

Ceredigion County Council

**Audrey Somerton-  
Edwards**



**Ceredigion Social  
Services –  
Statutory Director’s  
Annual Report  
2022/2023**



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# 1. Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to publish the annual report for 2022-23. At the beginning of this fiscal year, Sian Howys was the Statutory Director for Social Services, and we thank her very much for her work before retiring in November 2022. I joined Ceredigion County Council in April 2022 and took over the role of Director of Social Services on an interim basis on 01 November 2022, whilst the recruitment of a permanent Director was undertaken.



In line with the expectations of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Statutory Director of Social Services is required to publish a report on the Social Services duties within the Local Authority over the previous year, at the end of every fiscal year.

This is our opportunity to evaluate our performance and draw attention to lessons to be learnt and any required improvements. It is also an opportunity to highlight good practice and celebrate success.

The report provides a summary of what is in progress over the year to come.

The past few years have not been easy for the people of Ceredigion or for the Social Services workforce. The pandemic was incredibly challenging for our carers, our residential homes, those workers who visit people in their homes, and for all other workers. The impact of the pandemic continues, and we can see the challenges that have arisen as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. We have contended with significant workforce challenges that needed robust and decisive action to address.

Whilst I reflect on the last 12 months, I am struck by how challenging it has been across the whole of the Through Age Wellbeing services. The increased demand across our services has been significant and sustained. This reflects the pressures across our communities. The direct and indirect impact of meeting ever more complex needs, the cost-of-living challenges, post Covid issues are all having a significant impact on people’s lives as well as delays in people accessing treatment through the National Health Service. However, despite this I have witnessed the most outstanding force of goodwill and commitment from staff across the Through Age Well-being service to do their utmost to deliver for Ceredigion communities. Our performance for 2022-23, in the context of these pressures has been exceptional.

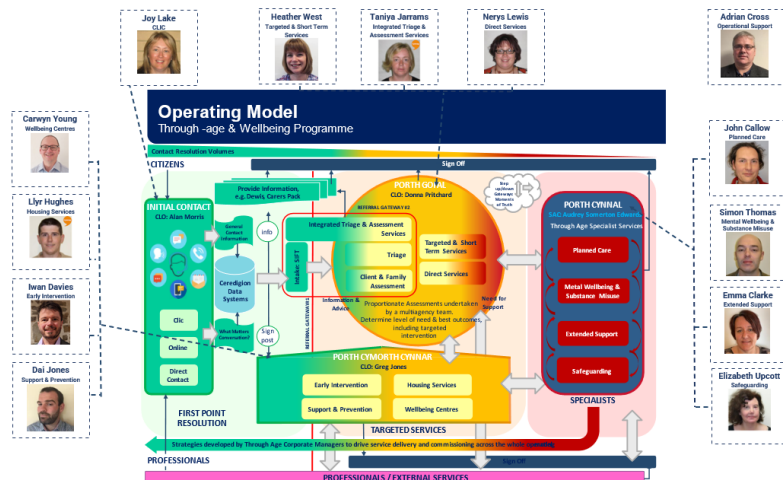
We have continued to work with families to keep children and young people safe at the heart of their families and communities. We are continuing to work with families to reduce the number of children who come into the care of the Local Authority. We have continued to support people to live at home independently and delay the need for admission to residential care. Despite significant challenges in the Domiciliary Care market, our workforce has worked additional hours and their days off to keep people at home, safe, whilst our commissioning team have been working with the market to reset and recruit. This continued to be an ongoing challenge. We have continued to embrace technology across our services to aid efficiency and safety for our communities.

During March 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales undertook a Performance Evaluation inspection which highlighted our strengths across the whole service. The final report recognised that the areas we are seeking to improve were aligned with their views on the requirements. It was satisfying to see our plans and developments endorsed by the regulator.

We welcome feedback from all stakeholders regarding this report.

It has been my pleasure to be the Director of Social Services in Ceredigion for the past 12 months.

# The Through Age and Well-being Integrated Service Delivery Model



For the year 2022 23 there has been significant progress in consolidating the implementation of our integrated Through Age Wellbeing Service model.

During 2021 the TAW Strategy 2021-27 was approved as an ambitious programme of change to achieve our five key Strategic Objectives:

- Promote positive health and wellbeing and support people to self support
- Provide proportionate approaches to managed care and support
- Protect individuals and keep them from abuse, harm and neglect
- Strengthen families so that children and young people remain within their family
- Enable individuals to live independently in their own communities

The model has been reviewed and some structural amendments made to ensure that the Through Age Wellbeing Services delivers services effectively and efficiently.

In March 2023 we received feedback from Care Inspectorate Wales recognising the value of the Through Age Wellbeing model as an innovative format to meet the needs of the community at all life stages. The report was published by CID on 18 May 2023.

The emphasis during the year has been to promote a climate of collaboration and cooperation across the three Porths to benefit the community. This has been achieved by engaging the workforce and elected members to understand our business and to contribute to plans and development as the integrated Through Age Wellbeing Service model matures.

*Audrey Edwards*

Audrey Somerton-Edwards  
Interim Statutory Director of Social Services  
Corporate Lead Officer – Porth Cynnal

## 2. Summary of Performance

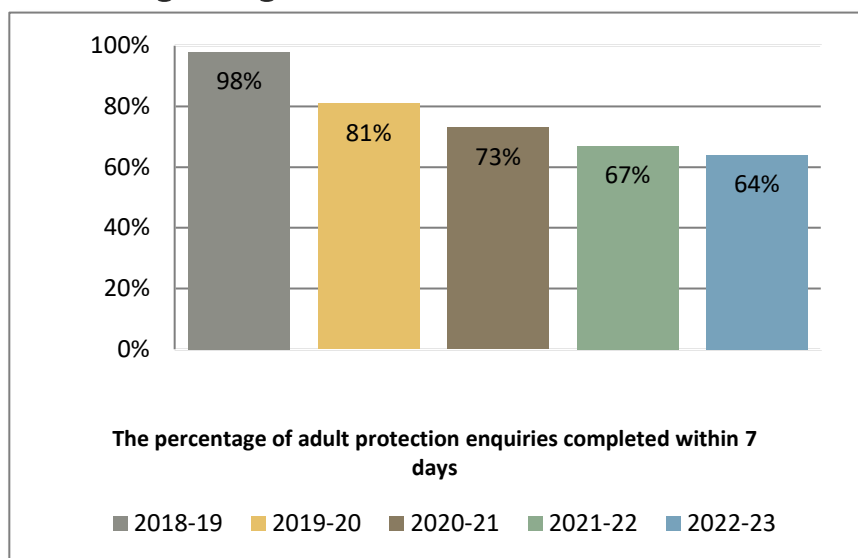
The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 Section 145 set out our duties to report on the performance of social services functions. You will see below how we have performed in the key areas of our service in the past year.

### Adult and Commissioning Services Summary

The performance of services for adults is satisfactory with priority given to adhering to local, regional, and national guidance, and protocols in collaboration with partner agencies to meet the needs of adults.

We continue to develop our key service areas such as CLIC for initial contact and signposting to Porth Gofal for advice and assistance, triage and proportionate assessment of need. Our early help approach to practice is becoming embedded into our Through Age Wellbeing Service model. Every opportunity to intervene at an early stage is utilised by deploying services from Porth Cymorth Cynnar continues to prevent the escalation of needs to levels where statutory intervention is needed.

#### Adult Safeguarding

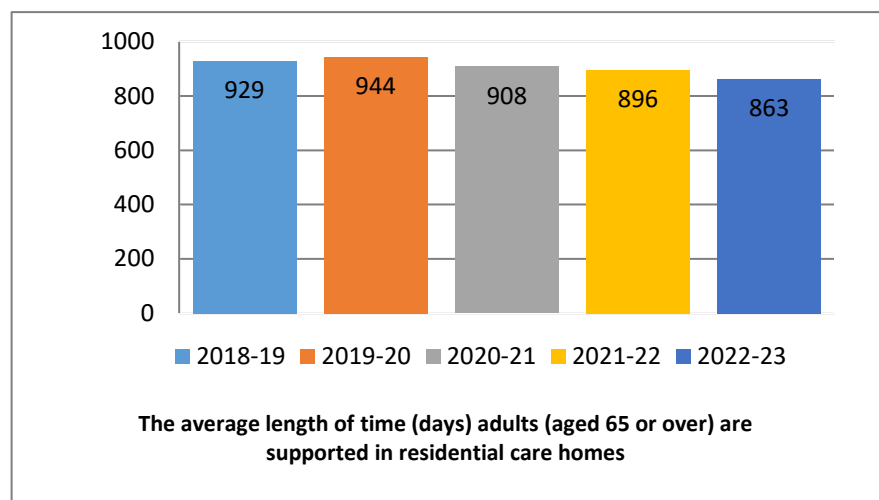


There has been a decrease in the percentage of Adult Protection enquiries completed within seven working days during 2022-2023.

The main reason for this has been that during this period, there was considerable service pressures and challenge with workforce capacity and the fact that as some of the staff are agency workers and do not live in the locality, there are some delays in staff going out to visit people in the community to speak to them as part of the

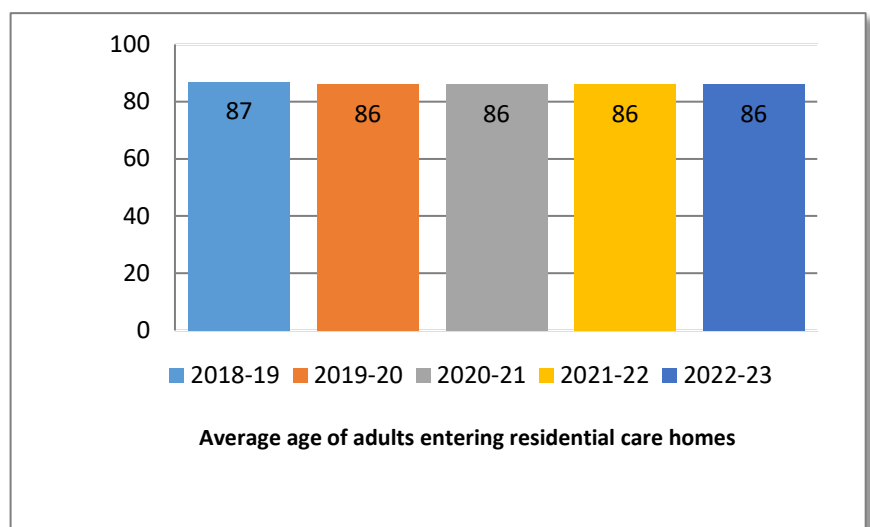
Safeguarding Enquiry. Nonetheless, high risk cases have been prioritized and timely action taken when required to ensure people’s safety.

**Adults supported in residential care homes**



Residential care provides a range of options for individuals who require 24 hour care. These include short term, temporary and permanent placements. There are various residential care options available, depending on the needs of the individual. Ceredigion operates five residential care homes (as at March 2023) itself and commissions with several private companies both in Ceredigion and further

afield.



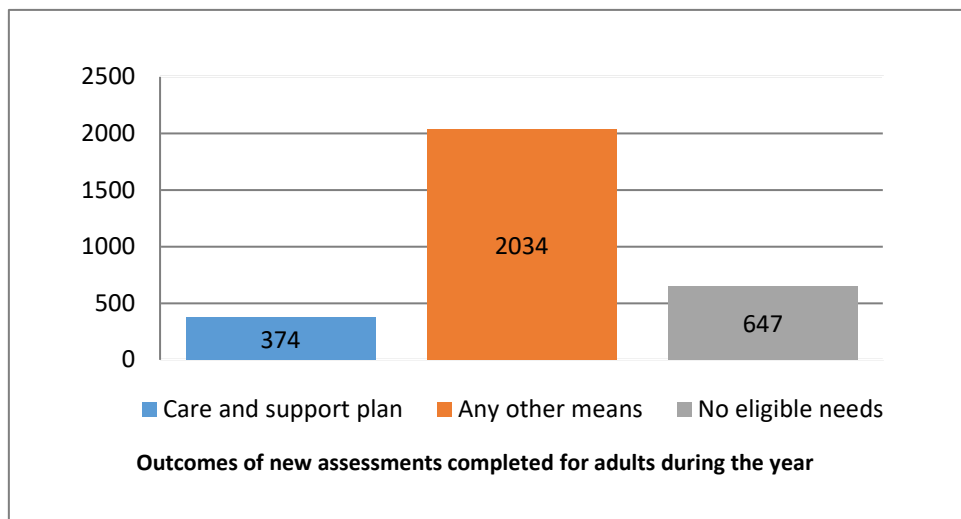
**Advice and Assistance for Adults**

The PATHWAYS OF CARE DELAYS PILOT commenced November 2022 which was the start of a new framework for reporting delayed transfers of care from a hospital setting which had been suspended at the start of the pandemic. A pathways of care delay is experienced by an inpatient occupying a bed in an NHS hospital, who is ready to move on to the next stage of care but is prevented from doing so by one or more reasons. The revised definition for recording a delay is:

“any patient post 48 hours clinically optimised”

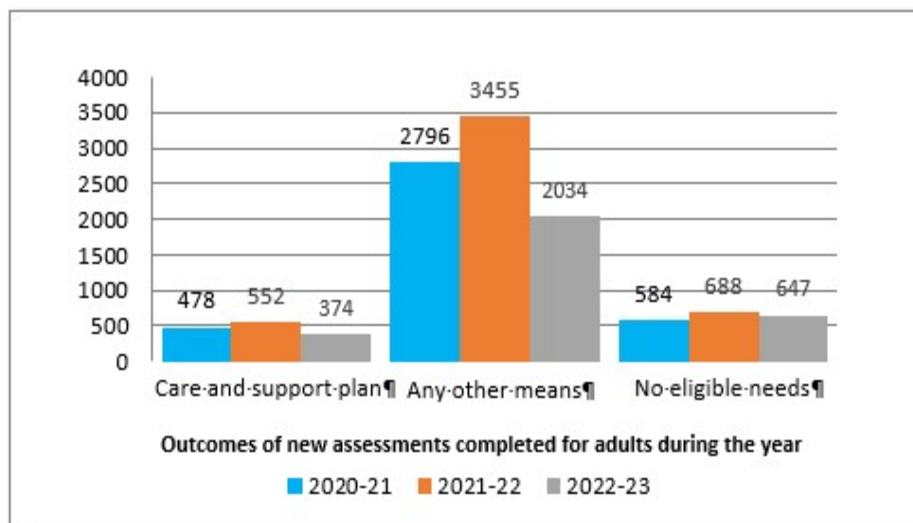
There has been a slight decrease in the number of delayed discharges between 2021-22 to 2022-23 but has not returned to the pre pandemic phase, the reason for this is the change in the definition and reporting of DTOC. The flow of patient discharges has improved due to increased capacity within domiciliary care and enablement service where by those with less complex needs

discharges are able to progress quickly due to availability of support. The step down beds in Cartref Tregerddan has also supported the flow of discharges for those who require 24hr support whilst recovering from an acute illness. The person is discharged to the step down bed for a period of up to 6 weeks. This has enabled for assessments to take place when the person fully recovered and functionally optimised.



All new adult referrals to the authority are progressed to Porth Gofal Integrated Triage and Assessment service when advice and assistance is required. Porth Gofal is an integrated Triage with Hywel Dda Health Board. The integrated Triage consist of a Senior Social Worker, nurse, Occupational Therapist and Physiotherapist who will undertake a holistic

proportionate assessment with a focus on Prevention, early intervention reducing escalation of need for long term statutory care and support.



- Any other means relates to the other national outcomes for assessment that are not for a care and support plan or no eligible needs.
- There are no care and support needs to meet. = There were no eligible needs to meet
- Needs can be met through the provision of information, advice, and assistance. = Needs were able to be met by any other means.
- Needs, can be met, through

the provision of preventative services. = Needs were able to be met by any other means.

- Needs, can be met, wholly or in part by the individuals themselves (with or without the assistance of others). = Needs were able to be met by any other means.
- Other matters can contribute to the achievement of the personal outcomes, or otherwise meet the needs. = Needs were able to be met by any other means.
- Needs can only be met through a care and support plan, or a support plan (needs are eligible). = Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan.



Porth Gofal is the integrated decision making hub for Ceredigion that triages and determine the level of need of all cases and the best outcomes for those individuals. Porth Gofal is the heart of service provision that focuses on ensuring that Citizens receive the intervention that is best placed to meet their needs or where else to guide them to early help or specialist services.

**Porth Gofal aims:**

- Adults to remain in their own communities and in their homes, maximising their independence and improving their health outcomes and quality of life.

**What Porth Gofal provides:**

- A responsive service to Citizens living in Ceredigion.
- Applies a Strength based needs assessment focusing on service user choice and control using the Signs of Safety framework.
- A reduction in the time Social Care professionals spend in determining eligibility for statutory services.
- Legislatively compliant service that meets the statutory requirements of the SSWBA.
- A safe service that identifies vulnerable and at risk Citizens, that responds effectively.

