

# Changing Lives



## Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022/23



## Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2	DIRECTORS SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE .....	5
3.	HOW ARE PEOPLE SHAPING OUR SERVICES?.....	13
4.	PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELLBEING OF THOSE WE HELP ....	15

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

‘Changing Lives’

This is the sixth Social Services Annual Report prepared under the requirements of both the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection for Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. The report covers the period April 2022 to March 2023.

This is my second report as the Director with statutory responsibility for social care and is the first occasion that I have reviewed the period of time that I have been in situ.

This report provides a summary of our developments throughout 2022/23, our current position, future developments and aspirations, some of the challenges and risks that require ongoing focus and the opportunities that we will explore and monopolise going forward.

As we continue to recover post pandemic, we are faced with the increasing cost of living crisis and subsequent economic downturn, which has impacted on all parts of our communities and public services. This, combined with a shrinking workforce across health and social care, has continued to present challenges and has further confirmed the need for services to work collaboratively across all sectors.

As budgets reduce and the cost-of-living impacts on citizens lives and service delivery, it is essential that we promote and develop greater levels of collaboration whilst enabling communities to increase levels of resilience and solutions to limit the need for statutory service intervention. Indeed, this promotes independence and greater levels of individual citizen control.

We continue to focus on performance and information management to inform the effectiveness and shape of our services and have enhanced a tiered approach to performance management within the service areas; this has enabled key decisions to be made at all levels within the service providing effective immediate operational service delivery, as well as longer term strategic vision and service shape.

The social care workforce operates in an ever-changing set of circumstances both in terms of the needs of individual service users and within a strategic and political landscape that is diverse, and which aims to meet so many needs against so many challenges. To that end, the resilience, commitment, and dedication of the workforce within all parts of Torfaen’s social care sector (which includes Torfaen employees, private providers, voluntary agencies, partner agencies, third sector and back-office support) is commendable, and as ever, makes me exceptionally proud. The workforce, whilst fluctuating and being depleted on occasion, has been adaptable and innovative and has endeavoured to deliver high quality services.

There are continued challenges across the entire expanse of Social Care and Health. As a directorate and as a Local Authority, and in collaboration with our partner agencies, we will aim to tackle these challenges in order to ensure that we continue to deliver and further develop, effective services that meet the needs of our citizens whilst

promoting safety, community resilience and independence. Our challenge going forward is to ensure that our work is increasingly effective and transparent against continued shrinking resource, whilst drawing on and creating community resilience to enable people to live the lives they want to live independently and safely, whilst engendering less dependence on statutory services. Innovation is key.

Torfaen Council has developed an inclusive County Plan, with a delivery programme to 2027. The plan is inspired by the Well Being of Future Generations Act and promotes the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and aims to tackle all aspects of health inequalities.

This report should be read in conjunction with the County Plan in order to fully understand the aspirations for Torfaen and the synergies that exist in cross directorate planning within the Council.

[Future Torfaen: A County Plan | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)

## **2 DIRECTORS SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE**

The Social Care services within Torfaen continues to be responsive, imaginative, and committed to delivering quality services, and responds quickly and efficiently to the continued demands on the service. Despite the challenges and consequent changes to the way within which we have had to work and respond, services have been delivered to a high standard. That said, some aspects of our performance will have been impacted by continued demand, coupled with workforce pressures associated with recruitment and retention within the health and social care workforce; this has caused us to review some areas of service provision and change and flex in order to continue to meet changing demand. Indeed, responsiveness, and change management always has and always will form a key part of social work delivery and is underpinned by our analysis of performance.

The ability to recruit and retain social care workers continues to present challenges and pressures. This challenge is evident, despite national, regional and local strategies to attract people into social care careers. We recognise the whole system is impacted and we continue to work with colleagues from other sectors in order to ensure effective service provision for our citizens and to develop a workforce that is fit for the future.

One of our key areas relating to service delivery and subsequent performance, concerns the provision of domiciliary care packages within the community. This has been a crucial area of focus for us in order to prevent citizens from requiring any form of residential or hospital care, in order to enable rapid hospital discharges and in order to support colleagues in health when pressure have been evident in hospitals.

