardship Strategy  
Action Plan report to PSB sub-Group  
23/07/2021**

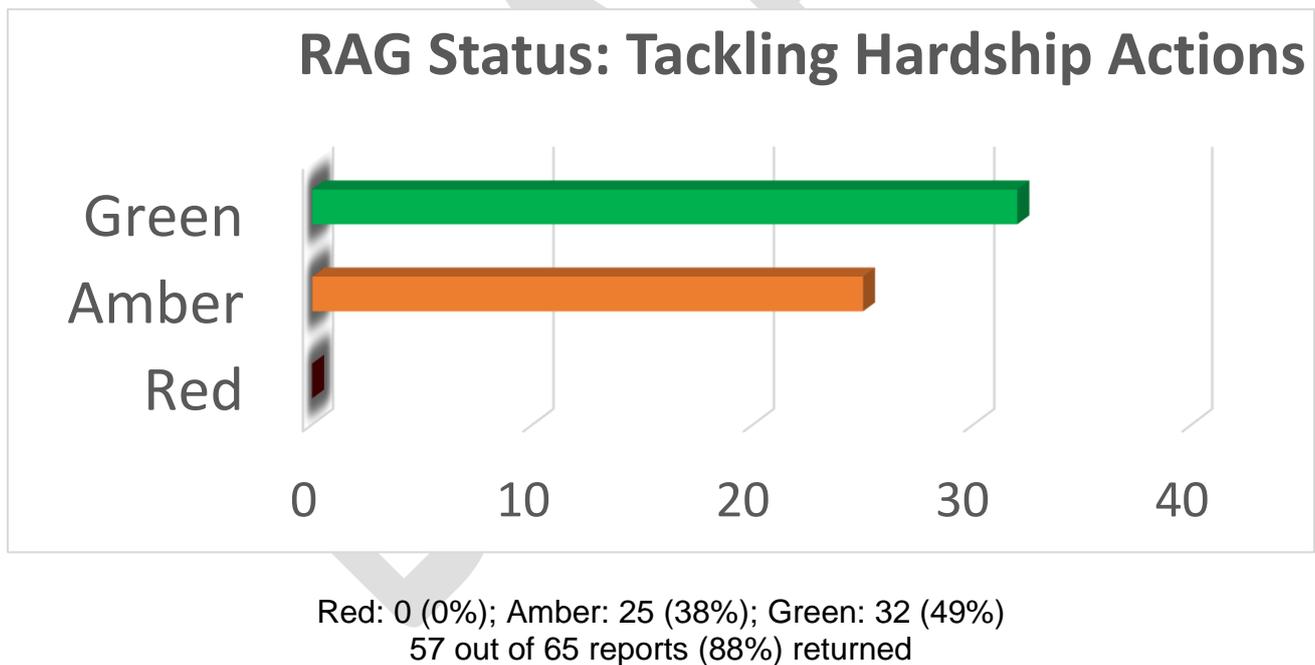
**Pillar Three: Community Resilience  
(Ensure that people can access services, face to face or online)**

The Tackling Hardship Strategy and action plan is monitored by the Poverty Sub-group. Matters relating to Child Poverty are scrutinised by the Children & Young People Services Provider Forum. The Forum meets one week before the Poverty Sub-group in order that feedback is timely.

The Action Plan is divided into the 3 Pillars described in the Tackling Hardship Strategy:

- Pillar 1 – supporting those who are experiencing financial hardship.
- Pillar 2 – supporting those experiencing exhaustion, stress and anxiety.
- Pillar 3 – making sure that people can access services, face to face or online

Pillar 2 was the focus of the Poverty sub-group's April 2021 meeting. Today's meeting will focus on Pillar 3.



**Porth Cymorth Cynnar: Early Intervention, CAVO and Policy & Performance team** created a map and list of resources last year to show the level of community support groups and food bank coverage across the county. The map showed good county coverage with a few small areas of no recorded support. The map is now out of date and shows the real need for the Dewis Wales and InfoEngine online platforms.

Dewis and InfoEngine are linked and designed to be updated by community groups themselves; the group receives a 6-monthly reminder to keep their information up to date.

Neither platform has an interactive map facility, but InfoEngine is considering it. The two platforms don't link very well together at the moment and work is needed on this.

**CAVO** are working with Penparcau, Borth and Llandysul on specific community resilience projects and also working with communities generally to strengthen community facilities and develop peer support networks and community hubs.

This work crosses over into a EU Transition funded 'small grants' project by the Council to tackle food poverty and address food insecurity. Part of the funding has been distributed to Aberaeron Food Bank, Victoria Hall in Lampeter and Aber Food Surplus. Applications from Cardigan Food Bank, Lampeter Growing Group and Area 43 are in the pipeline.

A meeting with Ben Lake MP and Elin Jones MS is arranged for August to provide a platform for those who grow, cook and distribute food in the community.