**What Porth Gofal achieves:**

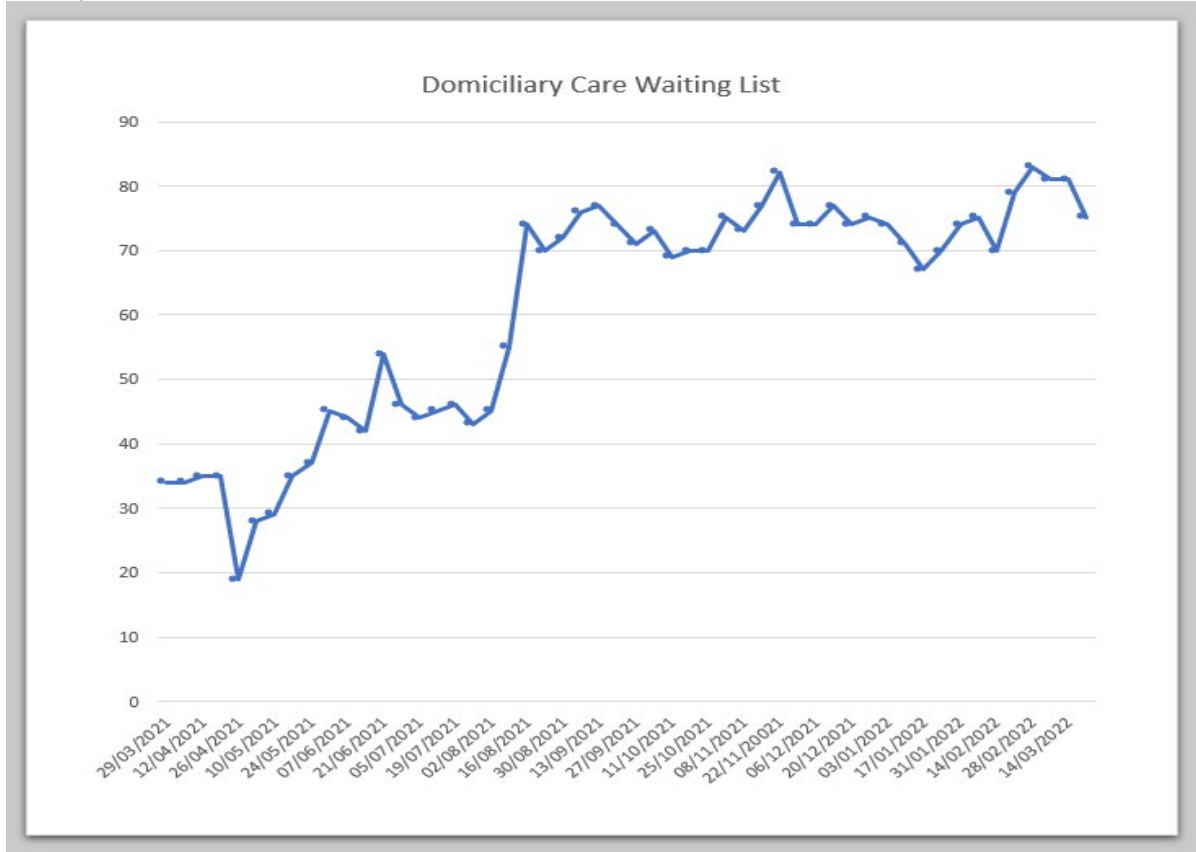
- Provides information, advice and assistance about community health and social care services for adults that improves the connection between people and their communities.
- Encourages a balanced approach to the assessment of need ensuring that citizens are at the centre of conversations, decisions and the “what matters” conversation takes place.
- Multidisciplinary triaging of referrals to identify the right professional to respond e.g. Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist or Social Care Workers to ensure right response at the right time.
- Provide more consistent, co-ordinated assessment for care and support.
- Improve the flow of information between services, resulting in faster decisions being made about people’s needs and support.
- Reduces hospital admissions by providing rapid wrap around re-ablement response service.
- Provides an in-reach service to reduce delayed transfers of care by providing timely discharges from hospital.
- A commitment to integrated working with a focus on positive rehabilitation outcomes for the citizens is essential.

People continue to receive specialist advice at the point of receipt of referral, the signs of safety model is used as part of the conversations with individuals with a focus of building on the persons strengths and resilience. Through the process of completing a proportionate assessment information and advice is provided and discussions around rehabilitation as Porth Gofal works in close collaboration with Therapies. This has led to many referrals being able to be closed following a proportionate assessment due to IAA being provided, referrals to 3<sup>rd</sup> sector or de-escalated for therapy support for rehabilitation. For those who appear to have more complex needs a social care assessment is undertaken whereby a worker will undertake a comprehensive assessment. Following this assessment, the outcomes may be the same that following preventative support such as enablement the person may have regained their independence and will not require a care and support plan and the provision of a long-term service.

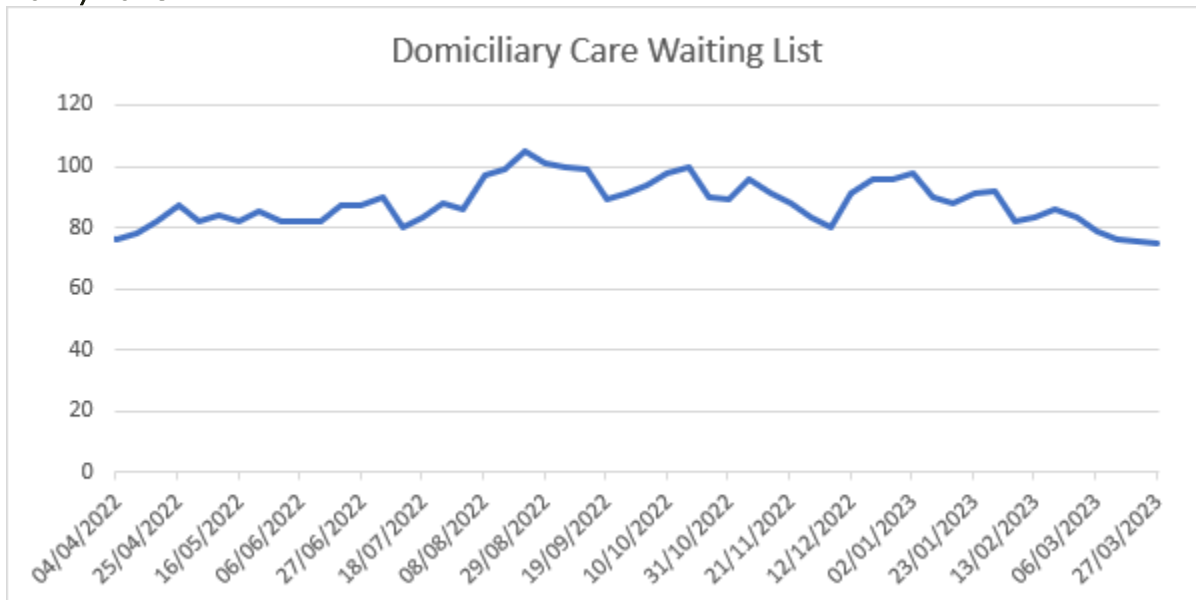
**Provision of Domiciliary Care**

During the period 2022-04-04 to 2023-03-27 the number of people waiting for domiciliary care fluctuated between a low of 70 and a high of 105.

**2021/2022**



**2022/2023**

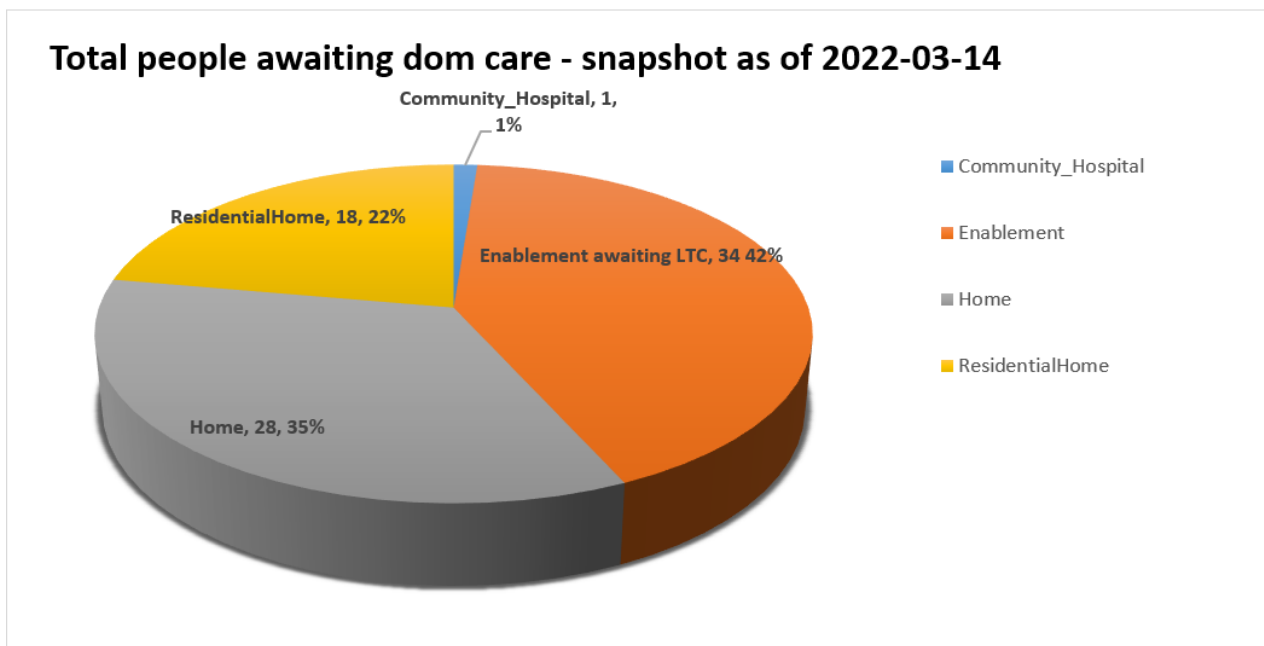


Providers reported that recruiting new staff continues to remain steady, unfortunately they are still losing some staff at a similar rate. The net staff loss/gain across the providers overall was often a negative figure. Staff were noting various reasons for leaving the service one of the highest being unable to maintain the cost of running a vehicle; followed closely by low pay; not suited to care work (physical/mental health impact), unaffordable childcare expenses and the impact of Covid 19.

Discussions in the regular providers/CCC meetings and the informal drop in continue discussions that took place over the summer, including all concerns and queries raised, were shared, and discussed at highest level including the Chief Executive. Providers were reassured that their voices were being heard at the highest levels.

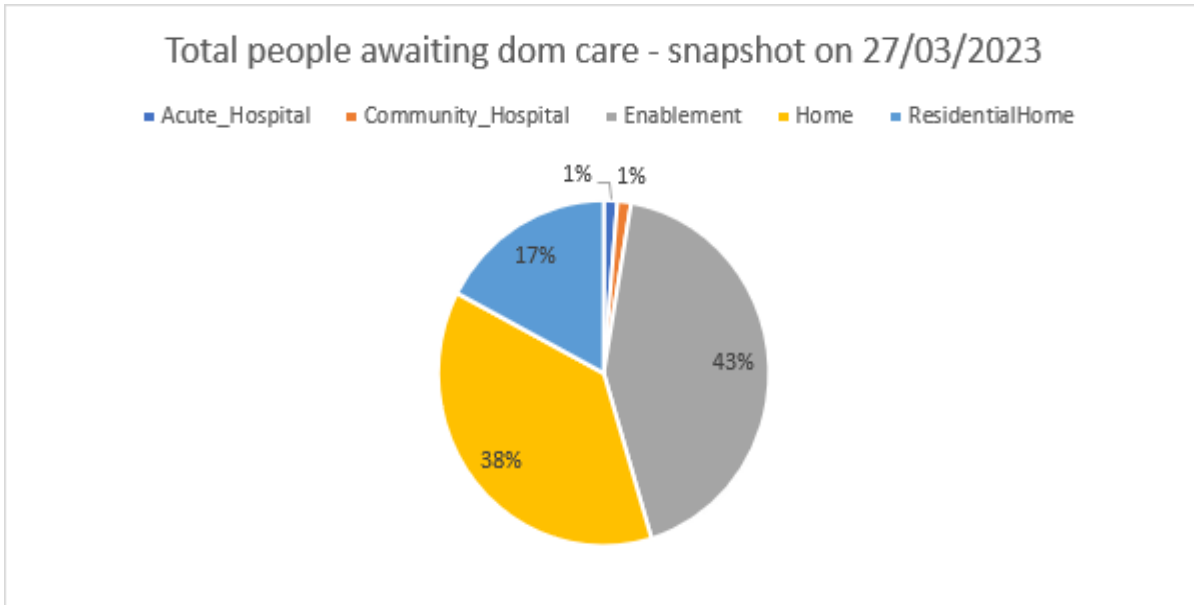
**2022 snapshot** of total Number of people in receipt of domiciliary care shown in graph below:

The total number of people in receipt of domiciliary care showed a decline in the period between March 2021 and March 2022 and remained static in the second half of the year at around 277

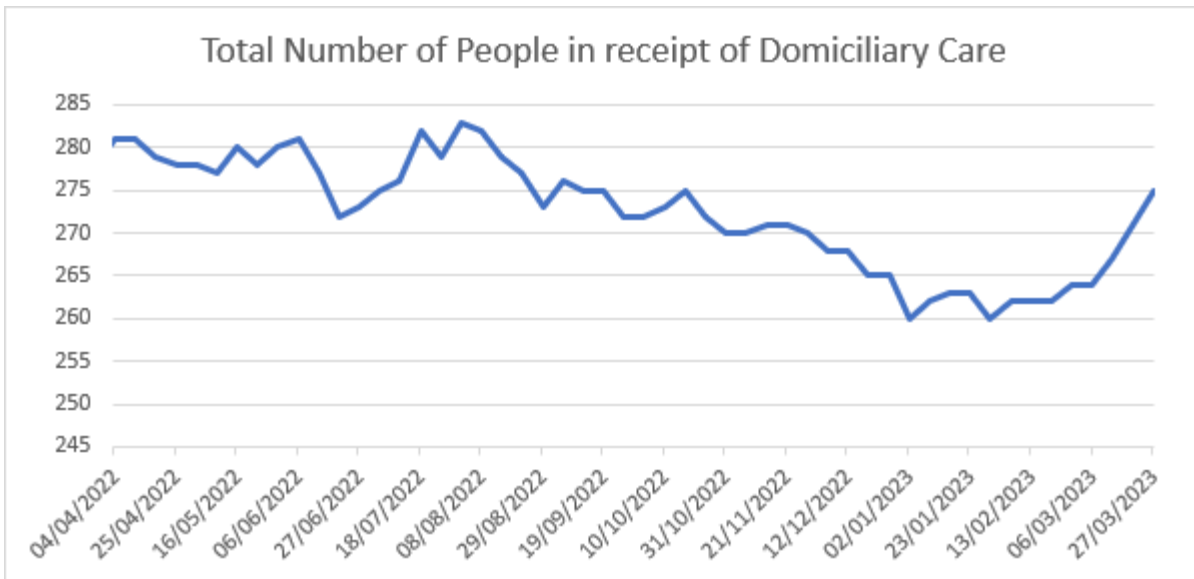


**2023 snapshot** of total Number of people in receipt of domiciliary care shown in graph below:

The total number of people in receipt of domiciliary care remained static at approx. 277 in the period between March 2022 and Dec 2022 and dropped to an average of 265 in the last quarter of the year.



2022/2023



	Total hours of home care purchased from independent sector	Individuals in receipt of commissioned care
2017/2018	239470.73	551
2018/2019	241300.18	571
2019/2020	234499.18	540
2020/2021	209780.61	487
2021/2022	192088.00	278
2022/2023	187068.4	275

**Enablement Team 2022/2023**

2022/23	Total referrals	enablement	Long Term	Closed	Started
Apr-22	60	41	19	15	45
May-22	43	28	15	18	25
Jun-22	40	29	11	18	22
Jul-22	54	41	13	26	28
Aug-22	57	36	21	34	23
Sep-22	35	20	15	6	29
Oct-22	48	33	15	18	30
Nov-22	33	22	11	12	21
Dec-22	27	19	8	16	11
Jan-23	42	28	14	16	26
Feb-23	52	42	10	33	19
Mar-23	23	27	6	4	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>298</b>

We continue to enjoy good working relationships with providers which gives us a good basis on which to build, allowing us to work closely with the market through the peaks and troughs. Providers continue to feedback that their regular meetings with Ceredigion County Council are beneficial and informative. Providers can raise important issue and trends can be identified and escalated when necessary, ensuring their voices are heard regionally.

We have several remote, isolated areas in which it is very difficult to procure care. In order to facilitate the release of pressure in certain areas and to aide hospital discharges we continue to utilize our in-house Enablement team to support with domiciliary care bridging long term cases and discharges.

As of 27/03/2023, 12 commissioned providers were delivering around 3943.88 hours of care every week. CCC in house enablement were supporting 36 people with long term care needs.

Our domiciliary care providers have generally been able to work together to ‘patch’ their cover to parts of the county. Several of our providers offer care services to Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Powys and can fill the gaps in their rotas across county lines.

## Children and Families Services

Across the Through Age Wellbeing Service, we have continued to work collaboratively with the Schools Service and partner agencies to support vulnerable children and their families. Our aim has been to intervene and provide early help at the first opportunity. We have identified increased complexity of needs in the aftermath of the pandemic and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable families.

The number of children recorded on Ceredigion Child Protection Register has risen steadily during 2022-23 and stood at 52 children at the end of the year. This is an increase on the end of year figure for 2021-22 when there were 45 names recorded. Post pandemic society is once again more open and we have had greater visibility of and access to children, but also the pressure placed on families during that period continues to take its toll. The most frequent categories of risk identified were domestic abuse, parental mental health and substance abuse and emotional / psychological harm.

The number of Ceredigion Looked After Children increased to 132 children by 31 March 2023 compared to 101 at the end of the last year. The increase is being closely monitored to ensure we continue to work with the whole family as a means of achieving re-unification safely wherever possible. For those children who cannot safely be at home with their family we endeavour to support and guide them as responsible corporate parenting.

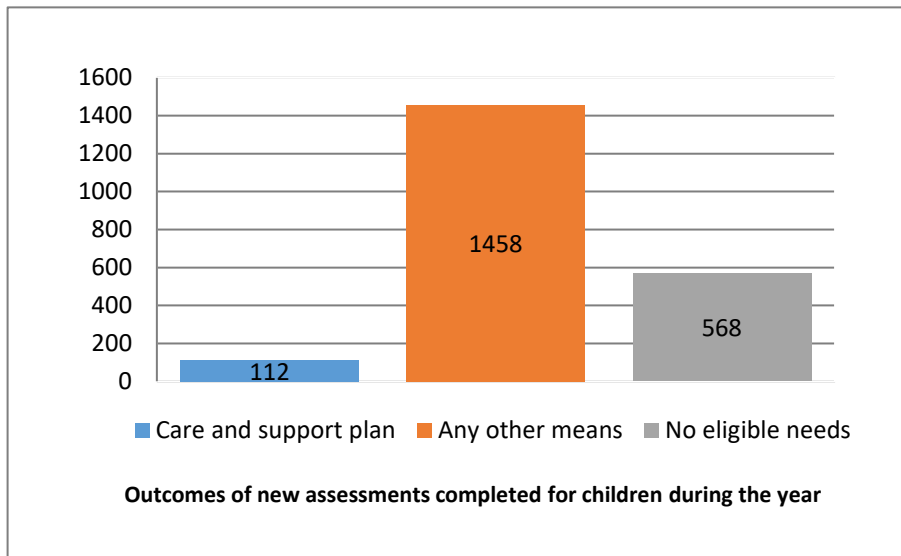
During the year 2022-23 we have had an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children referred to Ceredigion through the National Transfer Scheme, which has contributed to the sharp increase in children in our care.

A lack of suitable placements for looked after children has once again been a consistent theme locally and across Wales. We aim to reduce our reliance on ‘for profit’ provision by focusing on good quality, cost effective local options. We have commenced work to expand and develop our own internal placement and support resources to ensure that children and young people remain in Ceredigion and close to their family, school, and home community,

We are developing residential care provision, supported lodgings and stepping up our recruitment of local foster carers.

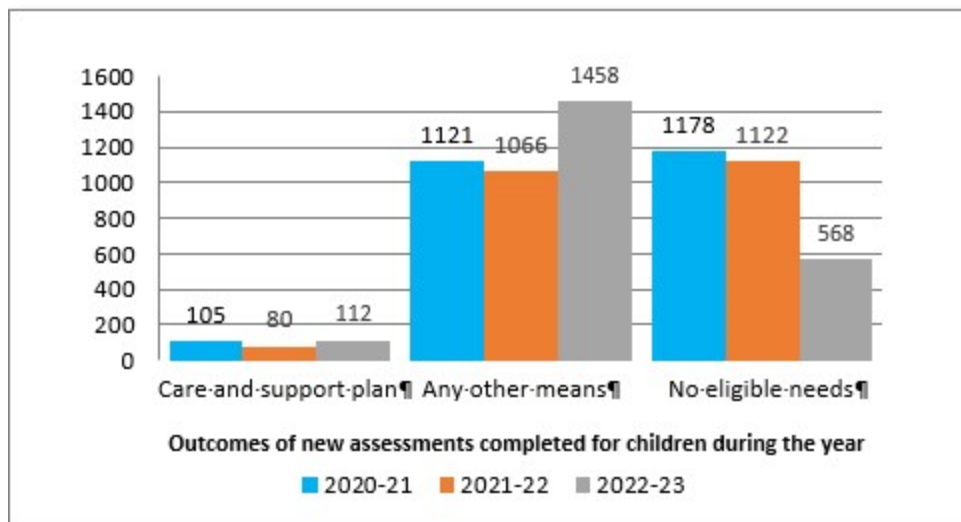
As ever our workforce and foster carers have come forward and offered exemplary support to children and their families over and above our expectation, for which we are extremely grateful.

### Outcome of Assessments



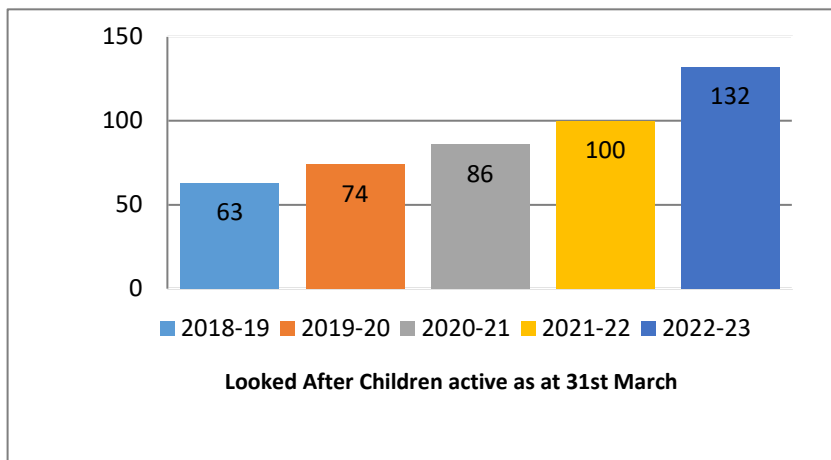
There have been 2,138 assessments completed in the last year, the vast majority requiring advise and assistance rather than any formal Care and Support Plan. Ceredigion Council has developed a Proportional Assessment, this allows us to use one form for enquiries that might be resolved by advice however if through a conversation it is identified that support for a family is required then this decision can be recorded. The

information then can be used to support a fuller assessment of a child’s needs without families having to repeat information that they have provided.



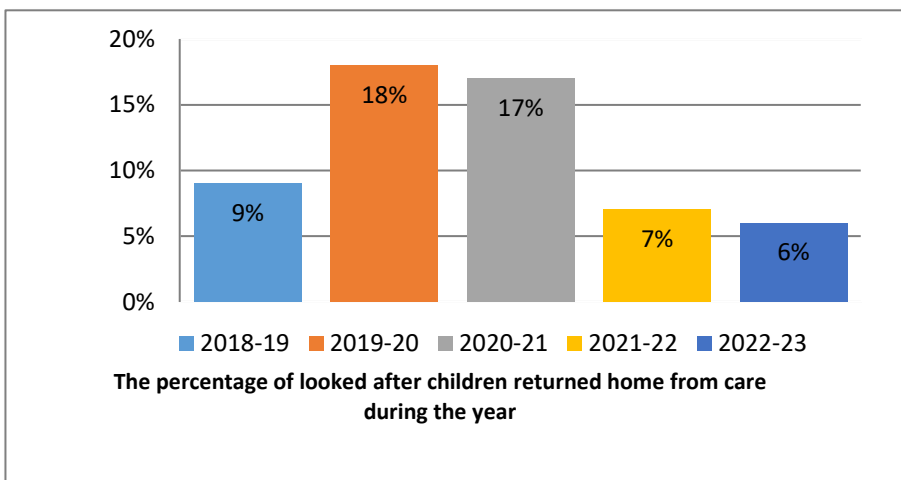
There is clear evidence of increased demand and alongside this an increase in complexity. This is not necessarily reflected in the chart however the number of new assessment where no eligible needs were identified has halved compared to previous years.

**Looked After Children**



The number of Children Looked After continues to increase and in addition to our children from Ceredigion we are now part of the national transfer scheme for UASC. The increased numbers means many of our children live outside Ceredigion. This is due to placements being limited within Ceredigion and no residential placements within the county. The geography of Ceredigion often means that even with children in

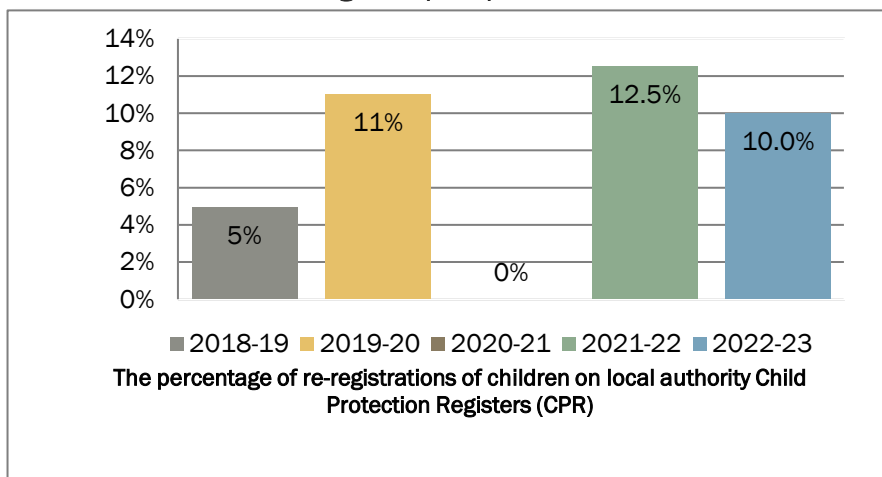
neighbouring local authorities they still remain close enough to attend their school and be part of their community. There has been work on discharging care orders as a number of children are placed with family members and are thriving so we can confidently discharge care orders.



The percentage of children returned home remains low, this is explained by a number of factors from the decision making to bring children into care being the correct one. To the complexity around parents needs and that in order to establish permanency for children, the timeframe around parents making required changes does not fit the child’s needs.

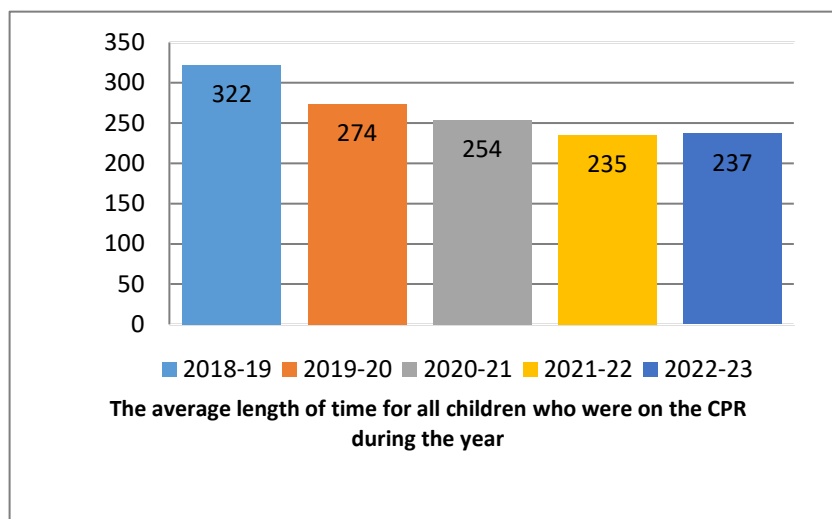


### The Child Protection Register (CPR)



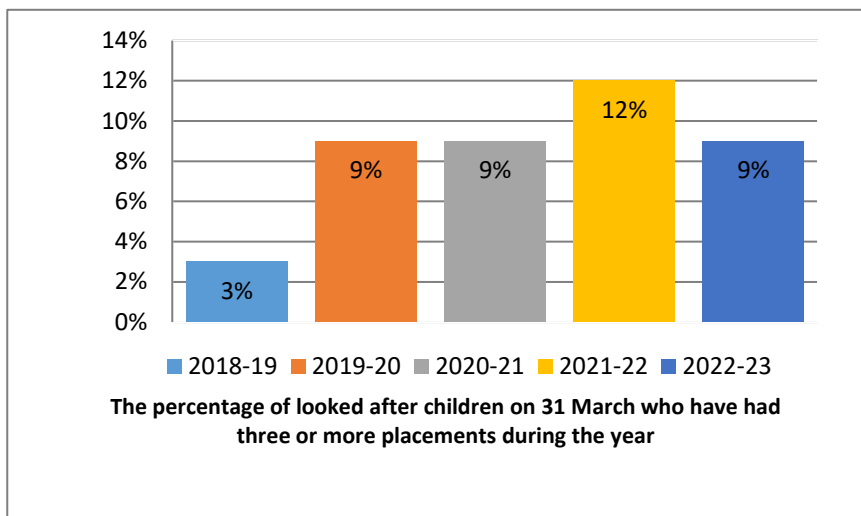
There has been a slight decrease from 12.5% in 20-21 to 10.0% in 22-23 in relation to the re-registration of children on the local authority’s Child Protection Register. Since COVID restrictions were more fully lifted in the 2021-22 period, and children/young people were returning to education and outside agencies and had more contact with children/young people, the

high percentage of re-registrations occurred and there were specifically larger families where a number or all the children within one family were re-registered. There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of re-registrations during 22-23, but it still remains high and on-going work is being undertaken to address this and to ensure that when children are being removed from the register, that the changes made in and by the family are more sustainable. Also, there is greater access to step down support for children and families, which would prevent the need for re-registration.



During 2022-23 period it was more possible to work with partner agencies to undertake actions with children and families who had been on the register for a longer period, and this has led to the decrease in the length of time children have been on the CPR in relation to 2020-21 but a slight increase from 21-22. However, the complexity of cases and level of overall risk to children being presented is still high and means that children are on the register for longer.

**Looked after children – stability of placements**



The number of children experiencing 3 or more placements remains too high, although a reduction from last year and back to previous years percentage it is an area that requires more work. The limited number of placements combined with placing older children with complex needs often means that a number of placements are required before a child can be found a suitable long term placement.

There is additional training with foster carers in order to equip them with the skills to meet the needs of children and in our matching meetings we identify some of the challenges we are aware of. The demand on placements especially foster placements has increasingly led to fewer offers for even younger children that previously would have automatically been placed in foster care. We are often having to use residential placements and then once there negotiating to find a foster placement. This alongside an emergency placement can then contribute to the figure of 3 placements.

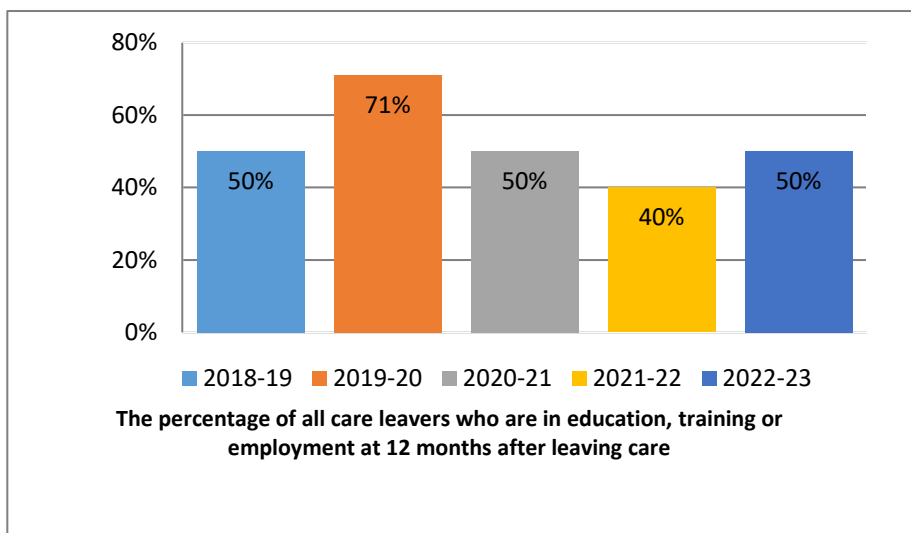
There is a need for more training of staff within residential placements as we have a range of providers and our experience, and the care of children does vary especially in how they respond to challenging behavior. We try to commission providers that are trauma-informed and use restorative approach however the care market is such that demand outstrips provision, so options are extremely limited when coming to identify placements.

The positive for our children is that the majority of Looked After Children have one placement and overall the vast majority of children remain settled in their placements, however the focus still needs to be on those that are unsettled for whatever reason.

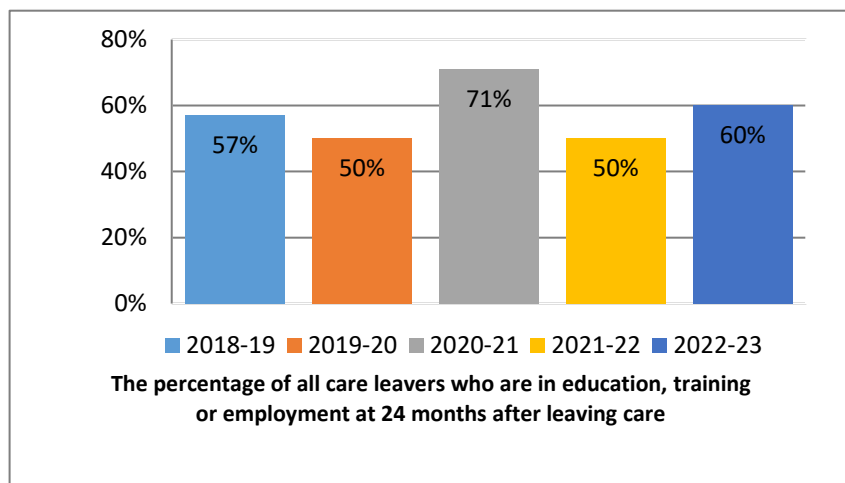
### Young People Leaving Care

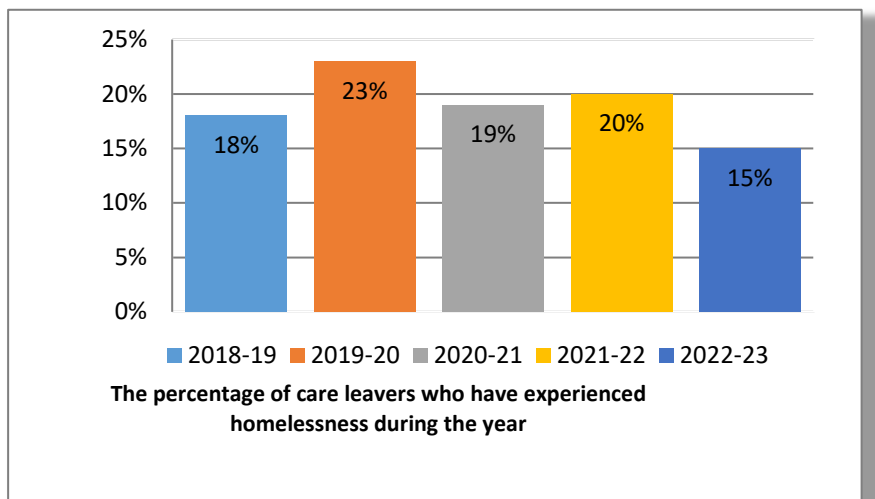
Leaving care is a term used to reference a group of children who are between 16 and 18 yrs. old and have previously been in care but are no longer legally “looked after” by the Local Authority. When children leave care, we still have a duty to support these people until the age of 21, or 25 if they are in full time education or have a disability.

Personal Advisors working with other professionals work hard to ensure that the children leaving care are in education, training or employment. It is important that these young people are able to obtain the skills to take them into adulthood. The challenges for these children are greater than those children from settled and supportive families, who equally face difficulties gaining employment or education.



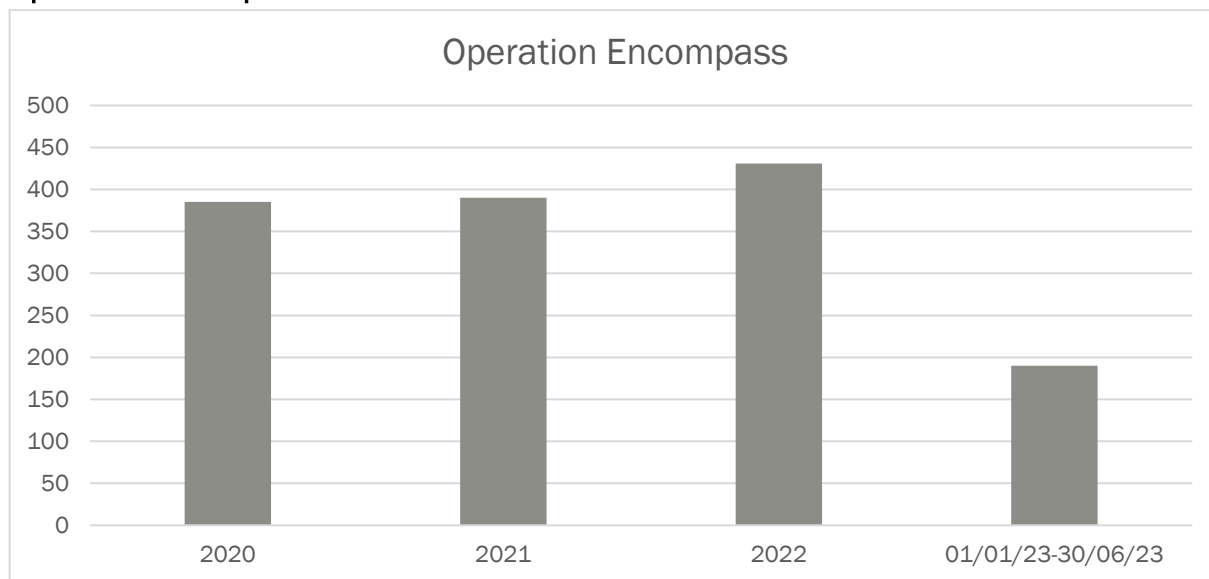
It is pleasing the percentage of young people that remain in education, training or employment. We fund practical support for these young people using the St David’s Day Grant.





Housing provision for all young people is a challenge however more so for our care leavers who often do not have settled supportive parents. There is ongoing work to improve provision for care leavers with our housing service and housing providers. The young people are supported when housing breaks down this can often be due to relationship breakdowns, unemployment and issues beyond the young person’s control. The initiative When I am Ready has provided additional support for young people reaching 18 and being able to live with their foster carers as lodgers until they are ready to transition to independence.

**Operation Encompass**



Operational Encompass became live in Ceredigion in November 2019. It has been working consistently well since its launch, with sharing of information on a daily basis with Schools (or as notifications are received). There have been a few notifications received from time to time regarding families from neighbouring authorities on the border of Ceredigion, however this information is also forwarded accordingly. Since lockdown, the sharing of information changed from telephone calls to emails, and the Information Sharing Protocol was then amended to accommodate this. It is noted however that the full email notification is not shared with schools in its entirety, each report is edited to include only the victim/alleged offender details. Children details, whether or not they were present, time/date and summary of the incident. Schools are fully briefed on the support services available for children who have been exposed to incidents either within their homes, or within their own relationships, these include Spectrum (Hafan Cymru) and West Wales Domestic Abuse Service. To ensure that Schools remain fully sighted on their pupil’s safety and wellbeing, the School’s Safeguarding Service continue to share notifications also throughout the School holidays, therefore is not limited to term time only. The figures within the above table reflect the number of referrals received, which show an annual increase since 2020.

### 3. How Are People Shaping Our Services?

Ceredigion County Council, Through Age Wellbeing Services have continued to work alongside all agencies and individuals to improve and transform our services with their input. We have engaged formally in partnership and through regional arrangements on an organisational level with:

- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Dyfed Powys Police
- Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board
- Regional Partnership Board
- National Probation Service
- Care Inspectorate Wales
- Audit Wales
- Public Service Ombudsman Wales
- Social Care Wales
- Association of Director of Social Services Cymru
- Mid and West Wales Adoption Service

On an individual level we have facilitated a number of consultations and reviews to help guide and contribute to our plans to improve services on:

- Domiciliary Care
- Day and Respite Opportunities
- Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection
- Child Protection Rapid Review
- Regional Dementia Strategy Action Plan
- Audit Wales Unscheduled Care Review

To ensure participation we have helped people to access consultations by:

- Meeting with people in person with Welsh and English speakers according to need
- Meeting with people virtually
- Speaking to people on the phone
- We facilitated a survey both online and on paper. All surveys were available in Welsh and English as well as in easy read format.
- People sent us extra information such as reports by email
- We put posters around the community at places people visit
- Community Connectors from the Council helped members of the public with the survey

We strongly believe that this approach has promoted voice and control for the Ceredigion community.

During 2022-23 we continued to deliver advocacy services to vulnerable groups and to analyse the outcomes from complaint and compliments about our services.

## Learning Disability Strategy 2018-2023 and Improvement Action Plan

Ceredigion is an active participant in the Regional Lives Improvement Group (RLIP). This group ordinarily alternates bi-monthly between a business meeting and a meeting led and chaired by the Dream Team. The Dream Team is a group of service users, supported by Pembrokeshire Peoples First, who actively support the regional group, particularly with use of Integrated Care Funding.

Services for Disabled Children, Prevention and Transition were inspected by CIW in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2019-2020. A CIW inspection was held in March 2023 which looked at every team in the Through Age Well-Being model.

### Progress on the Action plan

**Ensure that children and their families can be clear about what support they can access, how and when and where.**

- Some staff have case loads which reflect the TAW model, others are still very much in their adult/child role. Training is being looked at as to how we can support the workforce to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to be confident in working in a TAW way.
- The website for information on disabilities has been started however this is in the very early days it is hoped that this will be an easy guide for people to see where they can go for help support which will include links to the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector.

**Equip and support staff to complete and record good quality assessments and care plans that meet all statutory requirements including the child’s communication needs**

- Monthly staff supervision is in place to quality assure live cases.
- Use of 1-page profiles for children on their WCCIS record.

**Equip and support staff to identify, assess and provide support when required for carers in accordance with statutory requirements.**

- Staff identify carers and offer carers support needs assessment
- Staff training re carers assessments has been completed.
- Staff will record reason for refusal of carers assessment if this is the case.
- The team work closely with the Through age carers and community support team to sign post carers in the right direction.

**Establish the Disability Register in compliance with SSWBA requirements and use it to inform future service development and strategic commissioning.**

- Register is now live and on Ceredigion County Council web site for families to enter their data.
- This will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to identify and inform future service developments and demands.

**Improved service delivery and range of support services available for disabled children and their families in accordance with their needs.**

- There is an ongoing public consultation about short breaks and respite to see what the needs of the service users in Ceredigion are. It is hoped that this will be delivered by the end of the year.

- DASH have been provided with the contract to offer respite weekends to some of the young people identified as in need of this provision. Respite provision has been affected due to shortage in staffing.
- Ceredigion will spot purchase further respite opportunities from DASH once the contracted amount of weekends purchased has come to an end.
- We have employed 2 project workers in the team to enable them to undertake direct work and offer further hands-on support to individuals and families according to their assessed needs.

**The Local Authority and the Health Board work effectively together in the provision of support and review and develop existing commissioning arrangements for disabled children and their families.**

- Service specification is implemented.
- Weekly tracking meeting are held between Extended Support and health colleagues to discuss cases and identify the most suitable person to work with the young person.
- Close working relationships continue with health with plenty of challenge when needed.

**Children and young people can receive greater support for independence.**

- RIF funding has been agreed to develop the use of assistive technology
- Close working with education and Lifelong Learning and Skills to develop a more enhanced package of support for young people who wish to leave school education at the age of 16.

**Develop an effective quality assurance framework, underpinned by effective managerial oversight of its core functions and processes.**

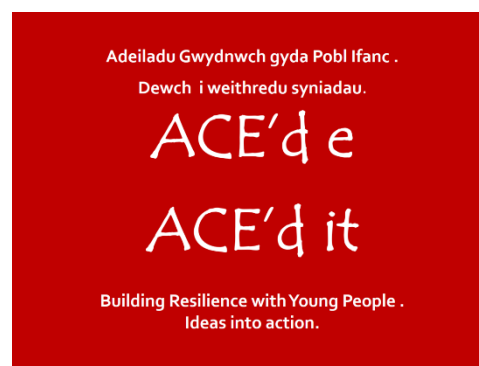
- SOS template and methods are being used in staff supervision.
- QA framework to be developed as an audit tool for managers to undertake random audit checks on cases.
- Managers have had training on supervision skills.
- IPC Programme of support for managers in Extended Support.

**People’s voice and choice is heard**

- Neurodivergent consultation meetings will be established in Ceredigion – the 1<sup>st</sup> is due to take place in September 2023. The aim of this is to ensure we have the voice of the people when looking at services being offered.
- A children’s group needs to be established to hear the voice of the child.

## Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that affect children. These could happen whilst growing up, being abused or living in a household affected by domestic violence, substance misuse, mental illness or criminal problems. Children who suffer ACEs are more likely to develop a range of chronic diseases and suffer with poorer mental well-being.





**Early Life Experience and The Brain**

**Childhood**

- First 2 years - baby's brain grows from 25% to 80% of adult size
- Critical restructuring continues through childhood for *empathy, trust, community*

**Health**

At Rest → Threat → Fight or Run Away → Exhausted → Recovery → At Rest

Fixed Allostatic load

↑↑↑↑ ACEs

**Chronic Stress from ACEs**

- Violence - over-develop 'life-preserving' brain
- **NEUTRAL CUES LOOK THREATENING**
- School - anxious, disengaged, poor learner

Tau et al, 2010; Meroy, Butchart, Bellis et al, 2014

In the year 2020-2021 training opportunities were offered to staff to ensure that we, in Ceredigion, were able to provide earlier interventions and help our professional care for and support children, young people and their families. This was a follow-on to the 1829 frontline staff who were made Ace aware the previous year following a training needs analysis across services.

Even though COVID-19 had a huge impact on training due to restrictions many staff were trained in ACEs to develop their understanding of the impact of trauma and the effects on

children and young people. Team Teach training (positive behaviour management) was done by many staff as was the STAR programme which covers domestic abuse and respectful relationships. Drawing and Talking therapy training was provided for 13 members of staff to be able to support children, young people and adults who may be suffering from trauma or poor mental health.

Self-Harm and Suicide Awareness was provided due to the nature of referrals being sent in for support for children and young people both in schools and the community.

Other courses included ‘Creative Counselling’, Trauma Recovery Model, (TRM was developed in a response to the complex needs of children and young people with multiple adverse childhood experiences).

During the year 2022-2023 Team Teach training was delivered to a number of schools both primary and secondary as they were responsible for arranging the training directly with Team Teach. Schools were asked to identify how many staff required Level 1 and Level 2 training and the number was in the region of 460 in March 2023.

A further 11 members of the Support and Prevention staff team received Trauma Recovery Model training in March continuing with the county’s commitment to ensuring that staff are ACE aware and are able to respond to the complex needs of those children and young people.

Planned training for May 2022 was provided by Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership (WRAP) for Support and Prevention staff along with the Deputy Head Teacher of one primary and one secondary school in the county as part of a pilot scheme with a view to rolling out WRAP training in the coming year. It will be up to the schools to arrange directly with Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership.

During the year 2022-2023, Team Teach training was delivered to a number of schools both primary and secondary as they were responsible for arranging the training directly with Team Teach. Schools were asked to identify how many staff required Level 1 and Level 2 training and the number was in the region of 460 in March 2023.

During the last six weeks of the summer term funding became available with the view of supporting the staff who required the training to be able to receive it. During that time a total of 46 people which included foster carers, teaching assistants, head teachers, deputy head teachers & care assistants from residential facilities to name but a few, through Support Pathways, Porth Cymorth Cynnar working alongside Schools Service.

The remainder of the funding has meant that a number of training dates have been put onto the internal booking system for school staff to be able to arrange convenient dates for themselves. This will be done directly with the Learning and Development team and Schools Service. The target is for as many schools as possible to ensure their staff have received this training to ensure a consistent approach across the authority.

Due to the initial cohort including those within senior management posts the feedback has been extremely positive and all school staff are now able to book directly on to the any of the multiple dates available themselves.

The Learning and Development team arranged dates for the ‘Introduction to Adverse Childhood Experiences using Virtual Reality’ training. The training is aimed at frontline staff working with members of the community that may have experienced ACE’s. The authority has 14 VR headsets and by the end of July 2023 a total of 41 members had attended the training. (The L&D team will roll out further dates in line with demand.)

In addition to these dates 3 members of the Support and Prevention team complete a day’s ‘Train the Trainer’ and have since trained their teams, Community Youth Work and Preventions team, Youth Work and Engagement team & Support and Attainment team. A further 3 members of the Family & Parenting Support team also attended the ‘Train the Trainer’ day and have since trained their teams.

Two trainers attended the ‘Trauma Informed Communities’ conference which was held in Aberystwyth University and put on a workshop using the headsets there. Head teachers within the county are due to receive the training during September along with Team Managers.

There are also e-learning modules available to all staff within Ceredigion and one of these is ‘Ask and Act’ which is specifically for professionals to help them spot the signs that a child or young person may be experiencing VAWDASV (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) , and how to ask & act on any disclosure and report accordingly. To the end of July 2023 190 staff had chosen to complete the e-learning module.

Since the start of this academic year there have been a total of 19 people trained in Team Teach de-escalation techniques. These include members of the Engagement and Attainment Team who work with vulnerable children and young people in schools and in the community, staff from some of the high schools and foster carers. The L&D team have arranged a number of dates for this training to be delivered during the next couple of months and it has been handed over to the schools and relevant departments for people to book themselves on to the course as and when they are able to. Support Pathways, within Porth Cymorth Cynnar, regularly liaise with Schools Service to ensure that the certificates and sent to the relevant people in a timely fashion. One of the largest schools in the county has arranged for twilight sessions for the training due to logistics of people having to drive across the county. Schools have, on the whole, given very positive feedback regarding the trainers.

Last term TAPPAS (Teams Around the Pupil, Parent, and Setting) meetings were piloted with 3 schools and the first meetings have been held this term. The purpose of these meetings is to identify pupils at an early age who are at risk of disengaging from their education, becoming NEET and requiring specific intervention. As a result of utilising the VAP information (Vulnerability Assessment Profile) a number of children and young people have been identified and have been discussed with professionals to ascertain what support could be offered earlier. These meetings will continue on a termly basis and are linked directly to the Welsh Government’s Youth Engagement & Progression Framework (YEPP).

## **National Safeguarding Week November 2022**

Ceredigion’s Operational Group collaborated with the Regional Safeguarding Board Business Unit to deliver a programme of activities to support National Safeguarding Week. Events and communications during the week were centered on particular themes.

A highlight of the week included a launch and celebration of a safeguarding training resource and video animation for professionals, which took place at Parc-y-Scarlets Stadium in Llanelli. The video animation had been created by children and young people from Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Powys and was formally launched by the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Rocio Cifuentes.

During the week, a variety of events including conferences and webinars that raised awareness and highlighted issues that affect children and adults at risk. This included a multi-agency conference on Domestic Abuse that was hosted by Dyfed Powys police, a webinar which revisited some of the themes associated with the Operation Jasmine Review into the neglect of older people in care homes and an event aimed specifically at schools and education staff, to promote the positive emotional health and well-being of children post pandemic. In other webinars, there was emphasis on learning from case reviews with an emphasis on safeguarding children living with Foster Carers, Adopters and Special Guardians, which identified why practitioners and managers must always “think family” and see both the adult and the child.

The regional program was also supported by national events taking place across the whole of Wales. This included the launch of new multi-agency training standards being led by Social Care Wales and an event was held, hosted by the National Independent Safeguarding Board in collaboration with the Violence Prevention Unit on shaping the future of Safeguarding in Wales. Several virtual seminars and workshops took place with attendance from Ceredigion officers throughout the week exploring these topics, complemented by a social media and website campaign.

## **Carer Support and Engagement**

During 2021-2022 as part of the transformation towards the Through Age and Wellbeing model, two small teams, the Carers Unit and Porth y Gymuned merged to become the Carers and Community Support Team. The work to support carers has developed and refined during 2022-23.

This year we produced a Carers and Community Support annual report. The report reflects the breadth of the work undertaken by the Carers and Community Support Team and it’s commissioned partner Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers along with the positive impact on those receiving services.

At the centre of the team’s work is the provision of high-quality information to users of the service and it is encouraging to see that the numbers of unpaid carers registered on the Carers Information Service and Young Carers Information Service has increased, meaning that more of the county’s unpaid carers have access to information such as the Carers Magazine.

The team has also been pro-active in engaging with Ceredigion communities organising events, drop ins with our Community Connectors and have supporting the Warm Spaces initiatives, again providing up to date information to those attending.

Here is a flavour for how the services has developed during 2022-23:

## PROVIDE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

### What did we do?

- Printed and distributed **4250** magazines across Ceredigion.
- Increased Carers Information Service membership by **14%** to **1888** carers.
- Welsh Government’s Charter for unpaid carers distributed to **100%** of the Carers Information Service.
- Increased the Young Carers Information Service membership by **144%** to **151** young carers.
- **3000** Information for Young Carer booklets distributed to schools across the county.
- Supported Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers to deliver information advice and guidance to **805** adult carers and provide **2016** hours of replacement care to give carers a break from their caring role.
- Worked with Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers to support **158** young carers to have a life outside their caring role.

### Public engagement across the county




2022-23 has been the first year, since the Covid pandemic, that the team have been able to arrange and attend public events. In total we have held and attended 96 events across Ceredigion.










- **49** community drop-in events
- **243** people attended community drop-in events
- **24** partner events attended
- **16** themed events organised by the team
- Participated in **7** tackling hardship groups

### Breakdown of Community Connector engagement 2022/23

- **607** enquiry referrals received by Community Connectors through CLIC

The top 3 reasons people contacted the Community Connectors were:

-  Loneliness and isolation (137)
-  Blue badge applications (108)
-  Cost of living related issues (68)

North Ceredigion – 177 referrals	Mid Ceredigion – 220 referrals	South Ceredigion – 210 referrals
 47  21  17	 53  38  21	 49  37  30

- Of the **137** clients who requested support due to loneliness and isolation **117** did not have any family members or friends who they could rely on for support.
- **78** unpaid carers contacted the Community Connectors for support
  - **49** of them were already members of the Carers Information Service before contacting the service and
  - **26** joined the Carers Information Service following contact with the Community Connectors.
- **13** unpaid carers were referred on to Porth Gofal for a carers needs assessment.

## DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE BREAKS FOR CARERS

### Ceredigion Carer Card

- Issued **189** new adult carer cards, an increase of **136%** from the previous year
- Issued **55** new young carer cards, a **500%** increase
- A total of **394** unpaid carers in Ceredigion are using a Ceredigion Carer Card to access free leisure facilities in the county.

### Ceredigion Carers Fund

Carers applied for up to £150 to improve their health and wellbeing.

- **£116,197** awarded
- **591** individual and family applications processed.
- **776** carers benefitted.

### What did carers spend the money on?

1. Short breaks and holidays (179)
2. Therapies and spa sessions (84)
3. Sport, fitness and outdoor activities (67)
4. Clothing (56)
5. Technology (52)
6. Gardening (42)

### Borth Multi Agency Team Multi Agency Team (MAT)

The Carers and Community Support Team have established good contacts and created strong working relationships amongst the MAT members who have been extremely approachable when further support has been required. We have got to know the surgery team well and from a learning perspective we now understand the roles of professionals such as Admiral Nurses, District Nurses, and other Allied Health Professionals. We also have a clearer idea of their involvement in a person’s care, where that person is in their journey both physically and mentally and it informs us in

our work to ensure the best positive outcomes. Any pre-existing barriers between our team and health colleagues have now been removed through participating in this project.

- **150** total number of patients seen by Borth and Tregaron MAT
- **19** patients directly referred to the Carers and Community Support Team
- **9 – 60+**, age range of patients supported

Patient outcomes:

- **58%** supported to join social groups in local area
- **21%** referred onto commissioned carer support service for in depth support
- **16%** supported to access mental health services
- **11%** were supported to access practical support at home from Red Cross and Age Cymru
- **11%** supported to access Citizens Advice Bureau surgeries.
- **5%** supported to access Country Cars for help with transport

### **Expanding social prescribing in Ceredigion**

In January 2023, following the widespread recognition of the Borth Multi Agency Team accomplishments, the GP surgery in Tregaron approached us with a proposal to establish a second, similar team. Currently, the team is in its initial phases, and we hold a positive outlook regarding the potential advantages it will offer to the patients and community of Tregaron throughout 2023 - 2024.

## **Ceredigion Family Support and Early Help Services**

Ceredigion Parenting and Family Support Team consists of – Team Around the Family (TAF), Parenting Support Workers, Family Group Meetings and Flying Start provide early help to the most vulnerable families & children in Ceredigion. These services work with the whole family network rather than focussing on one individual. Where a multi-agency approach is required, TAF can work with the family to identify and address the identified issues, using a strengths based approach to building family resilience.

### **Team Around the Family**

In 2022 - 23 Team Around Family (TAF) completed 192 JAFF assessments, of which 13 had indication of a child with a specific additional learning requirement or disability.

Annually, around 48% (approx. 94) of the requests are re referrals (often years later) when families are reaching a different life stage and considered TAF effective in the previous assistance and ask for our support again.

79 of all referrals received by TAF and Family Support were noted to have concerns with regards to Substance Misuse with a proportion of these also displaying other factors that would contribute to Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The number of requests being processed within five working days has increased to 57% and this reflects the planning and changes that have been implemented in the last year. Allocation meetings are now held on a weekly basis where referrals are discussed and allocated.

## Family Support

Our non-Flying Start Family Support provision consists of a small cohort of Family Worker who assist families by focussing on the provision of parenting support.

This year our Family Support workers received 358 referrals. Of the 358 referral received, 240 received parenting intervention within group settings or as bespoke one to one support packages. 6 families were signposted to more appropriate support and 22 declined support or the invite to attend a parenting programme.

In the year April 2022 – March 2023, approximately 20 evidence-based group parenting programmes were delivered either virtually or face to face throughout Ceredigion. We delivered programmes such as Family Links, Family Links for parents of children with a disability or additional need, Talking Teens, Incredible Years Baby and Incredible Years Toddler.

Other structured parenting programmes were delivered throughout the county including Language and Play, SPACE (Supporting Parents and Children Emotionally), Baby Massage, Blame it on the Brain, GroBrain Baby, GroBrain Toddler and Helping Me, Helping You.

54% of the families who received intervention reported an improvement in their well-being, resilience and parenting skills.

The majority of courses are now being delivered face-to-face-in locations around Ceredigion. Courses such as our ASC (Autism Spectrum Condition) Programme and Online Safety and Gaming Webinar continue to be delivered Virtually, due to their nature. The ASC Programme has weekly ‘guest speakers’ input. These professionals work to support families as part of the ASC assessment pathway and beyond, therefore, thus virtual delivery enables these professionals to take part. Virtual delivery also cuts travelling time, costs and enables any family who needs the support to attend no matter where they reside in Ceredigion. The ASC programme also provides a virtual peer support network for parents who are experiencing similar challenges with their children.

In Spring 2022, staff attended SPACE Training. It is a programme that support parents and children who have experienced trauma in their lives and gives strategies to support them. Since being trained to deliver the programme, four Space Programmes have been delivered in Ceredigion and parents’ feedback has been very positive. One comment stating, *“The course has helped me to off load and get advice from other members of the group and it was really helpful”*.

Family Workers continue to support families on a one-to-one basis and create a bespoke programme of parenting support to suit the needs of the individual family. There are plans in place to hold drop-in sessions in Penparcau Family Centre for families support them with their child’s challenging behaviours hardship, and create a safe space for parents to meet other parents in similar situations.

Family Workers continue to develop their knowledge and skills to support children, young people and their families through identifying gaps in training and thus receiving the relevant training.

Within the service we also have access to a Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator, whose role is to support families within the Early Intervention Hub. There are currently six open cases that are receiving support.

**Flying Start Provision**

The Flying Start Programme was launched in Wales in 2006/7 with the aim of making a decisive difference to the life chances of children under 4 in the areas in which it’s offered. The Flying Start scheme is postcode / LSOA based and delivers the following services to children under 4 and their families/ carers:

1. Quality part-time fully funded childcare (12.5 hours p/w) for 2-3 year olds
2. Enhanced Health Visiting
3. Access to parenting services
4. Speech, Language and Communication support.

During 22/23, we expanded the full Flying Start provision to the Penparc 1 LSOA (Llechryd area) and the take up of the offer has been positive and steady. During 22/23 permission was given by Welsh Government for us to expand to new postcodes in existing Flying Start LSOA’s in order that all postcodes in those LSOAs are Flying Start eligible. This has increased the number of children eligible for Flying Start services by 117.

Planning for additional expansion of the childcare element of Flying Start was also progressed during the year with new LSOAs being brought into this aspect of the programme in 23/24.

Flying start services were delivered from the Integrated Children’s Centres in Aberystwyth and Cardigan and were the bases for multi-agency staff.

**Maternity and Early Years Integration pathfinder pilot**

Our Maternity and Early Years Integration pathfinder pilot progressed well during 2022-2023 with provision in 5 areas of the county, linked in the main to third sector family centres. This is a place based approach targeted at supporting 0-7 year olds and their families. The support is similar to that provided by Flying Start, however, there is no funded childcare element. The approach brings together professionals from a variety of disciplines to form virtual teams to support families in their localities.

As part of the pathfinder pilot programme The West Wales Maternity and Early Years Strategy was written and consulted upon in the Hywel Dda region. The strategy which seeks to promote integration will be launched in 23/24.

**Penparcau Family Centre**

Penparcau Family Centre has been well utilised in 22/23. Activities included 6 after school activity sessions spread out over 2 months for children aged between 4 and 11 (primary school age). These activities were arranged following feedback received from families stating that they would like activities arranged for their older children. The sessions were well attended (on average 8 families attended). We also arranged Festive Craft Sessions that were open for parents to attend, these took place during December. They were unstructured sessions, cooking and craft activities were available if parents wanted to take part, or they could attend as a way of meeting other parents. These were also well attended and feedback was very positive.



Many parenting programmes took place in the Family Centre, for parents of children between the ages 0 to teenagers. These included Stori a Sbri, Family Links Nurture Programme and Additional Needs or Disability Family Links, Blame it on the Brain, Talking Teens and Space.

We have also supported partner organisation within the local authority and third sector by facilitating meetings in the Family Centre. These organisations included LAC Contact Team, Education Tutoring Services, Family Group Meetings and West Wales Domestic Abuse Service.

## Ceredigion Support and Prevention Services

The Support and Prevention Service is made up of multi-disciplined teams, with the overall aim of providing child, youth, and family-led approaches to enable children, young people, families, and wider communities to be empowered, to achieve, to develop personally, emotionally, socially and be the best that they can be. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Signs of Safety underpin everything that we do. Our teams provide universal and focused support that include:

- **Youth Work and Engagement;** Youth work in schools, education progression, accredited learning, and participation

School based Youth Workers engage with young people aged 11 – 18 both in universal and focussed contexts. Youth Workers strive to build and maintain meaningful relationships with all school pupils; that include referred pupils who are deemed at risk of disengagement from mainstream education, due to one or a host of reasons.

Youth Workers form relationships based on voluntary engagement. Through participation with individuals, Youth Workers can design a tailored plan that offer support in the form of personal, social, emotional, and behavioural needs of the individual. This can be delivered both within and outside the school environment and be both targeted and universal.

- **Support and Attainment;** Primary / secondary mentoring, transition, emotional wellbeing, nurture, and outreach

The Children and Young People’s Skills (CYP) Mentors support children and young people who may show challenging behaviour because of their social and emotional experiences. Mentors provide support for children and young people in Primary and Secondary Schools, and other education settings.

Mentors promote a holistic and strengths-based approach to better understand the deeper reasons as to why children are finding their current environment challenging in both focussed one-to-one and small group-based settings. This is to help manage their emotions, channelling their energy positively by focussing on attainment, both educationally and personally.

- **Community Youth Work and Prevention;** 16-24 support, community outreach, youth centres, focussed and universal provisions

Our Community Youth Work and Prevention team provide targeted and universal interventions with the aim of tackling and alleviating potential risk factors or underlying issues such as family, social, individual, educational, or mental and emotional health related issues, that may arise that put

them at an increased risk of offending and re-offending, but also preventing them from needing further statutory intervention such as professional mental health services, further medical intervention and even housing support as an example.

Provisions range from outreach, mobile and detached activities, youth centres and clubs, and collaborative targeted programmes and projects.

- **Support Pathways;** Through-age interventions, allocations, screening, quality assurance, data and performance analysis, resource support

The Support Pathways team is the gateway for all referrals to Porth Cymorth Cynnar and its services whether they are received from Clic or triaged by Porth Gofal. The team provides direct support to each service within Porth Cymorth Cynnar to identify, allocate, monitor, and evaluate interventions or support.

The team supports the ‘step up and step down’ protocols by working with Porth Cynnal and Porth Gofal to ensure timely and effective support for children/young people, adults and for families/carers.

The team also helps oversee the data and quality assurance processes of Porth Cymorth Cynnar services, ensuring that we can meet the needs of citizens as efficiently and effectively as possible.

#### Service snapshot 2022/23:

- **627** children and young people were open to support,
- An average of **150** pupils received weekly support via school-based youth worker,
- Skills’ Mentors supported an average of **160** pupils each week,
- **23** primary-aged pupils received weekly 1:1 support with a further **20** accessing weekly community-based nurture programmes,
- **154** interventions closed to Mentor support due to positive outcome ie., re-integration, signposting,
- **170** pupils identified as at risk of disengagement/ exclusion engaged in weekly targeted projects such as Pathways, Phoenix Course, Tonic Surf etc.
- **62** pupils have been escalated to PCC Strategic Panel for Step-up/ statutory service escalation due to complexity
- **32** vulnerable pupils at risk of statutory intervention were monitored weekly
- An average **80** children and young people accessed weekly universal and extra-curricular activities (lunch and after-school clubs), youth clubs and community-based programmes)
- **273** children and young people accessed holiday activity programmes
- **185** young people aged 16-25 supported through inspire or 1:1 support from community youth work team due to factors affecting their route into education, employment, and training (EET) such as substance misuse, mental health, and youth homelessness. **87** organized workshops have been delivered with **68** young people successfully entering ETE with **46** young people reporting an increase in self-efficacy and confidence. Y Fan project promoted positive engagement with rural/hard to reach areas of the service.
- **1** additional members of staff have joined the service with a **97%** retention rate.
- **8** staff members were supported to complete the level 3 youth work qualification, **4** staff members gained support for higher level qualifications within the service,
- Signs of Safety practice implemented in referrals, allocations, and monitoring processes.

## Care Inspectorate Wales Activity

In January 2023 notification was received from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) that a Performance Evaluation Inspection would take place.

An intense evaluation of performance across Adult and Children’s Service from 27 February 2023 to 10 March 2023 took place.

Verbal feedback was provided on 16 March 2023 and the draft written report was received on 6 April 2023. A formal response to the draft report was made by the Local Authority on 21 April 2023. There were no matters that required significant amendment contained in the report as the content reflected closely the verbal feedback.

An Action Plan has now been formulated to respond to the recommended improvements outlined by CIW in the report and to build on the strengths highlighted. The overwhelming majority of the actions were already in progress as the matters identified by CIW were being addressed before the commencement of the inspection.

The Action Plan has been presented to the Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

The CIW report was published on 18 May 2023.

This was the first thematic inspection since the implementation of the Through Age Wellbeing model implementation. The model is innovative and designed to respond to wellbeing to prevent escalation of needs across all life stages.

The inspection explored four domains and made the following observations:

### People – Voice and Control

‘For many people their voices are heard’.

‘People are able to communicate in their preferred language’

### Well-being

‘Safeguarding children and young people is prioritised across the Through Age Wellbeing Model.

### Prevention

‘Senior managers fully understand access to early intervention and prevention is key to maintaining well-being’.

### Partnership and Integration

‘Effective integration and collaboration between professionals is evident across teams’

We are very pleased to have the Through Age Wellbeing model of service delivery recognised as effective by our regulator.

## Complaints and Compliments

### Compliments

A total of **217 compliments** were received from service-users and/or their representatives during this reporting period. This is more than double the number of compliments that were recorded for Social Services during 2021-2022 (104 in total). Some examples of the compliments received are provided below.

Service Area	Compliments received
Porth Cynnal	78
Porth Gofal	139
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>

“As ever, I am so very grateful for the excellent way in which you have helped us and continue to provide support. Your efficiency is outstanding and your advice on all matters is friendly, thorough, and very reassuring to me.”  
– *Mental Health / Wellbeing*

“(Service user) was grateful for the afternoon and enjoyed meeting us all, knowing that the support was there should she need it.” – *Early Intervention*

“Thank you / Diolch from the bottom of our hearts for all of the care and love you showed and gave to X. He was so happy and loved all of you, you gave him the best years of his life.” – *Porth Gofal*

“Thank you for all your help and support during the last few months, my grandmother and the whole family appreciated it.” – *Direct Services*

“The holistic manner that you work with, is outstanding and I so wish that others who are educating themselves in order to work in social care could have some of your insight in how things should be done and be allowed the time and resources to do so. Once again you are an absolutely fantastic social worker and there should be more like you.” – *Mental Wellbeing*

“We are very pleased with the quick response from the OT Service. They were clear in their communication, kept us updated throughout, and have provided valuable support to enable my mum, who is 93, to be much safer and more confident in her own home. This has been hugely beneficial to myself and the rest of the family, as we have been very worried about her. We are very thankful for the help and support.” – *Occupational Therapy Service*

“Thank you for putting forward various options and many thanks for your kind assistance.” – *Integrated Triage & Assessment Service*

## **Complaints Report**

### **Introduction**

This report will refer specifically to all **Social Services compliments and complaints** received during 2022 – 2023. This data will also be included as part of the Council’s Annual Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) Report for 2022 – 2023, on a corporate level, which will be published later in the year.

The Council has fully implemented the requirements outlined in Welsh Government’s statutory **Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014** and the **Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014**. These regulations underpin the Council’s own **Social Services Complaints Policy**, which is due to be reviewed during the forthcoming year. The current Policy was approved by the Council’s Cabinet committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, and predominantly sets out the responsibilities placed upon staff within **Porth Cynnal** and **Porth Gofal** Services, as well as the corporate **Complaints and FOI Team**. This promotes accountability and ensures that effective arrangements are in place to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity, and if this is not possible, to ensure complaints are managed in accordance with the Council’s statutory obligations.

It is vital that the Social Services complaints process operates in accordance with the principles of the **Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014**, as well as ensuring that the process is accessible to all, and is fair and transparent.

### **Social Services Complaints Activity**

Every effort is made to resolve complaints pro-actively and in many cases this is successful. In such instances the contact will be recorded as a concern. However, in some cases this is not possible, particularly when the issues being raised are of a serious or complex nature. These instances will be managed in accordance with the afore-mentioned complaints policy and procedures.

The Social Services complaints procedure consists of **two stages**, and Corporate Managers within Social Services (i.e. Porth Cynnal and Porth Gofal) are responsible for managing complaints against their respective service-areas, ensuring that the appropriate level of decision-making and accountability is in place. The Corporate Managers strive to achieve meaningful outcomes as a consequence of complaints and, where necessary, measures will be implemented to ensure lessons are learned and any service improvements are prioritised. The Complaints and FOI Team is independent from Social Services, managed within the Policy, Performance & Public Protection Service, and is responsible for overseeing the administration of the complaints process.

A total of **60 ‘concerns’** were received within the reporting period, with the majority having been resolved satisfactorily without requiring escalation under the formal complaints procedure. However, this report will focus on the **complaints** that were investigated under stages 1 and 2 during the course of the reporting year.

For information, Stage 1 is the only opportunity that is available for Corporate Managers to investigate and/or resolve a complaint. The statutory regulations stipulate that an Independent

Investigating Officer (IIO) must be appointed to conduct investigations at Stage 2 and, in cases involving children, an Independent Person (IP) is also commissioned to oversee the investigation process. Once the Council’s own complaints process has been exhausted, complainants have the right to refer their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) if they remain dissatisfied.

**Total number of complaints received in 2022 – 2023**

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Porth Cynnal	19	6	25
Porth Gofal	12	1	13
	<b>31</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>38</b>

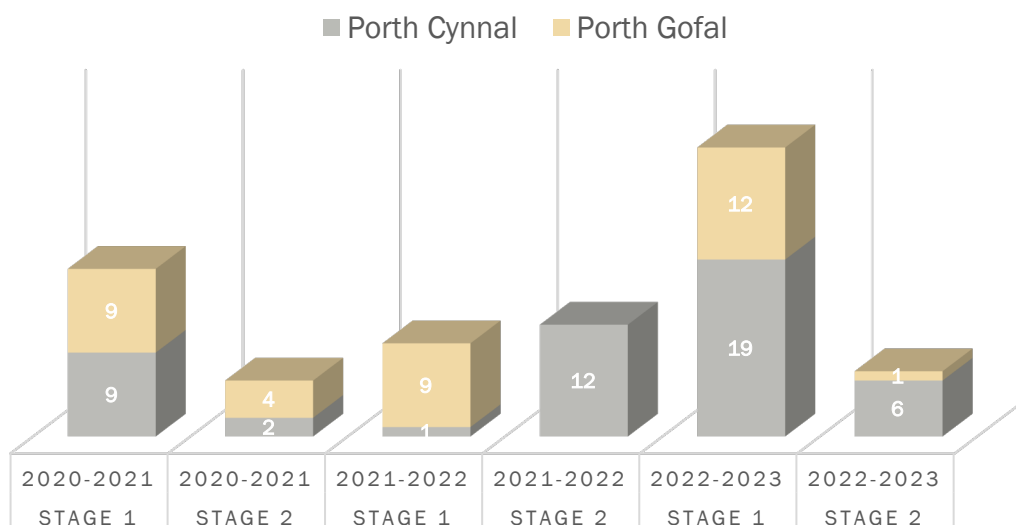
A total of **38 complaints** were received in relation to Social Services in 2022–2023, which demonstrates an increase when comparing these figures to the previous reporting period. During 2021–2022 there were **22** complaints in total which were addressed under the Social Services complaints policy.

Senior staff in Porth Gofal and Porth Cynnal continue to work closely with the Complaints and FOI Team by adopting an early-resolution approach when appropriate and this is proving to be an effective strategy. From the 60 concerns managed pro-actively, only eleven cases subsequently went on to be investigated at Stages 1 and/or 2; this equates to **82% of all concerns having been resolved satisfactorily** in the first instance.

**Comparative data**

Comparative data is provided below with regard to complaints received by Porth Cynnal and Porth Gofal, for the years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 and the current reporting period – 2022-2023.

**SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS**



**Complaint Outcomes by Service**

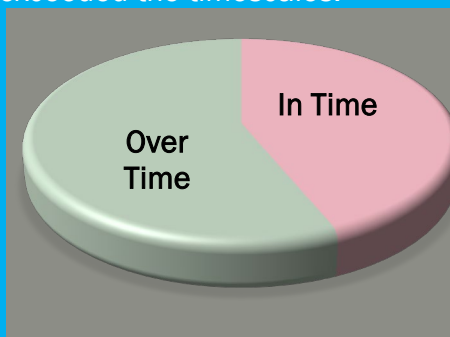
A breakdown of the number of complaints and their outcomes is provided below, in accordance with the relevant service areas:

Porth Cynnal	Not Upheld	Upheld	Ongoing / Suspended / Discontinued
Planned Care (Adults) (3)		1	2
Planned Care (Children) (6)	2	2	2
Safeguarding (Adults) (4)	1		3
Safeguarding (Children) (4)	1		3
Extended Support (Adults) (6)	1		5
Mental Wellbeing (Adults) (2)	2		
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>

Porth Gofal	Not Upheld	Upheld	Ongoing / Suspended / Discontinued
Integrated Triage & Assessment (Adults) (6)	2	1	2
Integrated Triage & Assessment (Children) (3)	1	2	
Targeted Intervention Service (3)			3
Direct Services (1)		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

**Stage 1 Timescales**

Of the 31 complaints which were recorded at Stage 1, only 16 were concluded (i.e. not suspended, withdrawn or discontinued – this will be explained in more detail in the analysis). 7 of these complaints were closed within the prescribed timescales. The remaining 9 exceeded the timescales.



**Stage 2 Timescales**

Only 5 of the 7 complaints that were recorded at Stage 2, progressed to the independent investigation stage, because two complainants decided to withdraw their complaints. All five of the complaints that were investigated took longer than prescribed timescale of 25-working-days. However, the statutory requirements to obtain written approval from the Director of Social Services was fully complied with, and responses were issued at the earliest opportunity following completion of the investigation.

## **Analysis and Conclusions**

Firstly, closer analysis of the **60 cases** that were initially recorded as ‘concerns’ revealed that **only 11** of these **subsequently escalated to the formal complaints stage**. This predominantly supports the benefits associated with taking a ‘**pro-active resolution**’ approach, where possible. The remaining **49** concerns (82%) were resolved successfully without further action required.

There has clearly been an **increase** in the number of complaints received in relation to Social Services during 2022-2023. Having received **31 Stage 1** complaints in the last year, this is the highest level since 2015-2016, when 32 Stage 1 complaints were received in a single year. There were **fewer Stage 2 investigations** conducted during this reporting period and in terms of outcomes, the ratio of upheld to not upheld complaints was fairly balanced.

However, the most striking factor within this year’s report is that a total of **20 complaints** were not concluded. There are a variety of reasons behind these, which will be explained below.

A ‘complaint’ is usually recorded at the point of receipt when it is deemed to meet the criteria for instigating the policy immediately: i.e. it is not a ‘first time request for a service’ or the issues being raised are felt to be sufficiently serious that intervention at Corporate Manager level is necessary.

There are, however, other factors that need to be considered once a complaint is formally recorded, but before the process can actively commence:

- ensuring appropriate consent is obtained from the service-user (when others raise concerns on their behalf).
- consideration as to whether there are any ‘concurrent investigations’ underway (i.e. if there are any court proceedings or safeguarding investigations that could be compromised by a complaint investigation)
- ascertaining whether the complaints process can be followed at all (e.g. instances whereby the complainant is seeking to overturn a decision made by a Court)

In these instances, the complaint may not be able to progress until the necessary checks are completed and this can occasionally take some time, whilst engagement between the Service and the complainant ensues.

Analysis of the **20 complaints** that were not concluded during the reporting period showed that:

- **3 complaints** were **resolved immediately** following the intervention of the Corporate Manager for the relevant Service.
- Failure to supply the service-user’s **consent** accounted for the discontinuation of **4 complaints**.
- In **5 cases**, the complainant **failed to engage** with the complaints process and the cases were subsequently closed.
- **4 complaints** were **ongoing or escalated to Stage 2** before completion of the Stage 1 complaint.
- **3 cases** were actively **withdrawn** by the complainant’s.
- **1 complaint** was unable to be progressed due to **other investigations** taking priority.

Whilst this is an unprecedented number of complaints that were not concluded within the reporting year, the cases were managed in accordance with the statutory policies and procedures and, in the



interests of openness and transparency these complaints were not removed from the system. Furthermore, all complaints were shared with the relevant service areas and the Corporate Managers responsible in each case sought to ensure that there were no underlying issues that required further intervention or investigation.

Response times at both stages of the complaints process requires improvement, though only one case exceeded the six-month timeframe. Complaints that take longer than the prescribed timescale to resolve is occasionally unavoidable, and the overarching priority is to ensure that complaints are investigated thoroughly, and careful consideration is given to the findings and recommendations which emerge from such investigations.

Porth Cynnal received a higher number of complaints which is largely due to the nature of the services they deliver, and their complexity.

Of the **18 complaints** that were fully investigated, 8 were upheld. Although this is an increase compared with the figures analysed during 2021-2022 (4 complaints upheld), this represents 44% of all complaints investigated, which is still an improvement on the statistics for 2020-2021, whereby 58% were upheld. Further, whilst almost half of all complaints investigated were upheld, acknowledgement must also be given to the number of concerns that were successfully resolved, and the complaints that were withdrawn earlier in the process because of the work undertaken by services to remedy the issues.

### **Themes and Trends**

**Poor communication** remains a consistent factor in most complaints, and, in many cases, these are addressed promptly at service-level to prevent unnecessary escalation. This was evidently the case in respect of the 49 concerns resolved pro-actively, which far exceeds the number of cases that were subsequently investigated under the formal complaints process.

### **Timescales**

As identified in previous reporting periods, improvements need to be made with regard to response times, particularly at Stage 1 of the complaints process. There is a requirement at Stage 1 to offer a ‘discussion’ between the complainant and the relevant Corporate Manager. Therefore, securing the availability of managers remains a challenge, as well as attempting to then co-ordinate their availability with that of the complainant. This will continue to be monitored in future reporting periods.

It has also become increasingly evident during the course of the reporting period that poor complaints handling has become a prominent feature in the failure to process cases expediently. Extensive efforts are being made to ensure better communication between Social Services and the Complaints and FOI Team, but some challenges have arisen as a consequence of increased complaints and FOI activity on a corporate level, as well as in the case of Social Services. This remains an ongoing concern which has been escalated as necessary.

### **Learning Lessons**

In all cases whereby a complaint is deemed to be upheld (either in its entirety or specific elements) it is crucial that recommendations are put in place to learn lessons and prevent any recurrence in the future. Examples of some lessons learned from complaints received during 2022–2023 are summarised below:

- *It was agreed that the Service would commence a weekly log of all communication, which will be shared with the complainant and minutes of meetings will be shared promptly with the relevant parties. This should limit anxiety levels due to lack of communication and delays in receiving documentation from the service.*
- *Relevant staff will ensure that discussions are held with interested parties in advance of formal meetings, so that everybody is aware of the format of the meeting and how they are expected to contribute to this. These discussions will be recorded, and a formal record will be given to all attendees as part of the process. In addition, staff were reminded about the importance of making a brief log of any telephone conversations, in accordance with relevant Council policies.*
- *Completion of assessments / reviews and carer’s assessments to be considered upon receipt of complaints, to ensure that level of care provision adequately meets the needs of the individual.*

### **Complaints referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)**

During 2022–2023 the Council received **eleven** new contacts from the office of the PSOW relating to Social Services complaints. These related to cases within the following services:

- Porth Cynnal (7)
- Porth Gofal (4)

There were a greater number of referrals received from the Ombudsman during 2022-2023, with only 9 having been received in 2021-2022.

Whilst no complaints referred to the PSOW resulted in a formal investigation, there were **eight complaints** that required intervention by the Ombudsman. These complaints were resolved by way of *‘Early Resolution / Voluntary Settlement agreements’* reached with the Ombudsman’s office, the details of which are provided in the table overleaf.

### Cases requiring Ombudsman intervention by way of Early Resolution Agreements

Service(s) & Reference	Summary of Complaint	Agreed Actions
<p>Porth Cynnal; Extended Support and Complaint Handling</p> <p>Case ref: 202200812</p>	<p>Complaint had previously been investigated independently under Stage 2; however, the complainant remained dissatisfied with the outcome.</p> <p>The complainant’s main concerns were that the Service failed to undertake appropriate and necessary assessments to determine her relative’s degree of learning disabilities, and that it failed to consider vital information provided during a telephone consultation.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman advised that the Council should respond to the additional queries raised by the complainant, following the independent investigation at Stage 2.</p>
<p>Porth Cynnal; Safeguarding and Complaint Handling</p> <p>Case Ref: 202201388</p>	<p>Complaint had previously been investigated independently under Stage 2. This process was unnecessarily protracted, and clarification was sought by the complainant regarding information that was included within the independent investigation report.</p> <p>In particular, the complainant wished to receive further information regarding the case law that was referred to, which the Social Worker had based their decision upon when providing care to the complainant’s relative.</p>	<p>The Council agreed to provide additional information surrounding the case law that had been considered by the Social Worker at the time that decisions were made surrounding care provision.</p> <p>In addition, an earlier agreement to award a ‘Time and Trouble’ payment due to the lengthy complaints process, had been overlooked at the point that the formal response was issued. Therefore the Council honoured its earlier decision in this regard, and acknowledged the additional inconvenience caused by having to approach the Ombudsman to obtain the information requested.</p>
<p>Porth Cynnal; Extended Support</p> <p>Case Ref: 202200853</p>	<p>Complaint that the Council had failed to properly implement the terms of an Early Resolution agreement undertaken in September 2020. This included the Council’s failure to fully complete a Carer’s Assessment, and for the continuing uncertainty surrounding the terms and arrangements of Respite Care. The Complainant was also aggrieved that the Council appeared to take an inconsistent approach to Direct Payment uplift.</p>	<p>The Council agreed to follow up on the arrangements previously agreed in relation to conducting a Carer’s Assessment. An Independent Social Worker was commissioned to complete this task.</p> <p>The Council also agreed to write to the complainant within six weeks to provide a full explanation regarding the Council’s approach in respect of providing respite care.</p>

<p>Porth Gofal; Integrated Triage &amp; Assessment and Complaint Handling</p> <p>Case Ref: 202205115</p>	<p>Complaint regarding the Council’s failure to take seriously the concerns raised by the service-user about the care provider that was commissioned to assist her. The Complainant made a complaint directly to the care provider, but their response was incomplete and inaccurate.</p> <p>The Council declined to investigate the complaint because it was satisfied with the care provider’s response and that no further action was needed. However, the Ombudsman disagreed – ruling that the Council did not fulfil its duty to accept the complaint in line with the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations.</p>	<p>The Council agreed to contact the complainant to obtain her complaint and issue a response which was consistent with the statutory complaints procedure.</p>
<p>Porth Cynnal; Extended Support and Complaint Handling</p> <p>Case Ref: 202206613</p>	<p>Complainant contacted the Ombudsman because the Council had failed to investigate the complaints she had submitted in February 2022.</p>	<p>The Council accepted it had failed to investigate the complaints raised and agreed to commence Stage 1 of the complaints process immediately. An apology was also given for this failure in complaints handling and a redress payment was agreed in acknowledgement of the Time and Trouble the complaint went to in order to have her complaint considered.</p>
<p>Porth Gofal; Integrated Triage &amp; Assessment Service &amp; Complaint Handling</p> <p>Case Ref: 202202005</p>	<p>Complaint that the Council had failed to provide regular and meaningful updates regarding her complaint.</p>	<p>The Council agreed to issue a formal apology and an explanation for the delays she experienced during her complaint. It was also agreed that the formal response would be issued within four weeks of the Ombudsman’s decision, and a payment of £100 would be given in recognition of the time and trouble the complainant went to in making her complaint to the Ombudsman.</p>
<p>Porth Cynnal; Extended Support and Complaint Handling</p> <p>Case Ref: 202107463</p>	<p>Following an independent investigation at Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaint Procedure, the complainant contacted the Ombudsman because the Council had failed to implement the recommendations made by the Independent Investigating Officer.</p> <p>In addition, the Council had failed to inform him that a full safeguarding investigation would not be taking place; though the issues identified during the complaint were considered during a Professional Concerns Meeting, under the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures.</p>	<p>By way of a Voluntary Settlement Agreement, the Ombudsman proposed that the Council and the Support Service that was involved in the original complaint, should meet with the complainant and his son (the service-user) formally to explain the safeguarding decision and to discuss any additional measures that would facilitate future learning.</p> <p>It was also agreed that a direct apology was warranted for the lack of communication following the conclusion of the Stage 2 investigation. The Council agreed with this proposal</p>

		and the necessary actions were undertaken.
<p>Porth Cynnal: Safeguarding Service and Complaint Handling</p> <p>Case Ref: 202107158</p>	<p>Complaint about the Council’s failure to close down a safeguarding case promptly, which had repercussions on the complainant’s ability to resume specific working responsibilities. The Complainant also stated that her complaint was not appropriately addressed once she had brought these matters to the Council’s attention.</p>	<p>The Council accepted full responsibility for the delays the complainant experienced in respect of the safeguarding case, and that this was further compounded by the failure to manage her complaint effectively. Further, the Council accepted it had not fully appreciated the impact that these matters had on the complainant.</p> <p>The Council agreed to provide a corporate apology for the maladministration identified by the Ombudsman and provide financial redress in the sum of £725 in recognition of the injustice that prevented her from returning to her duties within a youth organisation, and for the poor complaints handling – including the time and trouble invested by her, having to pursue her complaint.</p>

## 4. Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help

The six quality standards used to measure the Local Authority’s performance against the wellbeing outcomes are:

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

Throughout 2022-23 we have worked to maintain, sustain and develop in each of the Through Age Wellbeing services:

### Porth Cymorth Cynnar

- Wellbeing Centres’ - facilities that enhance the core physical activity and leisure offer with meeting, consultation, and treatment spaces. The Wellbeing Centre will incorporate services that consider and improve the physical, social emotional and mental aspects of an individual’s wellbeing and contribute to them enabling individuals to achieve their full potential.
- Further development and delivery of blended universal and focussed through-age community activities and interventions to enable empowerment, resilience, and independence.
- Worked collaboratively with key stakeholders and voluntary sector organisations to develop a range of services to meet the evolving needs within our communities to support and enable individuals and families in Ceredigion to cope well with the challenges and pressures that they may face.

### Porth Gofal:

- Direct Payments support service has been developed in house and is up and running efficiently
- Domiciliary Care – has been strengthened to recruit and retain new providers to work across Ceredigion
- Fostering – the service is working closely with Foster Wales to support recruitment, retention and training of foster carers
- Day Services Opportunities in dependent review has taken place – the action plan for implementation will be compiled shortly

**Porth Cynnal:**

- Develop preventative and recovery approaches across Porth Cynnal Services and the TAW model and with partner agencies focusing on mental wellbeing, domestic abuse, substance misuse
- Safe Looked After Children Reduction have been implemented
- Safe accommodation for children and local parent and baby accommodation provision is close to completion
- Embed Signs of Safety practice
- Revision to the structure in Mental Wellbeing, Substance Misuse and Safeguarding Quality Assurance has taken place to enhance efficiency.

**Workforce Challenges**

There has been a continued focus on recruitment with several campaigns both internally but also supporting external providers with campaigns.

The challenges of recruiting and retaining key staff specifically Social Workers and Occupational Therapists has been significant throughout 2022 -2023, however it is acknowledged that this is a national recruitment and retention issue and opportunities around regional working have been explored. The Council has a strategy for meeting this challenge including the following approaches:

- Increase number of Social Work traineeships
- Offering qualification opportunities and learning pathways for the current staff
- student placements
- Reviewing job roles and evaluations
- Refreshing advertising - intensive and new campaigns to join Ceredigion
- Use of agency staff where required alongside Ceredigion staff

**Supporting Staff Wellbeing**

We are committed to providing responsive, accessible, and inclusive support to staff:

- Employee Health & Wellbeing Officer
- Employee Assistance Package
- Occupational Health
- Responsive approach including, wellbeing surveys/questionnaires, discussions with managers & teams, streamlined appraisal process, drop in sessions
- Organization wide activity and support including, information on intranet, Wellbeing Wednesdays, Activities, Wellbeing Webinars, Shielding staff
- Dedicated health and wellbeing webinars, regular meetings with Corporate Manager/Registered Managers
- Individual staff support within care homes
- Strengthened the supervision policy

## Ceredigion Local Authority Housing Services

Under Homelessness interventions, in 2022-23, 708 cases were opened where there had been approaches due to households believing to be at risk of homelessness or presenting as homeless on the day. This is slightly lower than the figure recorded for 2021/22 (737).

Of the 708 cases opened 32.6% (231) were provided with advice and assistance and aided to prevent homelessness. This represents a decrease in the number of cases provided with advice and assistance in comparison to 2021/22. However, the number of cases which progressed to full assessment under s62 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 was higher than in 2021/22 i.e. 477 cases.

As a result of these assessments, 207 cases were successfully prevented and/or relieved. The total number of prevention outcomes recorded for 2022/23 was higher in comparison to the number of outcomes recorded for 2021/22 i.e. 180 and 142 outcomes respectively. The total number of relief outcomes in 2022/23 was similar to the figure recorded for 2021/22.

The number of clients assisted through financial means including signposting remains steady. There are however many cases where paying off arrears or aiding person to additional benefits is not able to prevent homelessness. This is because there are many non-financial reasons for homelessness, as seen in the table below with the ‘Loss of accommodation’ including no fault evictions being the main reason for approach (cases assessed under s62 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014). Therefore, the majority of successful prevention outcomes was achieved through the provision of alternative accommodation.

Parent, friend or other relative no longer willing or able to accommodate	21%
Breakdown of relationship with partner	Violent 5% Non-violent 10%
Violence for other reasons	4%
Loss of accommodation, e.g., Landlord served notice	33%
Rent arrears	3%
Current property unaffordable	0.6%
Current property unsuitable (e.g., overcrowding/ medical reasons)	6%
Prison release	5%
In institution/care (e.g. hospital discharge)	2%
Other, inc homeless in emergency, return from abroad, sleeping rough	8%

The Housing Options services continue to work in line with the ‘No one left out’ approach following guidance from Welsh Government, which will be enacted in law in the near future, effectively removing ‘priority need’. Therefore, there are no longer any single persons without vulnerabilities turned away at the interim accommodation duty and full duty stage. This means that Housing Options Service has been experiencing continued high demands for temporary accommodation and the number of households recorded as residing in temporary accommodation at the end of the month fluctuated between 75 and 84 households in 2022/23, with single person households accounting for the highest proportion of households placed in temporary accommodation (63% as at 31/03/2023).

For the year 2022-23 under the adaptations service, 86 Disabled Facilities Grants, 20 Minor Repairs, 61 Safe, Warm and Secure Grants and 650 Rapid Response Adaptions have been delivered.



The availability of contractors to complete adaption works and the increase in material costs, will impact the number of DFG’s the service can deliver going forward.

The development of a new Contractor Framework is currently under way, which will hopefully be available during the next financial year. We anticipate more contractors coming on board with the delivery of adaption works, which will assist to alleviate some of the service delivery pressures.

Under housing register work, for the year 2022-23, 1276 Housing Register Applications were received across all 4 Registers (affordable, general, older persons, accessible)

### ***What difference has the service made?***

The total number of approaches has slightly decreased however the number of cases progressing to full assessment and requiring more intensive intervention has increased which has been reflected in the higher number of prevention outcomes thus enabled the service to avoid homelessness.

Due to the increasing reliance on temporary accommodation coupled with the lack of affordable accommodation available in the county, the Housing service adopted temporary changes for a short period of time in agreement with partner RSLs to prioritise allocations to social housing to persons with homeless duties and in temporary accommodation. The temporary changes to the Allocation policy assisted the Housing Options team in meeting the demands for temporary accommodation as well as successfully rehousing households in permanent accommodation which contributed to the higher relief success rate for 2022/23.

The landlord guarantee scheme has become operational offering an additional tool to prevent homelessness and facilitate move-on to accommodation in the private sector.

Disabled Facilities and Safe Warm and Secure grants have assisted clients to live independently within their own homes.

A total of 240 applicants secured housing from the Housing Register. 79 (33%) allocations were made to people owed a homeless duty. This percentage has increased slightly following a temporary change to our allocation policy. This enabled applicants in temporary accommodation and/or with a homeless duty, to be offered permanent accommodation above all others on the Housing Register, wherever possible, and supported the early intervention and prevention agenda.

Due to the increasing reliance on temporary accommodation coupled with the increased number of potential homeless cases from both cost of living, and Ukraine refugees, for a short period the Housing service is working with the partner RSL’s to prioritise allocations to social housing to persons with homeless duties and in temporary accommodation.

### ***How well have we done?***

#### **Housing - Homelessness**

Total prevention outcomes: 180 (this includes successful prevention, unsuccessful prevention, non-cooperation, assistance refused, withdrawn, and withdrawn due to loss of contact)

Successful prevention outcomes: 124. Therefore 68.9% of households threatened with homelessness were successfully prevented. (Meeting target of 65% and slightly up on last year’s

67.6%). Of the 180 households 25 households (13.9%) withdrew from the service and therefore Housing Options were unable to assist or establish an outcome.

Total relief outcomes: 173 (this includes successful relief, unsuccessful relief, assistance refused, non-cooperation, withdrawn and withdrawn due to loss of contact).

Successful relief outcomes: 83. Therefore 47.9% households were provided with successful relief measures within 56 days. This represents a significant increase in the relief success rate in comparison to 2021/22 which was 33.7%. Of the 173 households 57 households (32.9%) did not achieve a successful outcome within 56 days and therefore progressed to the next stage of the housing options process i.e. s75 investigation. 32 (18.5% of total) clients withdrew from the service.

### **Housing - Adaptations**

During the year 2022-23 a safe home was provided for 817 disabled and vulnerable applicants to remain living independently leading to improved quality of life.

### **Energy Efficiency**

During the year a total of 420 clients received either improvements to their homes through EE initiatives and/or EE advice to improve their financial position and outgoings.

145 ECO4 Flexibility Declarations were issued to eligible households for funding (October 2022 to March 2023), with Air Source Heat Pumps, Solar photovoltaics and the various types of insulation being the main energy efficiency measures installed.

A total of 275 fuel poor households were assisted by the Warm Homes Fund Category 3/LOT 1 – Energy Efficiency and Health Related Solutions project between April 2022 and March 2023, with confirmed benefits (improved financial position) to the households of £250,793.00 (approximately £912 per household).

Ceredigion County Council were the Winners of the Wales Energy Efficiency Regional Awards 2023 and were awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the National Regional Energy Efficiency Awards 2023.

### **Housing – register**

1083 Housing Applications were activated on to the Housing Register enabling consideration for social housing allocations. In addition to this, amendments were made to applications and application renewals ensuring correct and up to date information for our RSL partners.

### **Delivery of affordable housing across all tenure**

The SHG programme is part of a 3-year rolling development programme made up of several funding streams from Welsh Government.

The development programme is based on regularly updated needs analysis of the Housing Registers with the aim of delivering a mix of social and intermediate housing across Ceredigion alongside a partnership with Registered Social Landlords who develop the schemes.

### ***What difference has the objective made?***

The number of Social Rented units being delivered is likely to increase year on year over the next 3 years with a generous SHG budget allocation for the 3-year programme. This will enable Ceredigion

to contribute to Welsh Governments 20,000 Target. Developments are being targeted to help meet the identified local need in the County. The range of affordable tenure options is also being increased to help address the different housing needs within the County.

During this year there was a total 27 Social Housing units delivered by our partner Housing Associations operating within Ceredigion. This is a decrease of recent years as the financial viability of schemes have been challenging due to vastly increased construction costs and contractor availability, all of which are the aftereffects of the pandemic. Moving forward with a £22.7m budget over 3 years there are some large, exciting schemes in the programme which if market conditions allow will mean a record delivery of social housing in Ceredigion for the coming years.

***Contribute towards the development and integration of the Porth Gofal - Early Intervention and wellbeing model:***

The HSG Gateway Service, is ensuring all cases are allocated the appropriate interventions in a timely manner. This has gone from strength to strength and has enabled the service monitor demand and outcomes effectively. This information and working alongside other services within the TAW model will be invaluable as we undertake a full review and recommission all HSG funded services operating within Ceredigion in the coming year.

***Ensure that the accommodation needs of residents are met***

The Housing Service continues to work towards ensuring that the accommodation needs of residents are being met. Throughout the year 397 inspections of licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation were undertaken to ensure safety standards were being met. 211 private rented accommodation enquiries were received resulting in 89 visits to ensure safety standards were being met, and 4 cases of harassment and illegal eviction were investigated.

Lifting of Covid restrictions together with a full complement of staff in the Housing Standards Team has allowed the backlog of HMO inspections that built up during the pandemic to be reduced considerably.