Graph 1 below illustrates the number of care hours waiting to be commissioned in the community over the 2022/23 period. A significant proportion of these hours are being provided by our in-house short-term teams but also need to provide longer term care from the independent providers so that care packages can flow, and where suitable, be de-escalated across the whole system. When we are unable to commission care, the result is a system that has blockages which affects our ability to provide the right level of care at the right time for our citizens. Graph 1 evidences a continued need with some fluctuations, but with an overall reduction in unbrokered hours. This is evidence of the investment and focus we continue to have on building up domiciliary care within the Local Authority area.

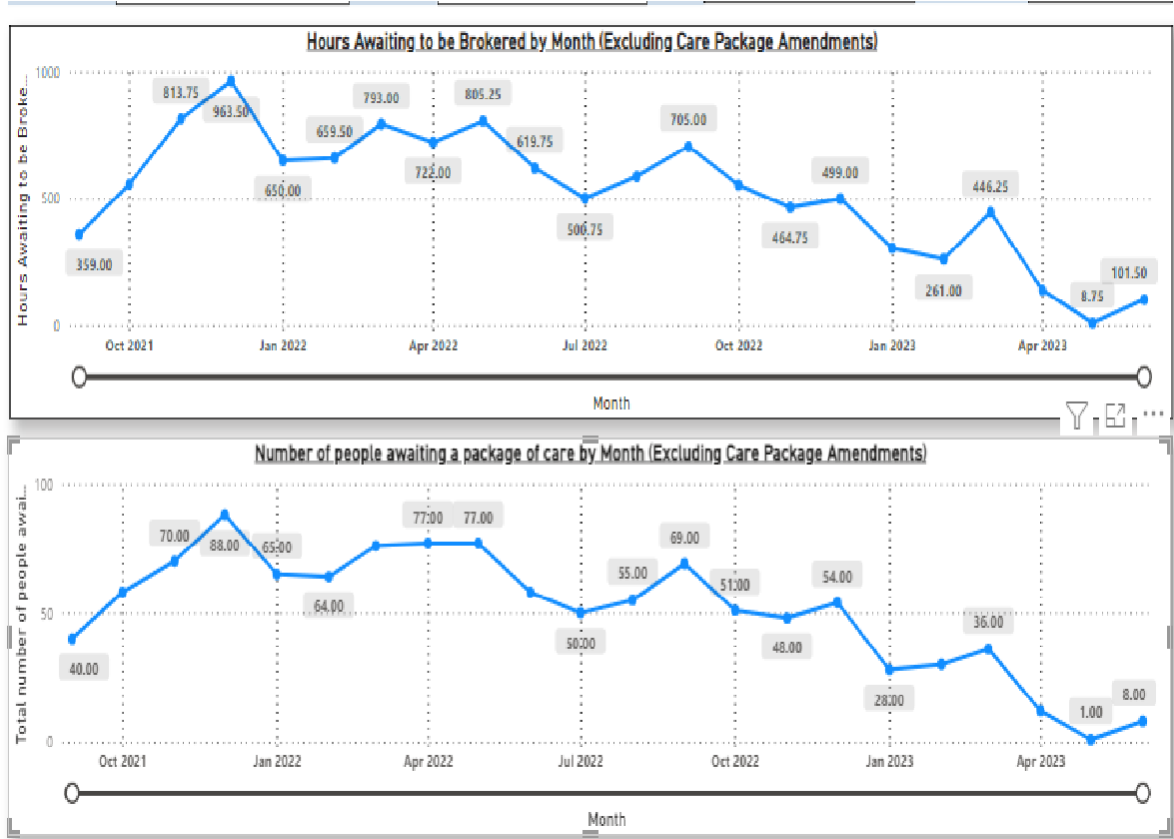
Graph 2 shows the number of individuals who are waiting for the correct care package to be delivered. It is worth pointing out that the "individuals" within Graph 2 have not been left without a service but will be receiving a level of service that does not correspond to their assessed needs; this could mean that they will have remained in residential care for longer whilst a package is being established / brokered.

In terms of both numbers of hours and numbers of individuals where packages of care are awaited, we have been effective in reducing this significantly and I am exceptionally pleased and proud of the way within which the service area has responded to demand in terms of in-house delivery and with varied approaches being

adopted in collaboration with external providers. This reduction has been achieved throughout the more challenging periods of winter pressures, has been continued and sustained in the past 12 months. This contrasts with the previous two years performance where we swam against the waves of the pandemic.

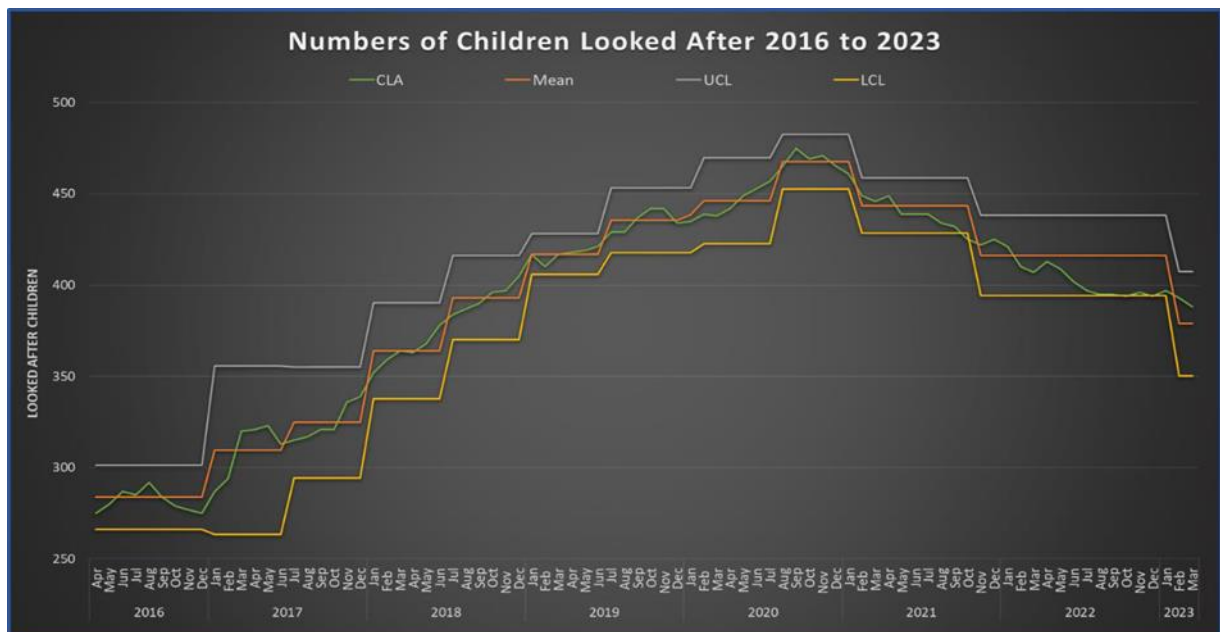
Whilst performance has improved dramatically, it is essential that we continue to develop community provision in order to ensure that citizens can maintain independence without escalating into the need for a higher level of care that, in effect, would reduce independence and move them from their homes and communities.

Graph 1 and Graph 2.

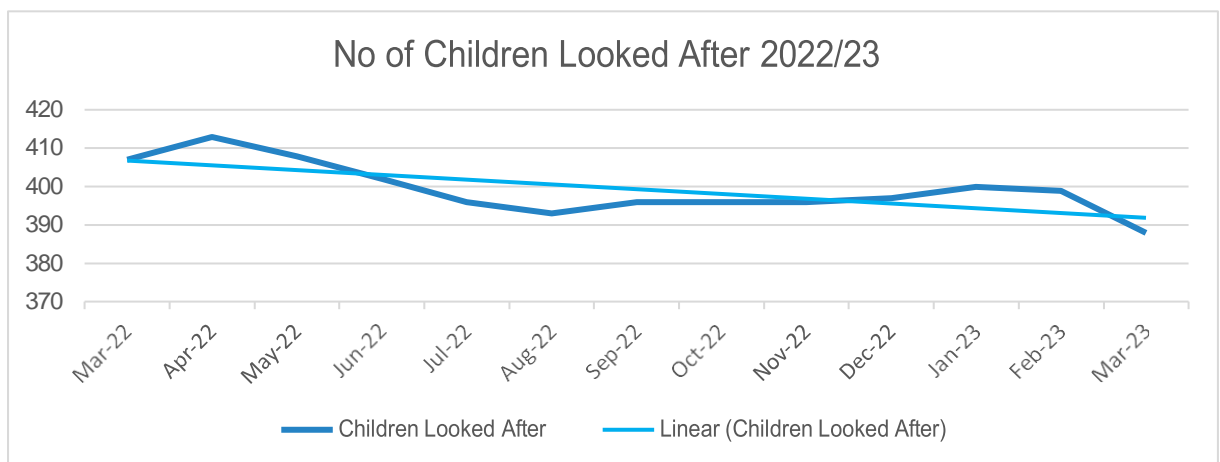


Another key area relating to service delivery and subsequent performance, concerns the number of “children looked after” by the Council. Torfaen has the highest Children looked after population per 10,000 (10-17 yr old) in Wales although sustained efforts and transformation within the service area has seen this reduce consistently since a peak of 474 in September 2020 to 378 as at March 31st 2023. Within our county plan we set an annual reduction of 15% within 2022/23 and achieved a 6% reduction. Despite our target not having been fully realised this needs to be taken in the context of a continued increase (of up to 15%) from 2016 to 2020, as depicted in Graph 3 below, with Graph 4 showing the reduction in isolation, for the reporting period of 2022/23.

Graph 3



Graph 4



The service area continues to strive towards a safe reduction of its children looked after population by focussing on strength-based decision making throughout the system whilst ensuring that risk can be managed, and by moving children out of the looked after system at the earliest opportunity by supporting effective and safe rehabilitation with parents.

The information contained below in Table 1 shows performance as it relates specifically to adult services social care. The data for 2021/22 is included in order for comparison of activity and demand to be evidenced. The overall theme within the data for 22/23 (and indeed for 21/22) is that there is a significant amount of demand placed within the service area that ultimately does not lead to any substantial service, but which leads to a significant amount of time being generated in assessing “need”. For example, in 2022/23 there were 1426 assessments completed with only 222 of those

resulting in the need for a care and support plan; and whilst the assessment itself may have resulted in need being diverted, it follows that a considerable amount of need could have been / was met effectively within the community and / or without the need for statutory support / intervention, and potentially without the need for assessment if the commensurate community offer had been available for the individual. This information, and the level of continued demand on the service area, has led adult social care becoming aligned within communities and forming an Adults and Communities Directorate in order to create a more focused preventative, enabling and communities-based offer.

**Table 1**

Indicator	21-22 Actual	22-23 Target	2022-23 Actual	22-23 Status
The number of new assessments completed for adults during the year (AD/004)	1,520	Demand Led	1426	Demand Led
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan (AD/005a)</li> </ul>	258	Demand Led	222	Demand Led
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs were able to be met by any other means (AD/005b)</li> </ul>	1,189	Demand Led	1153	Demand Led
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were no eligible needs to meet (AD/005c)</li> </ul>	73	Demand Led	51	Demand Led
The total number of carers needs assessments for adults undertaken during the year (CA/004)	128	Demand Led	130	Demand Led
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs could be met using a carer's support plan or a care and support plan (CA/005a)</li> </ul>	20	Demand Led	12	Demand Led
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs were able to be met by any other means (CA/005b)</li> </ul>	101	Demand Led	114	Demand Led
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were no eligible needs to meet (CA/005c)</li> </ul>	7	Demand Led	4	Demand Led
The number of carers needs assessments for adults refused during the year (CA/006)	300	Demand Led	331	Demand Led
The number of care and support plans for adults that were due to be reviewed during the year (AD/016)	921	Demand Led	794	Demand Led
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of those, the percentage whose reviews were completed within the statutory timescales (AD/017)</li> </ul>	44%	80%	87%	Green
Average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant	339	220	337	378



It is pleasing that timescales associated with review completion has exceeded the target by 7% and has increased significantly on the previous years figure of 44% (AD/016 and AD/017).

The number of Disabled Facilities Grants continue to be of concern where the target for completions has not been achieved. This is attributable to the delays throughout the process and ongoing legacy of commencement / completion throughout covid, particularly in terms of contractor completion and is a focus area for development in 2023/24. The process is being reviewed and we have developed additional levels of scrutiny and accountability to impact on performance and delivery going forward.

The directorate has demonstrated a commitment to transforming and modernising, and as above, has now become aligned to and Adults and Communities Directorate in order to increase and enhance community resilience and a community offer to prevent the need for statutory intervention / support. In tandem with this, there is a continued drive towards reablement for citizens to enable them to retain and regain the skills required to maintain independence and again, minimise the need for higher level / statutory support.

Ty Glas Y Dorlan was developed and came into operation at the end of 2021/22. The provision currently provides short stay accommodation with domiciliary care support aimed at enabling individuals to develop independence. This has been a successful provision and will enter stage two of evolution in 2023/24 where more focus will be played on a community-based offer whilst utilising the premises as a community reablement hub. The development of the community-based offer will aim to increase the number of reablement packages of support (AD/010a) with a focus on increasing the number of packages where the need for support is reduced (AD/011a).

Table 2

Indicator	21-22	22-23 Target	2022-23	22-23
	Actual		Actual	Status
The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year (AD/010a)	238	Demand Led	252	Demand Led
The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year Reduced the need for support (AD/011a)	71	Demand Led	4	Demand Led
The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year Maintained the need for the same level of support (AD/011b)	165	Demand Led	178	Demand Led
The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year mitigated the need for support (AD/011c)	0	Demand Led	70	Demand Led

Neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated the need for support (AD/011d)	2	Demand led	0	Demand Led
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The information contained below in **Table 3** shows performance as it relates specifically to children services social care. The data for 2021/22 is included in order for comparison of activity and demand to be evidenced.

The volume of demand on referrals and contacts continues to rise (CH/001). However, a theme in recent years relates to the number of referrals that are made which result in no further action. Considerable work continues to be undertaken with partner agencies in order for thresholds to be better understood and taken into account, so as to ensure that referrals are appropriate and resources can be targeted where they are most needed.

Despite there being a high level of demand placed on the service, performance in terms of decisions being made by end of next day is positive with a deficit in target by less than 0.1%. This needs to be considered in the context of a high level of demand and continued challenges in relation to workforce recruitment and retention.

The numbers of children on the Child Protection register (CH/026) continues to be relatively stable and even though figures can fluctuate over periods of time, they tend to be within a narrow range. It is encouraging that we reduce our Children looked after population, there has been no adverse effect in terms of increase of numbers on the child protection register.

The number of children looked after (CH/039) is documented above and continues to be on a downward trajectory. Our work within the service area has focused on strength-based decision making to (safely) prevent children from needing to become looked after and to support the (safe) exit of children out of the looked after system. This continues to be a priority area for the service in order to align Torfaen to the Welsh national Average. Our aspiration as highlighted within the County plan, is a further reduction of 15% within the forthcoming year. It should be noted that the Council has a proportionate allocated quantity of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers which, unsurprisingly continues to rise. By virtue of their circumstance and the manner within which the Home Office allocate these children to Local Authority areas, the Council has no control and cannot provide any preventative interventions to avoid these children becoming looked after.

For those children looked after, it is pleasing that we continue to provide high levels of placement stability with the target of 8% placement moves having been achieved and this being also understood in the context of some of these placement moves being part of an overall plan and representing a positive move (e.g. a move to an adoptive placement or a move from a residential to family placement) (CH/043).

Whilst the number of approved local authority foster parents has decreased from 121 to 115 this should be considered in the context of the reducing children looked after population and the local authority's ability to be able to maintain its proportion of in house placements vs independent sector placements, with this continuing to be above

target at 85% and which represents one of the highest performing Local Authority areas. Our target figure for 2027 as defined in the County plan is a proportionate split of 90% to 10%.

An area of continued focus with Children services is the shift from high level statutory work to the provision of more preventative and early intervention activity in order to prevent children and families escalating through the system.

**Table 3**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>21-22 Actual</b>	<b>22-23 Target</b>	<b>2022-23 Actual</b>	<b>22-23 Status</b>
The number of contacts for children received by statutory social services during the year (CH/001).	4,792	Demand Led	5124	Demand Led
Of those identified, the percentage where advice and assistance was provided (CH/002)	<b>68.66%</b> <b>(3,290)</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>61%</b> <b>(3129)</b>	<b>Amber</b>
The number of contacts received by statutory children's social services during the year where a decision was made by the end of the next working day (CH/003)	<b>99.98%</b> <b>(4,791)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>99.9%</b> <b>(5120)</b>	<b>GREEN</b>
The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year (CH/006)	<b>3,195</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>	<b>3489</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>
The total number of children with a care and support plan at 31st March (part 4, local measure)	<b>176</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>
The total number of children on the child protection register at 31st March (CH/026)	<b>93</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>
The number of children looked after at 31st March (CH/039)	<b>407</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>
Number of approved foster parents on the local authority register at 31 March (aggregate data CA1 Part 1) (Annual)	<b>121</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>Demand Led</b>
% of foster placement made In House v Agency Placements - In house	<b>86%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>Green</b>
% of foster placement made In House v Agency Placements - Agency	<b>14%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>Green</b>
PAM028 - The percentage of new assessments completed for children during the year that were completed within statutory timescales (CH012)	<b>95%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>Amber</b>

PAM029 - % of Children Looked After who have experienced three or more placement moves during the year (CH043)	7%	8%	8%	Green
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The period 2022/23, like all other years, can be described as exceptionally challenging for a range of reasons, such is the nature of our work and functions. However, the use of performance information means that we have become more attuned to our communities needs and are able to plan more effectively going forward.

Performance information has become embedded in the functioning of social care and has been reviewed in order to ensure effective reporting within the teams and service areas so as to impact day to day operations, through to corporate and leadership reporting so that we can impact positively on all aspects of performance, identify where there are challenges and deficits and plan accordingly by aligning strategic planning with operational need.

In order to develop and achieve its ambitions of managing demand to a greater extent and promoting the independence and choice of its citizens via early intervention and prevention, the Council reviewed and realigned its directorates in March 2023, resulting in an Adult Social Care and Communities Directorate and a Children and Family Services Directorate (education and children’s social care). It is anticipated that this reconfiguration will deliver greater results via a more aligned approach.

I am hopeful that what you read in this report matches your views and experience of social care delivery within Torfaen. I continue to be proud of the services we provide. I am confident that we will continue to develop and deliver high quality services, in collaboration with partner agencies and other directorates within the Council, and that we will continue to develop our understanding of our citizens changing needs.

Maximising independence, early intervention and prevention, partnership working and tackling key drivers of inequality remain at the heart of all our service delivery and planning.

**Jason O’Brien**

**Strategic Director Children and Family Services Director of Social Services.**

**December 2023**

### **3. HOW ARE PEOPLE SHAPING OUR SERVICES?**

In order to shape our services, we use a number of sources:

- Day to day feedback,
- Individual service user / citizen assessment,
- Complaints and compliments,
- Questionnaires,
- Specific focus groups,
- Performance information,
- Stories and real-life examples which form part of this report and tell the story from the individuals' perspective,
- We also use our own staff and workforce experiences.

The support we provide to our citizens, be it through early intervention, prevention or at a statutory level, is the single most important thing we do. We always aim to provide excellent practice and strive to continue to develop to changing needs.

Community engagement and co-production is key to achieving successful and sustainable change. We recognise that some people with limited communication will need additional support or an advocate that is suitably trained to aid effective engagement.

Throughout 2022/23 we continued to improve the mechanisms we use to engage with service users, carers, families and providers. We worked well with all stakeholders to establish positive relationships and develop coproduced solutions.

Consultation and engagement with all service users is undertaken through our assessment, care planning and transition planning processes alongside focussed engagement on service development. We ensure that individuals are part of all aspects of their care planning and promote independence and de-escalation whilst, where required, balancing the need for safeguarding and statutory interventions.

As Covid restrictions are no longer in place, we have recommenced our engagement with citizens on a face-to-face basis whilst acknowledging that some citizens will require additional considerations due to own vulnerabilities and some citizens may continue to have anxiety as a result of the restrictions that were in place, and the impact of covid. To that end, where appropriate, hybrid contact is also facilitated.

Care experienced young people provide the voice of the child and greatly benefits and challenges corporate parenting via their involvement and attendance at the Corporate Parenting Board.

Quotes from Young People:

*“Attending the Corporate Parenting Board is easy and accessible.”*

*“The Board gives a platform for young people in care to speak their opinions and thoughts.”*

*“Attending Corporate Parenting Board means I am able to make a difference.”*

There continues to be an emphasis within our Children and Family Services on families being able to utilise their strengths to help themselves or receive the right support to do so. Consultation and engagement are generally undertaken through individual assessment, care planning and pathway planning duties. This invites the views of children, young people, and families to be considered alongside the professional views. This is collated through the data which informs our performance indicators, we can recognise the demand and use this to inform business planning.

Our Family Focus Service and Rapid Response Service undertake feedback on the service with each family with the parents and the children (dependent on their age and understanding). This has been used to shape service delivery and in 2022/23 we restructured this provision to become more embedded and aligned to

In recognition of the need for independence, objectivity and requisite additional support for some service users in care planning and establishing service users views, we commission specialist advocacy services for adults and children. In 2022/23, 259 referrals were made for advocacy via the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), for children and young people.

Our Commissioning Unit continues to be an essential member of The Gwent Health Social Care and Wellbeing Partnership, Commissioning Task and Finish Group and utilises the Population Needs Assessment (PNA), to plan and target services. [Population Needs Assessment - Gwentrpb](#) Our work continues to be directed through our strategic partnerships, overarched by the Regional Partnership Board; for example, Children and Young People Partnership, Regional Safeguarding Board, Mental Health and Learning Disability Partnership, Dementia Board and the Carers Strategic Board.

## 4. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELLBEING OF THOSE WE HELP

### Young Carers Activities:

Young carers team have supported over 180 Young Carers (Aged 5 to 16) who engaged in a variety of activities throughout 2022/23. They have reported improved social skills, resilience, independence skills, reduced isolation, improvement in their mental well-being and develop friendship groups with health support networks. Activities have been delivered in partnership with the Youth service and Torfaen play service. The free gym sessions for young carers helped them to switch off and engage in fun and healthy activities, led by a qualified fitness instructor. The sessions not only help build strength they also build confidence and self-esteem.

Young carers celebrated cares week on 9th June 2022 by walking around the area of Cwmbran waving the flags they made to make themselves visible in the community. They were joined by a Local Councillor.



They also celebrated the Carers Rights Day on 26 & 27 November 2022 by enjoying a disco, art and craft for the younger ones and a bowling session for the older ones.

In addition, young carers completed several residential trips including the URD in Cardiff for one night, PGL in Swindon for two nights, YMCA Festival in Southampton and All Wales Festival in Builth Wells. These residential trips have not only been organized to give young carers respite to recuperate and recharge their batteries due to the caring roles they undertake at home, but also for them to meet up with others and be

children themselves, an aspect they miss out when they are at home in their caring environment.