### **Porth Cymorth Cynnar: Ceredigion Connect project**

The aim of this project is to support individuals through various pathways to remain independent in their own homes for longer. There is a particular focus on those who are isolating. Figures below are April-June 2021.

- 63 individuals signed up to Ceredigion Connect and 415 people were supported by the project
- 1 tablet was distributed to a client
- Family and friends are the highest referrers, followed by self-referrals, then OT/Physio
- 10 people were referred to the falls pathway
- A monthly heat map is created to identify call out time (24 hour response) and location

### **DWP**

Throughout the pandemic DWP/Jobcentres remained open to support vulnerable customers. As rules/situations change more customers are seen face to face. This is a proven means to support people into employment.

Work Coaches offer digital support where appropriate while also seeing some customers (in line with Covid risk assessments).

Some partner organisations are yet to resume face to face support – in particular those offering supported digital training - while others are starting to return to a limited face to face service.

Customers able to self-help continue to be encouraged to improve their digital skills via a variety of free, on-line courses.

### **Clic – (County Council Contact Centre)**

Cash offices remain closed, however the Library is open for Click and Collect and access to PC's by appointment. Access has been reduced to 45 minutes at present to allow for Covid restrictions but the hope is for this access to increase in the next few weeks.

Library vans will resume to 'normal' service from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. The contact centre remains very active.

### **Area 43**

25 young people were supported (March – June 2021). The Drop in centre service is via appointment only. Support offered has been via face to face appointments, outreach when possible, social media, telephone and text.

We have provided foodbank vouchers, feminine hygiene products, condoms etc. Information, counselling, signposting and support with applications have been amongst the most used areas of our service. There has also been a growing need for young people to have someone they are familiar with to 'just listen'.

Outreach and 'Summer of Fun' activity sessions will take place over the summer

### **Cymdeithas Gofal The Care Society**

Regular (virtual) contact was maintained with clients who needed it during the pandemic, including food shopping and doorstep deliveries. We were awarded some funding to provide laptop access where needed. Nearly 100% of our service users had access to a mobile phone and we ensured no contact was lost throughout the pandemic.

With the gradual easing of restrictions, most clients are happy to have face to face support. We are providing visits and floating support, in line with Covid restrictions.

March 2020 – February 2021 we carried out 693 food shopping runs; made 1,453 welfare checks; delivered 374 emergency food parcels; made 9,783 welfare benefit enquiries.

### **Coleg Ceredigion**

At the start of lockdown our mentor teams identified all learners in need of digital connectivity support. Those eligible were provided with the necessary IT equipment/mobile phone access so that they could access online learning provision. College mentors support learners with connectivity issues where needed. Laptops were delivered/collected and mobile phone data was funded to ensure access to lessons remotely.

The connectivity needs of the new cohort of learners in September, were identified at enrolment and eligible learners were supplied in readiness for the new academic year. The college received WG funding to purchase equipment and this, along with any college spare laptops, was used to ensure all learners have digital access to online learning.

### **Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Community Well-being & Learning: Dysgu Bro and Hyfforddiant Ceredigion Training**

IT equipment has been lent to learners who have needed this support. WG funded Chrome books have also been distributed to participants so that they can engage with mentors and job centres. The Employment Support Team are carrying out face to face meetings with the most vulnerable participants.

Dysgu Bro are delivering some courses via blended learning with some face to face courses e.g. First Aid, Paediatric first Aid, Fire Marshal and CSCS.

A variety of courses are being delivered internally via Teams, including Excel, MS Teams, Readability, HeartStart and iPad training.

### **Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Community Well-being & Learning: Wellbeing Centres**

There are plans for a Well-being Centre in the North, Mid and South of the county. Welsh Government funding has been secured and Cabinet have agreed to develop the first Wellbeing hub in the mid area of the county and the first Wellbeing Centre at Lampeter Leisure Centre.

Consultation on the facilities required has taken place with services in the Council's new Through-age and Wellbeing model and with the PSB Co-location and Integration of Frontline Services project Group. Architects have been appointed to finalise the building layout at Lampeter Well-being Centre and to prepare documents for construction tender.

Community Organisations that provide physical activity opportunities in Ceredigion have received a total of £194,705 of Sports Wales grant aid to assist them with dealing with the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and a return to provision:

- Sport Wales's Be Active Wales Fund (£65,852)
- Emergency Relief Fund (£126,873)
- Community Chest (£1,980)

Officers provide support and advice to the organisations and also assist Sport Wales with the decision making process.

### **Porth Cymorth Cynnar: Support & Intervention**

The service continues to represent and attend various local community group meetings and has started some community projects. 6 x 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector youth support groups have been funded to offer services on behalf of the Council.

150 referrals were received (Jan-June 2021) for early intervention and preventative support. In total, 250 individuals have had support both online, within schools and in the community.

A £20k Welsh language youth volunteering project will start September 2021. The project will be co-produced by the Council, CAVO, Urdd and YFC. The Mobile Youth Provision is due to arrive later this month. A young person panel/ group will be created to help oversee the project delivery.