## What are our priorities for next year and why?

This coming year will see the continuation of delivery of services as a Through Age Wellbeing Service model to achieve our five wellbeing objectives:

- Promote positive health and wellbeing and support people to self support
- Strengthen families so that children and young people remain within their families
- Provide proportionate approaches to managed care and support
- Protect individuals and keep them safe from abuse, harm and neglect
- Enable individuals to live independently in their own community

We want to:

- Continue to strengthen our workforce through recruitment, education and training to enhance and strengthen our practice to meet the demands of delivering the wellbeing objectives.
- Implement Day Service Opportunities
- Respite care to children and adults
- Work with Domiciliary Care providers to increase the available provision across the county
- Increase the number of personal assistants to deliver Direct Payment services
- Implement the Action Plan in response to the Regional Dementia Strategy
- Increase the number of inhouse approved foster carers
- Establish children residential placement provision
- Increase the number of carers supported by the Carers and Community Support Service
- Utilise early intervention services to keep children at home
- Reduce the number of children in our care
- Reduce the number of children on the Child Protection Register
- Develop our services to make a Rapid Response to Suicide or at risk of Suicide and their families and friends

## 5. How We Do What We Do

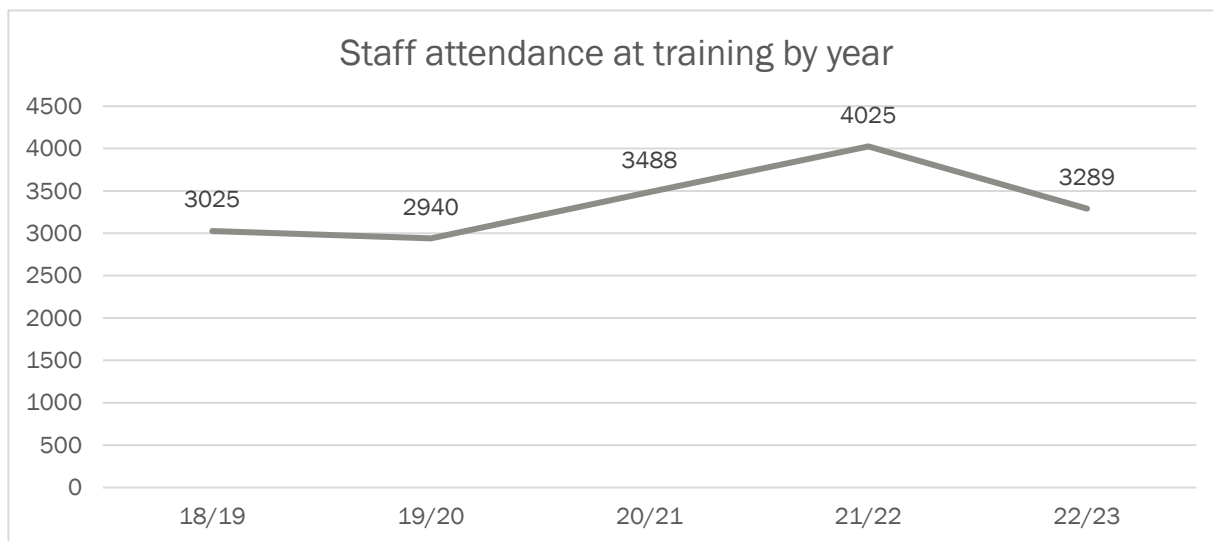
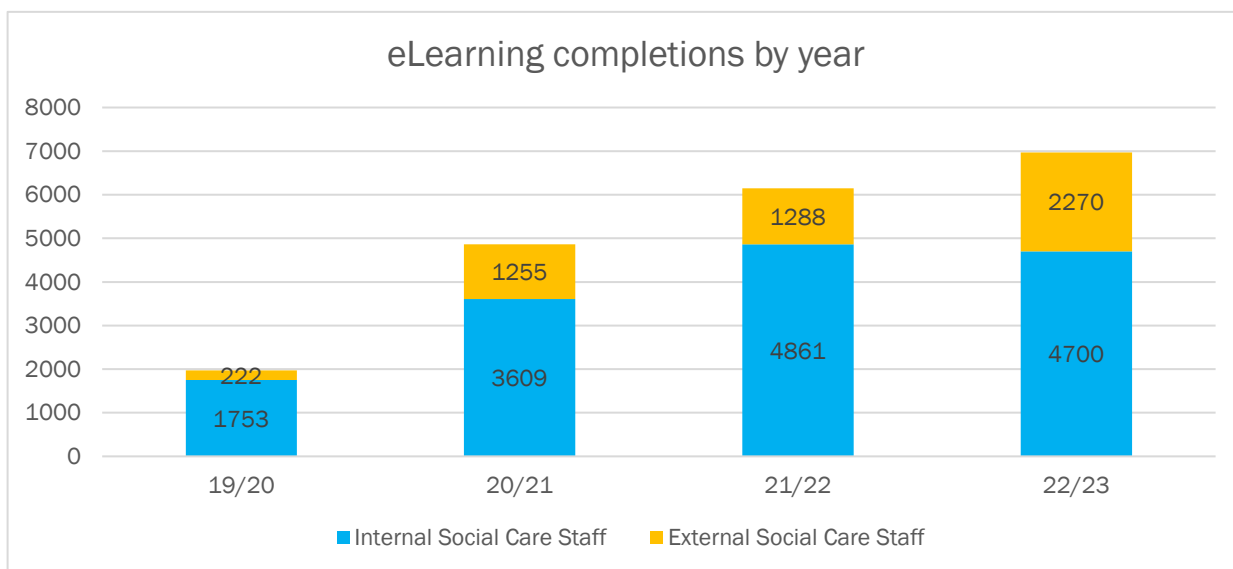
### **How we have supported the professional development of the Social Care Workforce**

The Through Age Wellbeing model continues to be embedded through the provision of a broad range of training which supports the induction, continuous professional development, and regulatory requirements of those involved in service delivery.

An annual training needs analysis is conducted across the social care workforce which asks internal teams and external providers to identify their training needs and priorities for the year. Meetings are also hosted to encourage and support dialogue with external providers, these have proved beneficial in the targeting of resources for example in the commissioning and delivery of Mental Health First Aid training.

A blended approach to training delivery is adopted; trainer facilitated sessions are delivered on-line, face to face sessions are reserved for specific subject areas for example, Manual Handling, Dementia Bus and Autism Reality Experience. In addition, e learning modules on core areas of practice are available across the sector.

Despite national and local recruitment and retention challenges, the workforce has continued to access training and pursue development opportunities. Staff shortages and the pressures of service delivery have seen training attendance decrease slightly this year however, this is mitigated somewhat by the increasing number of e learning completions. The previous years’ investment in a new Learning Management System, Ceredigion Learning Pool, has evidenced return on investment. The bilingual, user-friendly system now offers 31 e learning modules to the sector which cover a variety of subjects including Safeguarding, Autism, Mental Capacity Act, Infection Prevention & Control and Tourette’s Syndrome. Both the development of e learning modules and completion rates continue to increase annually. A bespoke programme of e learning has also been developed and made available to support Personal Assistants including Health and Safety in the Home and First Aid Awareness. The graphs below illustrate the number of e learning completions and training attendance by year:



Social Care Wales Workforce Development Grant (SCWWDG) funding remains core to the provision of training however, rising training costs require increasing prioritisation and focus on mandatory and regulatory requirements. A total of 394 trainer facilitated events have been delivered covering core areas of social care/social work practice and health and safety.

67 internal staff members have been supported to achieve qualifications across a variety of subject areas including Health and Social Care, Social Work, Team Manager Development Programme, Practice Educator Award, Assessing Decision Making and Trusted Assessor, a further 56 staff are continuing to work towards qualifications.

Significant work has been undertaken to support workforce succession planning. On-line information sessions have been delivered to promote careers in social care/social work in addition to the Council’s Trainee Social Worker Scheme. 2 staff qualified as Social Workers in 2022 and a

further 17 are being supported on social work qualifying training including the Certificate of Higher Education in Social Care Practice which consists of the first two modules of the social work degree.

To promote wider awareness of Dementia as well as careers in social care, initiatives have included the offer of the Dementia Bus experience to all county secondary schools, local Further Education College, Carers, Personal Assistants, Elected Members, and the Council’s Senior Leadership Group.

We seek to innovate and continuously develop our training offer and following a successful pilot scheme have now introduced virtual reality into training delivery. Training on Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Practice now incorporates the use of Virtual Reality Headsets and has received exceptional feedback. This offer will be further developed over the coming years.

In support of the ‘Active Offer’, 18 Social care staff have been supported to undertake Welsh Language courses delivered by the Council’s Work Welsh Tutor. The Welsh Language Awareness e learning module has continued to be promoted with the highest number of completions in a year of 258 internal and 94 external social care staff.

Language profile of our Through Age Workforce:

Porth Cymorth Cynnar:

OVERVIEW	No of People	% of People
Non-Welsh speaking	49	20.85%
Welsh Speaking	186	79.15%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100%</b>

GAP	No of People	% of People
GAP in ALTE requirements	83	34.87%
Meets ALTE requirements	154	64.71%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100%</b>

PERSON - SPEAKING & LISTENING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	2	15	32	30	66	90	<b>235</b>
% of People	0.85%	6.38%	13.62%	12.77%	28.09%	38.30%	<b>100.00%</b>
PERSON - WRITING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	6	23	39	43	52	72	<b>235</b>
% of People	2.55%	9.79%	16.60%	18.30%	22.13%	30.64%	<b>100.00%</b>
PERSON - READING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	4	22	35	45	48	61	<b>235</b>
% of People	1.70%	9.36%	14.89%	19.15%	20.43%	34.47%	<b>100.00%</b>



**Porth Cynnal:**

OVERVIEW	No of People	% of People
Non-Welsh speaking	57	52.78%
Welsh Speaking	51	47.22%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100%</b>

GAP	No of People	% of People
GAP in ALTE requirements	57	52.78%
OK	50	46.30%
Unknown	1	0.93%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

PERSON - SPEAKING & LISTENING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	3	27	27	15	13	23	<b>108</b>
% of People	2.78%	25.00%	25.00%	13.89%	12.04%	21.30%	<b>100.00%</b>
PERSON - WRITING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	10	31	23	11	13	20	<b>108</b>
% of People	9.26%	28.70%	21.30%	10.19%	12.04%	18.52%	<b>100.00%</b>
PERSON - READING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	10	27	25	9	16	21	<b>108</b>
% of People	9.26%	25.00%	23.15%	8.33%	14.81%	19.44%	<b>100.00%</b>

**Porth Gofal:**

OVERVIEW	No of People	% of People
Non-Welsh speaking	155	47.84%
Welsh Speaking	169	52.16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>100%</b>

GAP	No of People	% of People
GAP in ALTE requirements	165	50.93%
OK	155	47.84%
Unknown	3	0.93%
#MULTIVALUE	1	0.31%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

PERSON - SPEAKING & LISTENING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	29	73	53	66	34	69	<b>324</b>
% of People	8.95%	22.53%	16.36%	20.37%	10.49%	21.30%	<b>100.00%</b>
PERSON - WRITING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	64	69	64	54	28	44	<b>324</b>
% of People	19.75%	21.30%	19.75%	16.67%	8.64%	13.58%	<b>100.00%</b>
PERSON - READING	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No of People	56	65	62	45	43	53	<b>324</b>
% of People	17.28%	20.06%	19.14%	13.89%	13.27%	16.36%	<b>100.00%</b>

## Our Financial Resources and How We Plan For the Future -

The Council’s financial settlement from WG for 2022/23 was far better than 2021/22. Overall WG core funding of £119.4m was an 8.9% increase on the previous year, albeit Ceredigion was below the Welsh average of 9.4%.

The Council still had a budget gap due to considerable cost pressures. However, at £1.3m, this was far smaller than in previous years and this was tackled via a corporate approach focussing on Travelling costs, Fees & Charges and Treasury management opportunities. A last minute additional sum from WG in February 2022 through a reopening of the 2021/22 RSG settlement also included a sum of £239k for supporting the Domiciliary Care sector.

With the new Through Age and Wellbeing operating model in place - Porth Gofal, Porth Cynnal and Porth Cymorth Cynnar had a combined 2022/23 Original Budget of £46.7m. This was 28% of the Council’s 2022/23 Original budget of £165.8m (up from 25% in 2021/22). The rising cost of Social Care across the Pyrth Services at c£7.1m was recognised as being a significant part (57%) of the Council’s overall cost pressures of £12.3m for 22/23. Included within the Social Care related cost pressures for 22/23 were:

- The new WG policy to ensure that registered Social Care Workers received the Real Living Wage (£9.90 per hour). This formed a large component of a £2.168m cost for annual inflation uplifts for externally Commissioned Services - which were significant at 8.87% for Domiciliary Care / Supported Living, 9.13% (interim) for Residential Care and 11.15% for Direct Payments.
- The Council invested £857k as a Year 1 pump priming investment in the new staffing structure for the Through Age and Wellbeing model, with a further Year 2 investment of £224k in 23/24 to follow.
- A full external review of Older Persons placement fees was also instigated in January 2022 - undertaken and facilitated by Laing Buisson. This concluded with a further increase on top of the interim 9.13% uplift of between 8.1% and 20.9% across the 4 main fee categories. This resulted in an additional investment of £520k in the sector and the Council’s placement fees being on average the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Wales.
- A £513k investment was also made in the Direct Payments sector by increasing the core hourly rate from £11 to £12.50 per hour, prior to the further impact of the Real Living Wage.
- There was also an emerging trend of significant increases in volumes in the Looked after Children area which necessitated a cost pressure of £743k being recognised

The Council’s 2022/23 final performance was an overall breakeven position, with the Council’s overall financial position remaining positive and resilient. The Pyrth TAW services out-turned with an overspend of £1.577m, which mainly stemmed from Porth Cynnal (£1.650m overspend) which is the higher end part of the TAW model.

Adverse trends included higher in county Looked After Children costs (£295k overspend), increased Older Persons Placement costs (£576k higher than budget) and increased Learning Disability placement costs (£1.056m higher than budgets). A growing use of both professional social worker agency staff and Care Home agency staff was being seen, however in 22/23 this was largely contained from savings elsewhere within TAW services eg. Vacant posts / vacancy drag / Day services. Market supplements are also now being paid for certain Social Worker posts, with this currently being funded from reserves (£198k).

At year end, corporately a sum of £1.0m was set aside into the Creating Caring & Healthy Communities corporate wellbeing objective earmarked reserve. This was linked to a Cabinet decision to in-source a private sector Care Home in Aberystwyth during 2023/24.

Looking forward to 2023/24 and beyond, the financial challenge facing the Council and the Pwrth services remains significant both in terms of cost pressures and the ageing population dynamic. The range of cost pressures facing the Council for 23/24 is some £22m in total (£10.9m of which relates to Pwrth TAW services), equating to an inflation rate of over 13%. Factors within these cost pressures include the £1 increase in the Real Living Wage to £10.90 for Registered Care Workers as well as general staff pay award challenges, further investment needed in the Domiciliary Care sector in readiness for a new tender framework and increasing volumes of Looked after Children both in and out of county as well as increasing volumes of Older Person and Learning Disability placements. There remains a considerable recruitment challenge for professional Social Worker and Care Home roles.

In terms of Capital investment, there is a variety of investment going into Pwrth services. This includes repurposing Leisure facilities into Wellbeing Centres, with Lampeter Wellbeing Centre being the first of these to complete early in 23/24. There is also considerable capital investment going into our Local Authority Care Home infrastructure, including a dementia project at our Hafan Deg Care Home as well new initiatives being progressed for 3 new in County Children facilities, the first of which is due to come on stream towards the end of 2023/24.

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

All services across the Through Age Wellbeing Service work within the legislative, regulatory, policy and guidance framework with partners and stakeholders to ensure our accountability and compliance.

### **Corporate Governance**

- Through Age Wellbeing Programme Board
- Leadership Group
- Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee
- Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Committee
- Cabinet
- Full Council

### **External Partnerships**

- Welsh Government
- Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board
- Regional Partnership Board
- National Probation Service
- Care Inspectorate Wales
- Audit Wales
- Public Service Ombudsman Wales
- Social Care Wales

- Association of Director of Social Services Cymru
- Mid and West Wales Adoption Service

### The West Wales Care Partnership

Section 14A of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act requires local authorities and Local Health Boards to produce Area Plans setting out the range and level of services that will be provided in their area in response to regional Population Assessments. These Plans must be produced every 5 years and initial plans must be published by 1 April 2019.



The West Wales Area Plan for 2018-23, 'Delivering Change Together', has been agreed by the Regional Partnership Board and endorsed by Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire County Councils and Hywel Dda University Health Board. It includes a series of strategic commitments which the Partnership will take forward over the next five years to support the transformation and integration of care and support in the Region.

**Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board:**

CYSUR is the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Children Board.

CYSUR is an acronym for Child and Youth Safeguarding: Unifying the Region and is also the Welsh word for reassurance.

CYSUR is an amalgamation of the former Local Safeguarding Children Boards in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, and Powys.

CWMPAS is the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Adults Board.

CWMPAS is an acronym for Collaborative Working and Maintaining Partnership in Adult Safeguarding and is also the Welsh word for scope or remit.



The CWMPAS remit also stretches across Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, and Powys

The regional arrangements were established to meet the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

During 2022-23, The Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board continued to operate in accordance with its statutory obligations. Ceredigion County Council officers participated fully in the Board’s activities both locally and regionally. Developing creative solutions to some of the significant workforce challenges the social care and the public sector workforce is experiencing at a national level has been another key area of the Boards’ work this year, as well as the implementation of key multi-agency policies and protocols.

The Board’s collaborative response to the continuing challenges, alongside our successes and achievements, have continued to demonstrate the paramount importance of the Regional Safeguarding Boards and their work in the safeguarding of children and adults at risk.

## 6. Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

Title	Location
Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board 2022-2023	 <a href="#">maww-safeguarding-annual-report-2022-23.pdf</a>
Ceredigion CC Carers Unit Annual Report 2021-2022	 <a href="#">Carer's Annual Report 2021-22 (FINAL).pdf</a>
Language Profile of Ceredigion	<a href="#">annual-welsh-language-standards-monitoring-report-2022-23.pdf (ceredigion.gov.uk)</a>
West Wales Regional Partnership Board Regional Carers Strategy	<a href="#">West Wales Carers Strategy 2020-2025 – West Wales Care Partnership (wwcp.org.uk)</a>
West Wales Area Plan for 2018-23, ‘Delivering Change Together’	<a href="#">http://www.wwcp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/West-Wales-Area-Plan-English-Final-Version-29-03-18.pdf</a>
Through Age and Well-being Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2027	<a href="#">PowerPoint Presentation (ceredigion.gov.uk)</a> <a href="#">20211001-taw-strategy-action-plan-final-approved.pdf (ceredigion.gov.uk)</a>
Statutory Director of Social Services Annual Report 2020-2021	<a href="#">https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/media/13425/2021-2020-annual-report.pdf</a>
Statutory Director of Social Services Annual Report 2021-2022	<a href="#">https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/media/13426/2022-2021-annual-report.pdf</a>