### **Porth Cymorth Cynnar & Ceredigion Family Centre Network (Plant Dewi)**

All families that the Family Centres are working with are able to engage with online services. Those who need to borrow equipment have been identified and have been supported to get online. Families don't all have the desire or confidence to connect online, some prefer to talk on the phone, or use Messenger. Staff continue to work to develop this.

All staff have gained skills and confidence in providing online services. They have attended training in Digital Inclusion, Zoom and Teams and continue to develop their skills. Guidance has been created on using various platforms to support delivery.

An equipment audit has been undertaken to identify quantity of IT equipment held for loan within Porth Cymorth Cynnar services.

380 families have been supported to get online and now engage with online services. A case study about our Digital Connectivity project was submitted to Welsh Government and identified as good practice.

## **DASH Ceredigion**

We continue to support fewer disabled children/young people due to Covid restrictions. 28 attended weekend stays, playscheme and youth provision. 2 received 1:1 support. No requests were received for support for children to attend mainstream childcare (April-June 2021).

There are concerns about the impact of the changes to Tim Plant Anabl services (previously a co-located Health & Social care team) and how we will ensure that families can access our services.

We have increased the number of services available and hope to continue doing so over the next few months. Smaller groups have been very effective in supporting high need children. We are going to explore offering a high need service in the future.

## **CCC, Economy & Regeneration – Digital Development**

Several of our projects have been approved for funding and deployment of the infrastructure will start shortly. Two alternative network providers are proposing 'fibre to premises' projects in the county. We are working with Community/County Cllrs to raise awareness of the opportunities available.

BT Openreach have announced upgrades to exchanges. This will positively affect 8,000 properties in Ceredigion.

Applications have been submitted to the local broadband fund to improve 'fibre to the premises' in identified areas of poor connectivity (mostly to the south of the county). If successful this would bring in approximately £1 million of capital funding. A project is in development to improve broadband connectivity to social housing properties in Powys and Ceredigion.

We have now journeyed through the three Pillars

**Pillar 1** – support for those experiencing financial hardship.

**Pillar 2** – support for those experiencing exhaustion, stress and anxiety.

**Pillar 3** – making sure that people can access services

**Next steps:** Review the Action Steps and prepare an Annual Report:

## Appendix B: Contributing Partners

Hywel Dda University Health Board, Partnerships, Diversity & Inclusion
Ceredigion County Council, Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Community Wellbeing & Learning
Ceredigion County Council, Finance & Procurement
Area 43
Ceredigion County Council, Porth Cynnal
Plant Dewi
Ceredigion County Council, Porth Gofal
Cymdeithas Gofal The Care Society
Ceredigion County Council, Policy, Performance & Public Protection
Ceredigion County Council, Economy & Regeneration
Ceredigion County Council, Schools & Culture
Ceredigion County Council, Customer Contact
Ceredigion County Council, Highways & Environmental Services
DASH
Department of Work & Pensions (DWP)
Coleg Ceredigion
Ceredigion Citizens Advice
Penparcau Community Forum
Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations (CAVO)

## Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>2 November 2021</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Zoom</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Feedback from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Ceredigion PSB Poverty Sub-group - Tackling Hardship Strategy progress report July 2021</b>
<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>To provide feedback from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 October 2021</b>

### **BACKGROUND:**

Section 2 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 put a statutory duty on Welsh Authorities to prepare and publish a Strategy that will contribute to the eradication of child poverty in Wales. Local Authorities may choose to include their strategies within their local Well-being Plan. Ceredigion County Council has chosen to publish a separate strategy in order to keep a specific focus on issues relating to poverty in Ceredigion.

Following discussion and consideration of the report, Members agreed the following and recommend that Cabinet:

- Recognises the progress made in delivery of the three key objectives of the Ceredigion Tackling Hardship Strategy and supports the 'next steps' shown below:

*1. The PSB Poverty Sub-group will continue to develop the data dashboards to ensure we have a shared understanding of the evolving impact of COVID-19 on hardship in Ceredigion through the collation and analysis of data.*

*2. There is a need to review the list of contributing partners We know that there are opportunities to work collaboratively with more partner agencies in order to promote and take advantage of all available help and assistance.*

*3. The Action Plan is a live document designed to be updated during the life of the Hardship Strategy. Some contributing partners have completed their actions while other actions are still in progress. The Action Plan will be reviewed to ensure that we continue to work together effectively to strengthen individual and community resilience as we adjust to the impact of COVID-19.*

*4. The framework established to monitor delivery of the Hardship Strategy does not include a mechanism for partners to flag up specific issues of concern. In particular, those that the PSB may be able to address effectively on a multi-agency basis. The monitoring framework Will be adapted so that it includes a clear way of proactively identifying specific issues of concern that can be raised by support providers, citizens and PSB Sub-group members.*

The Chairman thanked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn for presenting the report and thanked the Families and Syrian Refugee Co ordinator, Cathryn Morgan for producing an informative report.

**Councillor Ivor Williams**

*Chairman of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee*