

Social Services: What we do and the difference it makes

Director of Social Services Annual Report

Wrexham

2019-2020



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1. Introduction

In last year's report, we made a very simple statement...

"It's our job to help people."

It's still our job. More than ever.

But it's also our job to be smart...to make our resources go as far as possible, so we can help as many people as possible.

A lot of the things you'll read about in this document are about being smarter. Finding new ways to provide people with the help they need, in the most targeted, efficient way possible.

You'll read about how we respond to problems and circumstances on an individual level – doing our very best to make a difference to each person.

But you'll also see how we're looking at the bigger picture...and changing our policies, processes and practices to meet the wider needs of the population – from domiciliary care to supporting families in crisis.

Providing social services has never been easy. People depend on us, and the things we do (or don't do) can change lives.

So we feel that responsibility, and we're constantly learning from our successes, our failures and – most importantly – the views and experiences of the people we help.

We've made a lot of progress over the past year, and we'll continue to put individuals at the centre of what we do – listening to their views and helping them achieve the outcomes they want.

Social care touches so many lives. So it's important we continue to adapt in an ever-changing world – with ever-changing resources, pressures and challenges – to deliver the best services we can.



Neil Ayling

Interim Director of Social Services

2. Summary of performance

Background

At the end of each financial year, every council in Wales must publish a report about its social services. This is our report.

The aim is to evaluate how well our services have been delivered, and highlight any improvements needed.

It's also a chance to explain how we're going to help people over the coming year – both people who need care and support, and carers who need our help.

As you read through these pages, you'll notice we talk about six 'quality standards'. These are part of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (we'll just call it 'the Act' from hereon).

The format of this report reflects the requirements of the Act, and the need to measure the performance of social services around these six standards.

It also feeds into the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales – helping to create a place where we all want to live. Both now and in the future.

Finally, you'll notice we talk about 'outcomes' a lot. This is because so much of our work is focused on helping people achieve the end results they want to achieve.

3. What people tell us about our services

Listening to the people we support is crucial. It's how we make sure we're delivering services that help them achieve what's important to them.

We're developing our approach to 'co-production' – coming up with ways to involve people and organisations in shaping our services at every stage.

We continue to learn a lot through the review of our day and work opportunities services, and this will help improve how we engage with people in the future.

We've also organised 'big conversation' events in 2020 and 2021, to help us unpick these issues further.

Annual carers survey

This year 134 carers shared their experiences and views with us – a response rate of 15% (slightly less than last year's 17%).

- 51% of carers who use our services agreed that Adult Social Care provides a good level of support that improves their quality of life.

Carers were asked if they felt supported with useful information, advice and assistance, and if their views were listened to.

- Over half (62%) agreed we provide sufficient support and information, and half said our services improved their quality of life.
- 82% of carers that were assessed, felt the assessment process helped them in their caring role.
- 62% said we provide a good level of support, along with good staff and carers.

"From my wife leaving hospital, the response has been good and timely in all aspects of my support in being able to look after us both.

"Reablement in particular were very good in supporting me, and guiding us through the carers' aspect of support.

"Everyone who has helped has been friendly, kind and professional!"

- Feedback via the annual carers survey.

Annual quality of life survey

This year, 257 people out of 1338 people surveyed shared their views with us:

- 67% agreed the support they receive helps them remain independent.
- 67% agreed that it helps them cope with daily living.
- 62% agreed it helps them feel more secure and safer at home.
- 66% agreed it improves their quality of life.
- 59% agreed it helps their family to support them.
- 60% agreed they were fully aware of what's available in their local community and how to access it.

Feedback on the Safe Places scheme

This scheme provides 'safe places' for people to go if they feel vulnerable or anxious while out-and-about in Wrexham.

This includes cafes, pubs, shops, taxi offices and all kinds of other premises, and the aim is to help people who might not always feel confident going into busy town centres and other public places.

"Using Safe Places, I have confidence to go and visit pubs and cafes to meet my friends. The staff know my name and know I'm gluten free. It helps me get out and it's a great idea." - Mr KS

"We meet up in different safe places, so we can get to know them (the staff) and they can get to know us. Its good fun and it helps others too!" - Mr AD

"We're being trained to give advice on how to make safe places better for people with different disabilities. Like autism or wheelchair users or dementia. I'm really excited to learn more and help Wrexham have great safe places." - Mrs JEL – a member of staff at one of our 'safe places.'

Feedback on Community Agents

Community Agents help older people re-connect with their communities...including people who live alone and feel isolated or lonely. (

They also help people deal with health and social care processes (e.g. filling in forms or making appointments), which can be complex and confusing for many older residents.

"I took part in the Time to Remember session with Ruabon Library and really enjoyed the afternoon." - Local resident

"One young volunteer was pleased to have the opportunity to meet older people, as she doesn't have grandparents and has little contact with the elderly." - Community Agent

"I'm now getting out and about much more and my housing and benefits situation has been sorted. I feel better able to cope with everything." - Local resident

4. Improving well-being (the six standards)

These are the six standards we mentioned earlier.

There's a lot of information here, so we've split them into two sections to reflect our two social services departments – Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.

Standard 1: Helping people achieve the well-being outcomes they want

This sounds complicated, but it's simple really.

We're talking about helping people improve their situation in a way that takes account of how they feel, and what they want.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Review our domiciliary care commissioning arrangements, increase our share of the homecare market, and work with the North Wales Workforce Board and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) to address workforce challenges.

This is what we did

Supporting domiciliary care providers

Domiciliary care is still a major issue in Wrexham. There just aren't enough care-workers, and the sector is experiencing acute workforce challenges.

So we're providing financial and practical support whenever we can – including above-inflation increases to improve wage-rates, workforce grants, training and workforce development

Jargon buster – 'domiciliary care'

Domiciliary care is provided to people who want to stay in their own home, rather than move to a residential care home. Care-workers visit the person in their home – usually on a daily basis.

The development of our Single Point of Access (SPoA) is also having a positive impact – helping us manage the increasing demand on the market by providing people with better information, advice and assistance.

This means more people can continue to live at home, without needing domiciliary care.

Jargon buster – ‘SPoA’

The Single Point of Access (SPoA) brings together services and organisations that provide health and social care in Wrexham...making it easier for people to get the help they need in one place.

But let's be clear. We're still facing a huge challenge.

The shortage of domiciliary care means we can't always provide people with the right care in a timely way.

This can put extra strain on informal carers (e.g. relatives or friends who help someone on an informal basis), delay hospital discharges and reduce the availability of 'reablement', as our in-house service becomes blocked.

This makes it harder for people to stay independent, and puts extra pressure on our social care teams.

Jargon buster – ‘reablement’

'Reablement' support is usually given to people who need to learn or re-learn skills to help them cope with health issues that affect their day-to-day lives. It's often provided to people when they come out of hospital, or when they've experienced a change in their health that makes certain day-to-day tasks more difficult.

We're doing a number of things to address these issues.

Encouraging more people to work in the care profession will help us meet people's care needs.

So we're working with BCUHB and care market providers to recruit, retain and upskill people.

Our Contracts Team has worked with care providers to look at their workforce needs – ensuring they comply with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA), and helping them prepare for potential Brexit-related workforce issues.

We've also worked with colleagues from Communities for Work to pair social care training programmes with recruitment drives, encouraging new people into the sector.

Finally, our in-house domiciliary service continues to focus on expanding the support it provides in the south of Wrexham County Borough.

The Home First programme

We've helped BCUHB deliver the regional Home First programme, where people are moved from hospital to their home for continued assessment.

It means people are in hospital for as short a time as possible – reducing the risk of infection, or further reduction in independence. Seeing people at home also makes it easier to assess their ongoing care and support needs.

Our social workers and occupational therapists help health staff understand what matters most to the individual, and what the norms are when they're at home.

The focus is on maximising people's independence, and providing appropriately sized care packages where needed.

Our therapists also continue to work on hospital wards alongside our senior support workers – helping to educate ward staff, so the right care packages are put in place.

'Right-sizing' care

Through the Integrated Care Fund (ICF), we've developed a specialist occupational therapy service that focuses on making sure people get the right size care-package.

Staff and partners have been able to access training in a range of techniques and equipment, so they can safely deliver single-handed care to people who need lots of manual help and handling.

Jargon buster – 'single-handed care'

'Single-handed care' is when one worker can provide the care that a person needs.

'Double-handed' is when two people are needed.

Through 'inreach' working on hospital wards, our occupational therapists and senior support workers can help assess the care that people will need when they're discharged.

This helps prevent unnecessary double-handed care packages – allowing us to support people's independence, while helping care market resources go further.

Project-work support

Our disability and older persons' teams have reduced the number of project work packages delivered by domiciliary care providers.

Again, this is helping to ease pressure on the domiciliary market...allowing resources to go further.

We no longer commission support from our care providers. We use dedicated project work providers, Direct Payments or Shared Lives services to meet people's needs instead.

Jargon buster – 'project work'

'Project work' in social care refers to, support provided to people who live in their own home or with family, which, in the main focuses on enabling and developing independence.

Working with more care providers

We've also made it possible for more providers to deliver care in Wrexham, by working with the Regional Collaboration Unit to re-open the Domiciliary Care Framework.

The framework is basically a list of approved care providers who can tender for contracts to deliver domiciliary care.

So there's been an increase in the number of providers available for work in Wrexham.

Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016

We've welcomed the introduction of RISCA, which has changed how services are inspected and controlled.

Care workers will need to register under RISCA, and this has provided us with an opportunity to promote social care as a skilled profession – ensuring people have the right qualifications and values to work in the sector.

But we also have a challenge. We need to make sure our own staff are registered.

Supporting the market to achieve full compliance with RISCA won't be easy. It brings its own resource issues. But we're committed to helping our teams – and our providers – achieve 100% compliance in Wrexham.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Review the domiciliary care market and grow in house provision to increase domiciliary care capacity
- Review 'right sizing care' projects, developing further those which are proven to improve outcomes for people.
- Explore the development of 'micro-commissioning' models, to make it easier for people to access care and support – particularly in our rural communities.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Finalise and implement the Regional Care and Support Plan.
- Implement the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS).
- Improve the timeliness of assessments.
- Update and implement our Departmental Action Plan.

This is what we did

Health and social care IT system

In November 2019, we moved across to the new joint health and social care IT system.

It's called the 'Welsh Community Care Information System' (WCCIS).

Moving to a new IT system always brings challenges, but it's also providing opportunities to review and streamline our processes.

Putting children at the heart of assessments

So what about assessments? Well, we think children should be at the heart of it.

We've changed our approach, and try to do more to understand families' circumstances and what they want, as well as their strengths and capabilities.

We recognise that families – with a bit of help – can often meet their own needs, and don't always need social services. But if we believe a child is at risk, we continue to act without delay to safeguard their welfare.

The timeliness of our assessments has stabilised. We've updated our Assessment of Care and Support following our move to WCCIS, and hope this continues to improve timescales.

When it comes to making sure children are seen as part of their assessment, Wrexham maintains high standards – even though this can sometimes affect timescales. In almost every case, children are seen as part of their assessment and we continue to be one of the best in Wales when it comes to this.

And again, it shows how we build everything around the child.

That's why seeing and talking with a child is at the heart of our assessment process.

Regional working

We've made sure our assessment documentation focusses on 'outcomes' – in other words, the end result.

One of our priorities this year was to update our Care and Support Plan documentation, to ensure we work in a consistent way.

Following our move to WCCIS, new documentation for Children in Need of Care and Support and Looked after Children has been embedded into operational practice and based on a regional template.

A regional form for agencies referring into children's services has already been implemented across North Wales.

The referral should be informed by a conversation with the child and / or the parents or family – to explore what's important to them and the outcomes they want to achieve.

The form should encourage a more consistent approach, enabling prompt and appropriate decision-making...so children and families are supported at the earliest opportunity.

Engagement

This year we're piloting a 'children's rights' approach. A self-assessment tool has been developed, based on the good practice detailed in The Right Way – a guide created by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

The children's rights approach is based on five principles:

- Embedding the UNCRC.
- Equality and non-discrimination.
- Empowering children.
- Participation.
- Accountability.

These principles put the UNCRC at the heart of planning and service-delivery, and integrate children's rights into every aspect of decision-making, policy and practice.

Engagement training is mandatory for staff in Children's Social Care. Sessions are run twice yearly for new starters.

As part of the Act, we're required to provide information about our teams and the roles of our professionals. We're updating the Young Wrexham website (youngwrexham.co.uk) so this is easily available.

Our Young People's Care Council and the Senedd Yr Ifanc (Wrexham's youth parliament) led a consultation to help us develop a child-friendly and easy-read Compliments, Comments and Complaints leaflet and form, which was launched during the year.

This can be used by children to give feedback about any council service that works with young people and their families (not just social care).

Single Point of Access for young people

Children's Single Point of Access (SPoA) remains the first point of contact for anyone making a new referral to children's services – including partner agencies and members of the public.

It also identifies families that might need early help, and signposts young people, parents and carers to services that can support them.

Children's SPoA is made up of various agencies and council departments, which means we can provide a wider range of information and advice.

Wrexham Family Information Service (WFIS) has increased its support to other social care teams by providing individually tailored information and expert advice for professionals and to the vulnerable families they're working with.

And from July 2019, WFIS has been present at the SPoA daily – providing information to families who wouldn't meet the threshold for social care support.

Jargon buster – 'Wrexham Family Information Service'

'WFIS' provides support to parents, carers and professionals who work with families. It provides information and advice on childcare, children's health, housing, education, debt, bullying and lots of other challenges that parents and families can face.

Arrangements are in place with the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) for WFIS to provide regular outreach sessions at the visitors' centre at HMP Berwyn.

Sessions started in October 2019, enabling families affected by parental imprisonment to get the support they need.

WFIS has also worked with other information services across North Wales to ensure families outside Wrexham can access support. This includes producing a North Wales leaflet for families visiting HMP Berwyn.

Care Inspectorate Wales

Following our 'improvement conference' in October 2018, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) returned in 2019 to both support and review the progress we've been making against our improvement plan.

The plan aims to address three main areas of concern around staffing, quality assurance and some departmental processes.

CIW was complimentary in its feedback about the openness and honesty of the managers it met, and noted that staff were "very motivated and committed to providing good outcomes for children."

The plan focuses on:

- Working arrangements and how to make best use of office time and technology.
- Potential duplication in documentation and processes.
- Legal Planning Framework and case-monitoring processes.
- Experience, skill-sets and the developmental needs of staff.
- Working with our Human Resources team to fill vacancies in the department, as well as comparing pay and conditions with other councils.

We continue to make progress against the plan, and in 2019 we introduced an 'accelerated improvement board'

Chaired by the Chief Executive of Wrexham Council, it includes senior managers from departments that can support our improvement – including Human Resources, ICT, Legal and Prevention (Education).

Staff workshops are also being held to make sure every employee has an opportunity to contribute to ongoing improvements in the department.

Getting the views of young people and their families

We want children, young people and their families to know that by attending meetings with us and giving their opinions, they're making a real difference.

The Young People's Care Council collects the views of looked-after children and care-leavers in Wrexham.

And they make sure these views are listened to...and acted upon.

This year we've also agreed to procure Mind of My Own – a child-friendly app that allows children and young people to communicate in a way that suits them.

The aim is to utilise technology to safely encourage young people to get more actively involved in their care and support planning. This will also help professionals understand issues that are important to the children and young people they work with, as well as helping us understand the broader collective views of children we support.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Ensure the national WCCIS system is firmly embedded and supporting our social care teams on the ground.
- Continue to engage with CIW and progress with our improvement plan.
- Review SPoA processes for decision-making and case-transfer...to ensure they're still fit for purpose.

Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing

This means helping people look after their physical, mental and emotional health.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Continue to develop our new outcomes-focussed contract monitoring tools across all services – working closely with CIW to reduce duplication and ensure a more streamlined approach.
- Develop our approach to cluster-based working in partnership with BCUHB and other partners – building more integrated health and social care in our communities.
- Work with Primary Care cluster leads to develop a clear model for social prescribing in Wrexham.
- Work with our support-service provider to achieve our strategic vision for Direct Payments.
- Work with partners to implement the Regional Learning Disability Strategy and the Learning Disability Transformation Grant bid.
- Work with partners to implement the Mental Health Transformation Grant bid.

This is what we did

Monitoring contracts

The Commissioning and Contracts team aims to ensure well-being outcomes are at the centre of our commissioning activity.

In other words, it's not about what gets done. It's about the difference we make to people's lives.

So we make sure the specifications for newly tendered services are outcome-focused.

This includes using the National Well-being Outcomes Framework, and nationally agreed well-being outcome indicators.

We're continuing to work on our contract monitoring tools to ensure they're fit for purpose (we need to monitor the right things if we want to be sure we're making a difference to people's lives).

We're also working with partners across North Wales to implement an updated contract for care homes – and an updated North Wales Domiciliary Care Agreement.

This will help ensure contracts do more to promote people's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Cluster-based working

Work on transforming the way we deliver community services is going well.

Our newly appointed Wrexham project manager and sub-regional project manager are taking the work forward.

The focus is on developing teams that are based in our local communities, and include professionals from different areas of health and social care – so it's easier for people to get the support they need in one place.

This makes everything's a bit more 'joined-up' for people.

We asked people how they wanted services to change. Based on what they told us, we're moving away from everything being delivered from Wrexham town centre, and developing a local approach instead.

We already have some staff using this approach. They're based with health colleagues in various neighbourhoods, and at the Maelor and Chirk Community hospitals.

We've split the county borough into three 'localities' for this work – central, north and south. We've identified a main 'hub' for services in the central area, and are looking at potential locations for local hubs in the north and south.

This work brings some challenges, and we have a dedicated work-stream focussed on making sure we can support people with complex needs in a local setting.

Social prescribing

People's health and wellbeing are determined by a range of factors...including their environment, social and economic circumstances.

Social prescribing is used by GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to non-clinical services and activities that can benefit their health.

In other words, GPs can refer people to community groups and activities in the same way they would write a prescription for medicine.

Activities can include volunteering, arts, group-learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports.

Wrexham now has an established model of social prescribing led by BCUHB, and Penley Rainbow Centre has been commissioned to coordinate and support social prescribers across the county borough.

We've supported the development of social prescribing in Wrexham – establishing a joint Community Agent and Social Prescribing Steering Group.

The group helps partners share good practice, and ensure they're not duplicating provision.

Housing support

We're working with housing colleagues to include housing-related support as part of an integrated model of preventative service-delivery in Wrexham.

This fits with the aims of the regional Communities Transformation Grant, and the drive to develop seamlessly integrated health and social care services.

As part of this, we continue to take part in a regional partnership called 'Community of Practice', where we share ideas and lessons learnt in developing preventive models of community support.

Direct payments

We've been able to expand our Direct Payment's offer across Wrexham, and implemented a new support service provided by People Plus.

This helps people make informed decisions, and think more creatively about how to buy the services they need...including pooling budgets.

Jargon buster – 'Direct Payments'

'Direct Payments' is a fairly new system that allows people to buy the care services they need, without going through the council. It basically cuts out the middle-man.

In partnership with People Plus, we've hugely increased the number of Personal Assistants available for work in Wrexham.

A pre-payment card scheme has also been launched, providing another way to help people manage their Direct Payments.

And we're consulting with users – as well as carers and potential users – to ensure they have all the support they need to adapt to the new system.

Training for social workers – along with important follow-up sessions – has been really successful. Social workers say they now feel more confident when advising on and promoting Direct Payments.

An established Direct Payments steering group, which includes people who use Direct Payments, is helping us manage further roll out of the scheme.

Regional learning

We've been working with partners across North Wales – as well as local people and families – to identify how we transform our Learning Disability services in Wrexham.

The first phase involved looking at current services and meeting key people and groups.

The second phase involved looking at new models or building on current good practice.

Phase three will see the roll-out of innovative new projects (from January to December 2020).

In other words, local people and professionals are working together to design and deliver the changes to our Learning Disability services.

This is more than just consultation. Service-users and their families are genuinely involved in making this happen...from start to finish.

As part of phase one and two, we identified certain things we need to focus on.

These include:

- Making sure people feel safe in their communities – building on the Safe Places scheme, and possibly expanding it to other parts of the county borough.
- Helping people get the right support – including consistent values-based recruitment and training, recognising people's right to stay up late and have more flexible support at evenings and weekends, and promoting more flexible use of Direct Payments.
- Developing more opportunities for people to have genuine friendships and relationships (including personal relationships). A North Wales group – which includes individuals from Wrexham – has been looking at this, and we're developing a friendship and dating app as a result.
- As part of this work, Wrexham Friendship Group has secured funding to co-ordinate good social-networking initiatives, as well as new projects that help people enjoy a rewarding social life.
- For example, there's interest in developing a 'Gig Buddies' project – so people can stay out later and make new friends.

- Finding more ways for people to have a meaningful life – including volunteering and paid work. We're keen to build on the successes we've seen through Wrexham Day Opportunities and Tempo Time. We want people with learning disabilities to play a leading role in helping us create more work opportunities. Making more use of technology to support independence is also a key focus for us.

Jargon buster – 'assistive technology'

'Assistive technology' helps people overcome challenges in their day-to-day lives. It can remind them to do things, help them read and understand information, help them communicate...and lots of other things.

Working with people using services and partners we've identified several priorities:

- Developing safe social networks and communications for people with learning difficulties.
- Using equipment to increase people's independence at home and in the community.
- Using equipment to promote positive 'risk enablement' (i.e. taking carefully managed risks that will benefit a person).
- Updating our assistive technology demonstration flat – so people can see for themselves how technology could help them.
- Using Digital Communities Wales to increase digital awareness, training and safety.

Mental health - 'Putting stronger emphasis on social care principles and practice'

For some time, social work has been managed by the Betsi Cadwaladr NHS Trust in partnership with CPN. We've now had talks with our health partner around changes to the governance of our secondary mental health services. The decision to do this was made with the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 in mind. We want to place a stronger emphasis on social care principles and practice, as well as social care eligibility in the area of mental health as set out by the Welsh Government social care policy.

AHMP Coordinator is a success

We've also looked at the arrangements that were put in place in 2017, when we provided the Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP) service through a specialist AMHP Team. This team is now managed by a dedicated AMHP Coordinator, rather than the AMHP rota across the department, which it was brought in to replace. We've since had positive feedback from our mental health colleagues and we've seen improved coverage as a result of the change. Because of this, Adult Social Care will continue with the AMHP Team and AMHP Coordinator permanently.

Supporting mental health within the secure estate (prison)

The Recovery Service has recognised an increased need to support mental health within the secure estate (prison) and is working on a new way to help and support these issues. It will be an all-disability model, linked to the Recovery Service that will be important to the recovery of prisoners and released prisoners.

Recovery service to offer an even greater number of responses

The focus of the Recovery Service (supported living service for mental health) is being expanded to include an even greater number of responses. In particular they will be looking at emergency responses to people with lower level mental health issues, but with personality and other challenges. Further work will continue to explore crisis prevention, short term rehabilitation and step down from the secure estate.

This is what we want to do in 2019-20

- Through the Integrated Care Fund, develop a Wrexham Wellbeing Hub for Wrexham citizens
- Develop integrated locality working
- Formally launch the pacesetter project in South Locality to improve citizen experience and further enhance integrated working
- Expand the Community Development Fund to further enable development of innovative care and support solutions for people and families living with Dementia
- Work with services-users to co-produce projects that transform some of our mental health and learning disability services
- Ensure positive working relationships are developed between Adult Social Care and the proposed 'wellbeing hub' in Wrexham.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Appoint a placement officer for the Fostering service.
- Increase the number of generic and therapeutic foster-carers to reduce our reliance on private providers of foster and residential placements.

Jargon buster – 'therapeutic foster carers'

Therapeutic foster carers are foster carers who are able to provide specialist and tailored support to children with complex needs.

This is what we did

Foster carers and recruitment

The increase in the number of looked-after children affects all our social work teams, but places significant pressure on our Fostering team.

The team is responsible for recruiting, assessing and approving foster carers.

It has to react quickly to requests for accommodation, think creatively about how to recruit new foster carers, meet statutory procedures with existing carers, and manage the increasing demand for kinship and viability assessments.

When children are placed with family members, the team has to undertake a 'Kinship Foster Carer Assessment.'

Each kinship assessment also requires a viability assessment, and both are intensive pieces of work which detract from the team's core business of recruiting, assessing and retaining generic and therapeutic foster carers.

Also, once kinship carers are approved, they're subject to the same statutory visits and reviews, which further impact on the team's resources.

During 2019-20 we recruited a Placement Officer. Their role is to find placements for children who've been assessed and need a placement as part of their Care and Support Plan. This includes foster placements, respite, residential and supported lodgings.

The role helps social care teams match children to placements that support their individual needs, and should take some of the pressure off the Fostering team so it can concentrate on recruiting carers.

We've increased the number of foster carers, but we're still not meeting demand. So to increase numbers further, we started a new recruitment campaign in January 2020.

We sent leaflets and posters to all departments, schools, health centres and other public places – as well as using social media and other digital marketing channels to raise awareness.

Increasing the number of in-house foster carers should help us save money on agency placements, as well as improving outcomes for children by keeping them in their local areas, schools and support networks.

The fostering service has recently updated its policies and procedures, which are available to staff on the council's intranet, and to foster carers via the updated fostering handbook.

A digital version of the handbook has also been made available.

Reducing the number of looked-after children

The number of looked after children has increased across Wales in recent years. It's a trend that's been identified by Welsh Government, which is working with local authorities to try and safely reduce the numbers.

While we aim to meet our safeguarding and welfare duty towards those children and young people, we must also:

- Try and keep children with their parents, extended family and their wider community whenever it's safe to do so.
- When it's not safe to do so, ensure appropriate orders are available that provide permanence for children with limited statutory intervention.
- Base our decisions on evidence-based practice, effective assessment and planning, and try to reduce both need and risk at the earliest opportunity.

Corporate parenting

Our Corporate Parenting Panel ensures the needs of looked-after children, as well as those leaving our care, are met through a 'whole authority' approach at the council, with support from our partners and the third sector.

This year we've revised the officer representation on the panel and updated its terms of reference, helping to ensure we fulfil our responsibilities to these children – that we care for them, and be aspirational and ambitious for them as a good corporate parent.

We've also updated our wider Corporate Parenting Strategy. This sets out our vision and plans for fulfilling our corporate parenting responsibilities.

The strategy is based on what children and young people have told us about their experiences in our care – captured through the annual Young People’s Care Council survey.

The Young People’s Care Council will be strengthened to better represent children and young people, and will continue to tell us what needs to change, while providing ideas and advice about how to make these changes.

We value the experiences of children and young people in care and we’re committed to involving them in all the decisions that affect their lives – by asking what they want, listening to what they tell us and taking action.

Children in care and care-leavers can face challenges as they grow up and move on to become independent adults. To make this journey as smooth as possible, and ensure they go on to fulfil their potential, it’s vital that councillors, officers and services across the council work together in their interests.

So the strategy provides a framework to help us fulfil our roles as corporate parents.

Helping children with complex needs

We sometimes have children with complex needs who – rather than staying in residential placements – might benefit from therapeutic foster care.

So we’ve developed an approach for this – called the ‘Wrexham Repatriation and Prevention Project.’

Using Integrated Care Fund money, we’ve been able to expand it into a sub-regional model with Flintshire – to further support looked-after children who need complex therapeutic foster placements.

Someone to turn to

We have a health board nurse based in our social services team. They work with health visitors, school nurses and paediatricians to help look after the children we’re supporting.

We also support 11-18 year-olds who’ve been to hospital for self-harming and other risk-taking behaviour.

This is part of a project we’ve been running with the health board since 2006.

Helping families

Flying Start is a Welsh Government funded programme that operates in certain parts of Wrexham. It supports children from birth up until their fourth birthday, as well as their parents / carers.

The aim is to help children get the best possible start in life.

The service employs a social worker, mental health practitioner, and a speech and language therapist. They work alongside health and social care professionals, and visit the homes of families that might need help identifying their needs early...before things escalate.

The service provides intensive health visiting support, support for early language development, parenting support and the provision of childcare for children aged 2-3 years.

All Flying Start services are free and information is available via midwives, health visitors and at the Flying Start office at Hafod y Wern.

Case study

A Flying Start social worker describes how they helped a family...

"Professionals within Flying Start had concerns about a family due to home conditions and the impact on the children's development.

"The second child had a learning disability and the mother was worried that the two younger children would develop this too. The third child had poor attendance at school nursery and the fourth child wasn't mobile.

"The mother was sexually abused as a child and was also socially isolated and experiencing mental health problems. She was also avoiding opening letters, which may lead to debt for the family.

"The father struggled to manage the mother's mental illness and its impact on the family, and her low mood and anxiety was affecting her motivation to manage the inappropriate home conditions.

"The father also had a low mood but was managing to go to work. He came into the office requesting support.

"The family received a care package from Flying Start consisting of intensive health visitor support (as well as being seen at the clinic), the language and play Chatterbox group, a family support worker, a speech and language therapist, and a primary mental health practitioner.

“Historically, the family were poor at engaging with services. It was also difficult to gain access to the family home. There was a long history of service involvement and non-compliance from the mother.

“An initial visit was made with the Flying Start mental health practitioner to discuss the referral. The mother was very anxious about a social worker visiting her home and its consequences.

“During the visit, the mother was reassured that my role was to empower her to improve her home conditions. She appeared to be reassured and agreed to me visiting again.

“At my first visit we completed the ‘home conditions tool’ together. This was to make her aware of the concerns and to enable her to make the changes.

“The assessment concluded that if the home conditions continue to be of concern, this would impact further on the children’s wellbeing. I adopted an open and honest approach and explained my concerns.

“The mother also appeared to be open with me and discussed her concerns. She said she was ashamed of her home and did not want professionals to visit until she had made changes.

“After the second week of intervention, the parents had cleaned the kitchen and bathroom. They had also cleaned the living room, and one of the children’s bedrooms. The living room was also free from clutter and the children had space to play.

“The youngest child is now walking independently. The parents are now managing to maintain the home conditions. To promote evidence-based practice, the home conditions tool has been revisited and positive changes have been recorded.

“The children now access play provision and nursery. The youngest child regularly attends the child minder. The mother has accessed Flying Start and external services to meet her own needs.

“Had the family not engaged with a Flying Start social worker to make improvements, there is the potential this case would have been escalated to Children’s Social Care due to the likelihood of significant harm.”

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- In line with the refreshed recruitment strategy, continue to increase the number of in-house foster carers.
- Deliver on our wider Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Standard 3: Safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

This means helping to protect people who might be at risk of abuse, neglect or other forms of harm or exploitation.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Ensure the Advocacy Service is achieving its aims, and review the outcomes being achieved for people.
- Deliver the actions set out in our response to the Making Voices Heard report.
- Achieve 100% compliance with Re-X procedures (DoLS 2007).

This is what we did

Advocacy service

A new contract for advocacy provision was implemented in January 2019 following a competitive tender.

The new service places greater emphasis on self, community and peer advocacy – with case-work focussed on those who need independent professional advocacy.

It's also committed to supporting older people living in residential care.

Jargon buster – 'advocacy'

'Advocacy' is when a person has another person (i.e. an advocate) to help look out for their interests. The advocate is usually a professional, relative, friend or another service-user, and they'll often accompany the person to meetings with health and social care providers.

NWAAA facilitate the Wrexham Self-Advocacy group, which remains an important and continually developing service.

It gives people the opportunity to discuss, debate and challenge local, regional and national changes that affect them.

'Peer-advocacy' is still an informal thing in Wrexham. But with NWAAA, we want to drive it forward.

We also want to develop our own advocacy services, to make sure we can support people with very complex needs.

Making voices heard

A detailed action plan has been developed as a result of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales' Report 'Making Voices Heard: Older People's Access to Independent Advocacy in Wales (2018)'

We've engaged with a range of people and organisations, and aim to ensure that decisions about care and support are made by individuals themselves...not by others.

We want every person that comes into contact with health or social services to understand their rights to advocacy – and the different types of advocacy available.

Demand for formal or specialist advocacy services will be managed by creating more opportunities for self, peer and citizen advocacy – with independent professional advocacy in place for more complex cases.

As part of the plan, best-practice standards will operate across all providers, including those offering more informal advocacy.

Providers will work with local people to develop these standards, and will share best practice across the region.

R-ex

We've been working to deliver compliance with Re-X procedures.

However, the procedures will now be replaced by the Liberty Protection Safeguards Code of Practice, so further roll-out has been halted.

Our focus will now move to ensuring full compliance with the new safeguards code of practice.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Develop skills to coproduce with people with complex communication needs.
- Develop an audit cycle ensuring key themes of asset based assessment, outcomes focused care and support planning, mental capacity and advocacy are embedded into practice.
- Manage the safe and effective transition from the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards to the Liberty Protection Safeguards.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Reduce and streamline the number of documents completed as part of the Child Protection process.
- Continue to work with colleagues in Human Resources to improve the stability of our Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officer (ISRO) posts.
- Review and develop our Child Protection Plan.
- Ensure Children's Social Care remains compliant with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), in line with corporate timescales.
- Improve the timeliness of our reviews of Care and Support Plans, including those for looked-after children and children on the Child Protection Register.

This is what we did

Safeguarding people

2019-20 continued to be a busy year for the Safeguarding People team.

It faced increased demand its services and had to respond to a complexity of cases.

Following a period of instability and staffing challenges with the ISRO posts, the team are now at full strength. This has improved the timeliness of our Looked After Children and Child Protection reviews.

We continue to work with our colleagues in Human Resources to support long-term stability within these roles.

In relation to our other objectives for this year, we did make good progress.

Documentation around Section 47 investigations and the initial child protection conference has been streamlined – reducing duplication and paperwork.

Further training for all social work staff and managers has been ongoing throughout 2019-20 to support the development of our risk assessment model.

This includes individual sessions for managers and staff with an independent specialist consultant with additional coaching and mentoring available as required.

Protecting children

We still have work to do with our Child Protection Plan. However, we're working towards an effective child protection model and drawing on work being piloted by another council, which is aiming to set a national standard for best practice.

In line with the proposals set out in the draft national guidance for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), the remit of the CSE Panel in Wrexham has been expanded to incorporate all forms of exploitation.

This is now known as the Missing-Exploited-Trafficked (MET) Operational Panel and covers children and young people who are vulnerable due to missing-from-home episodes, being exploited (including criminal exploitation) and being trafficked.

We also hold strategic MET meetings with colleagues in Flintshire – to look at any patterns, themes or trends across North East Wales. This is now embedded into practice.

The department has progressed well, ensuring it remains compliant with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) introduced in 2018.

We've updated our privacy notices on the council website, and have an accurate register of all our information 'assets' and 'flows' in and out of the department.

We've trained all our Information Asset Administrators (IAAs) – who are mostly team managers – in how to use the electronic system to support timely and accurate recording of any changes.

Info and training

We continue to provide councillors with training on our Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

The Corporate Safeguarding Action Plan has been updated to reflect emerging issues like 'County Lines' (gangs), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Modern Day Slavery (MDS) and PREVENT (Counter Terrorism)...and our responsibilities in helping to combat these problems.

Engaging with children and families

We continue to try and increase participation of children and families in the child protection process. This is part of our departmental engagement strategy.

We've improved the way we engage with young people after they've been assessed and referred to our Child Protection and Looked-After Children processes.

Before every review meeting, we'll send them a child-friendly form they can use to tell us their wishes and feelings.

We have feedback forms to get a better feel for how children find the meetings, and to shape how we do things in future.

The ISROs are working with foster carers, who will be providing a picture of children and young people placed in their care doing something they enjoy at each review – in order to promote 'life journey' work.

Providing advice

We share information and expertise – both internally and with partner agencies – in lots of ways.

The Safeguarding People team provides advice to staff who work with young people at risk of harm.

The expertise in the team helps provide a consistent approach to safeguarding across social services in Wrexham.

A learning culture

You can never learn too much, and we're committed to developing a learning-culture here in Wrexham.

For example, recommendations from Child Practice Reviews (which look at serious incidents of abuse or neglect in Wales) are shared with our social services teams.

We use them to develop our procedures and shape what we do.

We also contribute expertise and resources to the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board – which helps co-ordinate multi-agency work in the region.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Improve attendance of young people at child protection conferences.
- Develop and implement our Child Protection Plan.
- Ensure our risk model is embedded in everything we do.
- Increase the involvement of the 'referrer' and other agencies involved in strategy meetings and discussions.

Standard 4: Helping people to learn, develop and participate in society

This standard is about encouraging people to take part in society – helping them learn, interact with other people and be part of their communities.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Implement the new Shared Lives daytime support service across all user-groups, and decommission project work support from domiciliary care agencies.
- Continue to develop the Community Agent initiative in line with our co-produced strategy.
- Continue to develop Wrexham as a Dementia-Friendly Council, by ensuring Dementia Friends sessions are a mandatory part of staff induction training across all departments.
- Continue to develop and promote the Safe Places scheme across Wrexham. Training will be provided to venues, and the team will work alongside the police and police cadets, as well as raise awareness among Neighbourhood Watch.
- Continue to implement the findings of our review of day and work opportunities.
- Work with people with autism and their families to further develop our approach to making Wrexham an autism-friendly council and town.
- Work with partners to promote digital inclusion and develop digital information, advice and assistance for people who need our services.

This is what we did

Shared Lives

We've worked across our older persons and disability teams to significantly reduce the number of project work packages delivered by domiciliary care agencies.

We no longer commission project work support from our care providers (helping to ease pressure on the care market), and more appropriate solutions are sourced from dedicated project work providers, Direct Payments or Shared Lives.

Jargon buster – ‘Shared Lives’

‘Shared Lives’ is a scheme that pairs people with dementia and other health issues with carers who have similar interests and hobbies – so they can continue to enjoy a full and rewarding life. This can be anything...from gardening to fishing to going to watch the football.

We’ve been working closely with our commissioned third sector Shared Lives provider.

The aim is to grow the number of Shared Lives carers across Wrexham. To help achieve this, Person Shaped Support has been working with partners to attract new people with different skills and interests into the profession.

This will make it easier to match people and carers appropriately.

We’ve also been able to develop our Shared Days service to give people greater choice about how they achieve their outcomes (i.e. what they want).

This means people with similar interests can come together to share a carer for the day, or part of the day – encouraging peer-support, reducing social isolation and providing cost-effective choices for people.

Community Agents

Community Agents play a key role in helping us support the development of ‘strong and resilient communities’

They help older people find local solutions to meet their needs – rather than having to come through social services.

They also help develop low-level local activities and groups identified through community engagement...anything from a local luncheon club to a craft group.

However, a lot of their work is with individuals who are vulnerable, isolated and need help reconnecting with their communities...or navigating the often complex health and social care system.

This year we’ve focussed on ensuring full coverage across the county borough, and growing the service to meet local need. Is full coverage in place now?

We’ve also been able to help Community Agents develop local activities and services through the Community Inclusion Grant.

Working in the spirit of the Community Services Transformation Programme, the joint Community Agent and Social Prescribing Steering Group is working on integrated access to Community Agents – forging links with our Adult Services SPoA, Housing, BCUHB and the third sector.

Case study

A Community Agent describes how they helped a man living in a remote rural area...

"A' has a number of health issues following cancer treatment. He is now in remission but struggles with mobility. He lives alone in a very rural part of the area and has been extremely isolated.

"A' struggles with high levels of anxiety, finding it difficult to access both local services and outside events. He is virtually housebound and has his medication and shopping delivered.

"A' is not comfortable with writing letters or completing official paperwork, but is able to do so with support. He can use the telephone but will give up if faced with an answerphone, is placed on hold or needs to wait in a call tree as he gets impatient and frustrated quickly.

"This has severely limited his access to help and support in the past, but his confidence is gradually improving.

"He's too frail to adequately maintain his home. This resulted in his initial call asking for help when his heating system was condemned. When visited, further issues were identified, including social isolation, a large amount of clutter presenting a very real fire risk and an overgrown garden.

"The Community Agent obtained assistance from colleagues at Chirk Charities who arranged for a fully-qualified heating engineer and electrician to attend the property, check and repair the system and provide energy and safety advice.

"Due to the number of electric heaters, extension leads and trailing wires in the property, a 'Safe and Well' check from the fire service was arranged and replacement smoke detectors were fitted.

"Care and Repair have been approached to review repairs needed within the property, including a replacement front door.

"Following a conversation with the Red Cross, the Community Agent approached Derwen College (a local college for students with learning difficulties). They agreed to tackle the gardening work as part of their work experience programme in return for a minimal fee. An appointment was arranged within the week, with the promise of further visits should they be needed.

"A' is now much more positive. He has purchased an automatic car which he is able to drive to attend local appointments and to visit friends."

Dementia Friendly

Having worked continuously across teams and departments – and in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Society – we’ve now been recognised as a Dementia Friendly Council.

We’ve increased the number of Dementia Champions in each department – helping to raise awareness of the needs of people living with dementia and their carers.

There are now 22 Dementia Champions across the council. Champions are responsible for delivering Dementia Friends training within their departments.

We’ve also been working closely with the Dementia Friendly Wrexham Steering Group, to ensure Wrexham becomes a Dementia Friendly Town.

And with support from the community council, we look forward to announcing Holt as our first community ward to achieve Dementia Friendly status very soon. 115 people in Holt – including shopkeepers and pub landlords – have received Dementia Friends training.

All of our residential care homes are now equipped with ‘sensory boxes,’ containing a range of tools for reminiscence activities (designed to help people remember and reminisce about certain things).

Coupled with our Rempods (portable reminiscence scenes like a sweet shop, train carriage and shed) and promoted through Activities Co-ordinators, our commissioned services are now able to provide more reminiscence activities – supporting the wellbeing of people living with dementia.

This year also saw the launch of ‘Hug Dolls’ in Wrexham. Hug Dolls (made by Laugh) are sensory devices designed to bring comfort to people living with dementia.

They’re designed to be cuddled – like a small baby – and have a beating heart and a soft body. They can also play music.

Young and old together

Bringing different generations together – young and old – can be a great way to support older people.

So the introduction of ‘intergenerational boxes’ with games and activities for hire has been a real positive.

Nurseries, playgroups and schools have also been encouraged to provide intergenerational activities at care homes, with support from the Community Inclusion Grant.

This kind of interaction between younger children and older people with dementia is helping us develop Wrexham as a Dementia Friendly council and place – preventing loneliness and isolation, and improving the health and wellbeing of children and adults.

With help from Wrexham Activity Coordinators, Boogie Beat – which provides music-based fun for toddlers – has launched ‘Boogie Beat Intergenerational’ in Wrexham.

Trained as a Dementia Friend, the Boogie Beat co-ordinator has delivered dance, movement and song sessions in care homes across Wrexham which are suitable for old and young. And they’re quickly becoming the most popular Boogie Beat sessions in Wrexham – providing amazing experiences for everyone involved.

“The benefits are far reaching, they've got everyone talking and I have a regular group of parents that specifically only want to attend the care home sessions.” - Sarah – Boogie Beat Coordinator for Wrexham and Chester

Safe places

The Wrexham Safe Places scheme continues to expand at pace.

The scheme provides the security of knowing that people who are worried about their own or others’ safety, have a ‘safe place’ to go in times of need.

Each place is added to an app. You can tap the app and it’ll take you to the nearest location.

So far 57 venues have signed up to be ‘safe places’ – ranging from cafes to taxi offices.

Individuals can register for a card with the details of the people they would like to be contacted if they’re feeling vulnerable. They can show this at a Safe Places venue, and staff will know what to do.

The scheme is free to use and it’s free to become a venue.

We’ve also been working on making our Safe Places dementia and autism-friendly – including Dementia Friends training at all venues.

People are now regularly telling us they feel confident going into Wrexham town centre and other areas for work, shopping and leisure.

“Using Safe Places, I have confidence to go and visit pubs and cafes to meet my friends. The staff know my name and know I’m gluten free. It helps me get out and it’s a great idea.” - Mr KS

Day and work opportunities

We've continued to reshape our Day and Work Opportunities service – ensuring it's more flexible, sustainable and centred around the people that use it.

Jargon buster – 'Day and Work Opportunities'

'Day and Work Opportunities' is a service that provides work and volunteering opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

We're now providing more choices and personalised experiences for individuals – making it easier for them to access local work and volunteering opportunities, and be included in the community as equal citizens.

This year we've continued to review our services through 'co-production' – involving people in their design, delivery and evaluation.

Jargon buster – 'co-production'

'Co-production' refers to work undertaken with the full and equal involvement of service-users. In other words, people who use services are given an equal say in decisions and changes that affect them.

This included a series of workshops to gather the views of individuals, families and carers, advocates and other professionals.

A questionnaire was published on Your Voice Wrexham (the council's consultation website), with nearly 100 responses, and an independent Advocacy Service review was held with people attending The Cunliffe Centre and Erlas.

Most people agreed that support services should be community-focused, and that individuals should have opportunities that promote independence and choice.

There was also a common theme around having a community hub in the town centre, where people can access activities.

A lot of people suggested we build networks with third sector organisations, businesses, colleges and schools to develop opportunities for people with disabilities – including apprenticeships and training for people who want to move into work.

The responses also highlighted the need to develop accessible facilities and suitable transport in communities, as well as individuals having the support they need to participate in the activities they choose.

This year has been about engaging with our service users and understanding their aspirations, and this will continue as we begin to develop future models of support.

Autism friendly

We've co-produced an Autism Action Plan to help Wrexham become an Autism Friendly Town.

Supported by the Integrated Care Fund, we've:

- Worked with third sector providers, carers and individuals to stage our first Autism My Way festival – welcoming over 170 people to an event about autism.
- Delivered the Virtual Autism Tour Bus experience – training 330 people across Wrexham.
- Purchased Virtual Reality Headsets to give people access to a 'virtual autism' experience through their smart phone. Working in partnership with GPs, schools and hospitals, the headsets have enabled us to start 'big conversations' with people about autism.
- Partnered with the Safe Places scheme to help registered safe places to become autism-friendly spaces, identifiable via the Safe Places app.
- Achieved Autism Friendly status for our Social Care Commissioning team.

Building on the positive work we've started this year, we'll continue to work with our partnership steering group to implement the Autism Code of Practice, and achieve Autism Friendly Town status.

Digital

As a council, we've completely overhauled our website. Content has been reviewed and re-written to be more customer-focussed and easier to read.

As part of that process, we've taken paper-based forms and made them electronic – improving the way people can access our services through the web.

We're also working with our corporate colleagues to improve our use digital marketing techniques to get information to target audiences – including the use of an email marketing tool.

It's been very effective, and alongside an active social media presence and news blog, we're making more people aware of the advice and services available to them.

Through our Community Inclusion Grant, we continue to support community-based digital inclusion programmes.

This year, we funded laptops at a local supported housing scheme for people with learning disabilities – helping people develop their online skills and independence. And we continue to work with Dewis Cymru – a national website that provides information about health and well-being services.

We're looking forward to building on this in 2020-21, and helping even more people access help and support online.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Continue to grow the shared lives offer as a more flexible and personalised alternative to more traditional care services.
- Evaluate the Community Agents Project and design a clear pathway between social prescribing and community agents.
- Co-produce Intergenerational Strategy to support improved outcomes for people.
- Co-produce a sub-regional partnership with the third sector for delivery of Safe Places.
- Prepare for implementation of Autism Code of Practice.
- Co-produce further development of a community based friendship hub.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Continue to reduce the waiting time between referral and intervention for TAC to prevent escalation of needs and the requirement for specialist intervention.
- Improve the timeliness of the completion of initial PEPs, to ensure the needs of looked-after children are met at the earliest opportunity.

This is what we did

Personal Education Plans

Our education co-ordinator continues to support the young people we look after through school and college.

It's a really important job, and helps prevent or reduce disruption to their education (for example if they need to move to a new location or school).

We've amended the way we monitor timeliness of initial Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in line with the requirements of the Act.

Timeliness remains a challenge. However, a move to the new IT System (WCCIS) has seen us incorporate education plans into our LAC Care and Support Plans – ensuring the child or young person's education is a key part of their overall care and support.

Together Achieving change

We have a Together Achieving Change (TAC) officer working within the Children's SPoA to help identify families in need of early help.

The TAC process is a way of organising and co-ordinating extra help for children, young people and their families who need additional support, but whose difficulties are not serious enough to involve social services.

Support can be offered on a family basis or just to an individual.

“Knowing that support was on hand was amazing. It is great to have a service that can bring everyone together.” - Service user comment from a TAC evaluation form.

TAC has celebrated 10 years since the roll-out of the service across the county borough.

A celebration event took place in December 2018 – attended by families who've received support from TAC, along with practitioners from other services who shared their experiences.

The team continues to work with families to ensure their needs are identified early, and they benefit from co-ordinated, multi-agency preventative support.

A review of our TAC service and waiting lists has led to a change in practice.

Each TAC Officer carries out an introductory visit with the family within two weeks of allocation. This has led to better engagement and support being put in place at the earliest opportunity.

The waiting list has reduced significantly and cases are currently allocated within a maximum of three weeks from the time the referral is received.

The team has been strengthened with two new family practitioners, providing support to families at the earliest opportunity.

ACE Informed Practice

Staff from Families First have also worked with the Wrexham and Flintshire Home-start organisation, local schools and Women's Aid to develop an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Champion project.

This project is trialling approaches to working in an ACE or 'Trauma' informed way with families, in a safe and trusting environment. Lessons will be shared with partners and good practice incorporated into policies, procedures and training as appropriate.

The project was awarded Early Intervention funding from the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.

The project is developing an expert 'ACE Champion' approach to family support, as well as establishing a hub for information, training and research on adverse childhood experiences.

Helping families with parenting problems

The Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) is a multi-agency team that works directly with families experiencing parenting difficulties due to substance misuse or other complexities – such as mental health or domestic violence.

IFSS intervention consists of an intensive 4-6 week programme, followed by a less intensive phase of up to 12 months.

"IFSS service is such a valuable service to people like myself during time of desperate need. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to work with the worker to develop new life-long skills."

Feedback from a service user who benefitted from IFSS intervention

The IFSS is under review across Wrexham and Flintshire, with a view to making changes that encourage a preventative approach and meet the needs of more families across both counties.

It's hoped the re-launch of IFSS will take place in Spring 2020.

IFSS is also running the 'Pause and Reflect' project. This provides targeted support – including sexual health services – to women in Wrexham and Flintshire. The project is exclusively for women at risk of repeat pregnancies followed by the removal of a child.

The project aims to provide holistic support to women to enable them to achieve positive futures.

Supporting young carers

We also support young carers through our partners Credu.

To enhance regional working, Credu has implemented an assessment and support plan to encourage consistency across the councils it works for.

Young carers are children who look after someone at home (a parent, brother or sister for example) and often carry big responsibilities on small shoulders.

Advice and information, one-to-one support, outings and activities – as well as opportunities to meet other young carers – help these children experience things that might otherwise be impossible. In 2019 / 20 we had roughly 350 children registered with Credu as young carers, 216 who attended groups in Wrexham and between 10 and 20 who have also accessed extra individuals support at any one time.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Review the IFSS model to ensure the current service is fit for purpose.

Standard 5: Helping people maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.

This standard is about helping people achieve healthy relationships at home and with the people they're close to.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Work with care homes to develop a 'you said we did' approach to managing feedback from people living in residential care and develop a Quality Standard for Care Homes.
- Work with people living with dementia – including people with young onset dementia and their carers to better understand their needs and co-produce solutions.
- Work with carers of adult children with a disability to help them plan in advance for the future living arrangements of their children.

This is what we did

Quality standard for care homes

We continue to work closely with CIW to improve how we gather and manage feedback from people living in care homes.

This year we've been working with people, families and partners to turn "what 'good' looks like to people" into meaningful outcomes we can monitor to help improve services.

Working with people with dementia

Since September 2017, Adult Social Care has been working with the Older People's Community Mental Health Team (BCUHB) and the Alzheimer's Society to develop a new approach to supporting people living with young onset-dementia.

This new model takes provides a community-based support that's age-appropriate and centred on the individual.

This year, our work has focussed on a partnership with Wrexham Council's library service, exploring ways we can improve access to libraries for people living with dementia.

Through the Intermediate Care Fund, Dementia Action Plan (DAP) funding, we've purchased 'Active Minds' products designed for people living with dementia. They're available in different formats – depending at what stage a person's dementia is at.

Products are available on loan from Ruabon and Wrexham libraries. We plan to evaluate their success and roll out further products in 2020.

DAP funding has also helped us buy other dementia assistance aids and technology, and helped us deliver Virtual Dementia Tour Bus training.

In fact, over 330 people, carers and staff from a variety of organisations have been able to visit the bus – providing a much-valued insight into what it's like to live with dementia.

Working with carers of adult children with a disability

We've continued to work with carers of adult children with a disability.

Our carers' service is delivered by NEWCIS, a network partner of Carers Trust Wales. As well as information and advice, it offers an increased number of carers access to respite solutions to support them in their caring role.

NEWCIS has also taken over the administration of our carers' Direct Payments scheme. Payments of up to £200 can be made to carers for purchases to support them in their caring role. We hope to reach more carers and expand on how Direct Payments for carers are used in future.

Through our 'what matters' conversations, we're able to explore the needs of families as a whole, and help people design person-centred care and respite plans.

As a result, we've been able to deliver 'taster breaks' for people and families looking at supported living – helping them make informed choices about their future, based on things that matter to them.

Having these conversations with people and families at the earliest opportunity helps them to plan.

People also tell us that being able to share experiences with other families is a huge help. So we've been putting more people in touch with each other...so they can support each other during these important life-changes.

This year:

- 930 people were supported by NEWCIS for IAA
- 87 people were supported by NEWCIS for Respite
- 136 people were provided with a carers Direct Payment
- The grants are used for practical items such as washing machines, cookers, laptops, gardening, holidays, equipment or anything that supports carers with their caring role or personal wellbeing.

The annual carers survey was returned by 134 carers and found that:

- 69% of carers agreed that their views had been listened to when discussing the needs of the person they care for.
- 82% of the carers that were assessed felt the process helped them fully or partially in their caring role.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Implement outcome focussed monitoring of care homes based on what 'good' looks like to people.
- Commission emergency respite solutions for people living with dementia and their carers.

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- In line with the outcomes of a review, introduce a new regional funding model and service structure for North Wales Adoption Service – so it can meet the increased demand for children requiring adoptive placements.
- Review the impact of the Edge of Care panel in reducing the numbers of looked-after children.
- Develop a pool of sessional workers to help prevent family breakdown.

This is what we did

North Wales Adoption Service

Wrexham continues to host the regional North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS), which helps place children who can't return to live with their parents.

In Wrexham and across the region, there's an increasing number of children waiting to be adopted. These children are available for adoption, but suitable matches haven't been found yet. This reflects a national trend of a shortage of adopters.

Many of the children waiting to be adopted are older or have extremely complex needs, which makes finding an adopter even more difficult. Recruitment of adopters remains a challenge for the service across North Wales.

A planned review of NWAS was undertaken and completed in 2019. This made recommendations relating to the governance and structure of the service and around post-adoption support services. Recommendations from this review are being taken forward in 2020.

The changes will improve the management of the service and enable NWAS to meet all of its regional, national and legislative obligations.

Staff will also benefit from improved access to management support.

The changes will also allow NWAS to expand, and deliver an enhanced post-adoption service as directed by the Welsh Government – benefitting potential adopters, adopters and adopted children.

The service will also introduce the TESSA (Therapeutic Education Support Service in Adoption) role.

Clearer documentation

We've refined our referral documentation and process for the Prevention and Support Service (PASS) both for the Core Team and Waking Hours – providing greater clarity about what support is being requested.

An outcomes document has also been designed to help us evaluate not only our successes, but also where we can do better or learn lessons from the interventions we offer.

The PASS team has added to its provision of supervised contact and one-to-one support. It offers Family Group Meetings, Return Home Interviews and Parenting (PAMS) Assessments.

We plan to review the PASS team to ensure our service model is still fit for purpose and can meet the demand we're facing.

Supporting families

The Waking Hours Team has been fully operational since June 2016.

The team aims to deliver services between 7am and 10pm, 7 days-a-week – allowing workers to support parents with routines, behaviour-management and developing positive relationships within families.

The team also assists with foster care and adoption placements at risk of breaking down, as well as providing support for adolescents aged 16+ struggling within the family home or in supported lodgings.

The team has a child-friendly venue where staff undertake direct work and supervised contact with service users. The approach is proving effective and we're committed to its development.

“Thanks for everything. I have been through a lot the last couple of months and you have helped me so much.” - Feedback from a service user on a PASS evaluation form.

Case Study

The PASS Team describes how it helped a mother and her two-year-old child...

“Referrals were received by the PASS team for supervised contact, parenting assessment and Waking Hours one-to-one support for a two-year old child placed into foster care.

“Initially, the birth parent’s engagement with supervised contact was very poor. Mum showed significant anger towards Children’s Service’s due to her previous experiences as a child.

“The Family Support Worker (FSW) considered mum’s anxieties and own negative parenting experiences within her approach – resulting in mum’s engagement significantly improving.

“The FSW helped mum understand the importance of putting her child’s needs before her own, implementing boundaries and dealing with behavioural issues in the moment.

“Mum’s engagement improved to the extent that she not only worked well within supervised contact but when a second FSW started the Parenting Assessment, she continued to engage well, with full attendance and compliance.

“Following the recommendations from the Parenting Assessment, an FSW from the Waking Hours team provided one-to-one support – working with mum towards the child being returned home on a rehabilitation plan. The work focused on parenting, routines and boundaries.

“Mum engaged very well and remains in professional contact with FSWs regarding parenting support. The outcome was that the child was successfully returned home with continual low-level support from children’s services.”

When young people go missing

Wrexham was one of the first councils in North Wales to introduce a Missing from Home Co-ordinator.

This post ensures young people reported missing are visited and seen within 72 hours of returning home, and are assessed for vulnerabilities in relation to exploitation.

Our co-ordinator liaises regularly with our colleagues in health, education and the police.

Case study

How we helped protect a young person from criminal exploitation...

“A referral was received from SPoA in the form of a police notification (CID 16) relating to a 16-year-old male ‘Missing from Home’ (MFH) in Wrexham.

“The Missing from Home Co-ordinator identified the ‘placing authority’ (the council from the young person’s home area), as the individual was from out of county. They made contact with the allocated social worker to offer a Return Home Interview and then went on to speak to staff from the placement to arrange a time and date to visit.

“Over the following nine months the co-ordinator completed 23 RHI with the young person and attended three strategy meetings.

“During this time the co-ordinator built a positive professional relationship with the young person, which enabled her to collate geographical and associated peer group information. The co-ordinator was able to forward this information to the specific department within North Wales Police, the placing authority and the local authority where he was placed.

“As a result, the young person received support from Barnardo’s Independent Child Trafficking service and the information was shared at multi-agency Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) meetings, which were held due to the intelligence gathered from the RHIs and other sources.

“The information also helped the police in mapping areas of concern to enable them to target resources to protect more young people from becoming involved in Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) related behaviours.

“As a result of all the support given to the young person he was moved out of the area to safeguard and support him, and to enable him to make positive life choices.”

‘Edge of Care’

We’ve seen a significant rise in children becoming looked after.

In light of the financial constraints imposed on councils and the need to provide good quality outcomes for all children and young people who access our services, we’ve reviewed our approach to accommodating children and young people.

We introduced the ‘Edge of Care’ Panel. With this multi-disciplinary approach we aim to manage the threshold for access to the looked-after system, ensuring resources are appropriately identified and allocated.

The panel will act as an additional check-point for social workers and other professionals to ensure all avenues have been fully tested and exhausted before a child or young person is brought into care.

Research indicates that children / young people and their families achieve the best outcomes when intervention is targeted early, and before they reach statutory levels of intervention.

It’s been established that children and young people who live with their parents and/or birth families on balance achieve better outcomes compared to those looked after by the local authority.

Our Edge of Care approach is to support children and young people to remain with their birth families whenever it is safe and possible to do so.

We also intend to use the panel to review and assess the existing Care Planning and Permanence arrangements of children in our care, to ensure the placement continues to meet their needs now and in the future.

Helping foster-carers build positive relationships

In Wrexham, we continue to support the Confidence in Care programme. This is a Big Lottery funded programme aimed at training 1,500 foster carers in Wales to raise their confidence and improve placement stability.

The course runs for 12 weeks on an annual basis, and teaches foster carers different techniques to build positive relationships with the children and young people in their care.

Wrexham Fostering Service is also introducing a new 'buddy scheme' to support foster carers.

The scheme will launch in 2019 and will be trialled for 12 months and then reviewed.

The aim is to utilise the skills and experience of existing foster carers to support newly approved carers.

Family centres

The council has two family centres that provide a range of services. For example, the Parenting Team offers early intervention for families who need parenting support – including one-to-one help and group sessions.

Both family centres provide Flying Start services for children who need extra help and support with their development.

We relocated our Dean Road family centre in Borrass to a more central location in Rhosddu.

This centre is called Tŷ Ni and offers a more modern and child-friendly environment for service users.

This year, our family centres have been concentrating on promoting their services. This includes producing a directory for professionals, which details the services they offer.

They've also produced a leaflet aimed at families.

The centres have established their 'accessible hours' service, which ensures a member of staff is always present to offer either telephone or face-to-face support for families.

The hours are Monday to Friday 10am-12pm, and 3pm-5pm (4.30pm on a Friday). This is supplemented by an evening drop-in session on the first Thursday of each month, 4.30-6.30pm.

The centres also held open sessions for families during the school holidays in August. They were very positive and received good feedback.

"Fantastic time at the fun day. Lovely friendly staff and excellent provision. Thank you." - Feedback from a service user who attended the Family Centre open summer session 2019

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Review the PASS Team to ensure the current service model is fit for purpose.
- Embed the regional adoption service model.
- Continue to develop early intervention and preventative services in line with Welsh Government priorities.

Standard 6: Helping people achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

This means helping people improve their income. As well as helping them benefit from a social life and a suitable place to live.

Adult Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Work with Supporting People to review our extra-care schemes – ensuring independence is promoted.
- Work closely with colleagues in our housing department to inform the development of the Older People's Housing Strategy and the Housing Strategy.
- Continue to develop innovative models for Supported Living – utilising the Integrated Care Fund.

This is what we did

Extra-care schemes

Our new extra-care housing scheme – Maes y Dderwen – reached full capacity this year, offering 24-hour support to people with high level needs.

This facility is based in the centre of Wrexham, and – alongside our existing scheme Plas Telford – provides 112 apartments.

Based on the 'third's model', extra care in Wrexham is structured to provide support to individuals with low, medium and high support needs.

For people with high-level needs, the model reduces demand on residential care and improves older people's level of independence – as well as enhancing their experience of assisted living.

Care at both Maes y Dderwen and Plas Telford is provided by our in-house service – so we can make sure there's a strong focus on reablement. Allocations are managed by our Team for Older People.

Working with the Housing Support and Local Lettings Team, we've reviewed the way people access housing-related support at our extra-care schemes this year.

Support is now coordinated by the Housing Department's 'Housing Options Gateway', with specialist support made available based on the individual's needs.

Older people's housing

Older people's housing needs are now addressed in one document – the Local Housing Strategy.

The strategy sets out the housing needs of people living in Wrexham – both now and in the future – and explains how we as a council plan to address them.

As part of this, we've worked with the Housing Department to:

- Join forces with First Choice Housing to access grant funding via the Innovative Housing Programme. We'll use this money to redevelop a supported-living service, and launch a modular 'flexi-home' for people with learning disabilities.
- Include fully accessible bungalows and flats as part of new council housing developments.
- Work with the council's Housing Development Project Manager to ensure the needs of disabled and older people are catered for in new housing developments.
- Help the Housing Adaptations Panel assess applications for adapted properties across the county borough.
- Represent social care on the Sheltered Housing and Refurbishment Project Board – ensuring schemes are designed to 'dementia design' and 'lifetime homes' standards.

Jargon buster – 'adapted properties'

'Adapted properties' are adapted to make things easier for someone living there. For example, someone with limited mobility might be able to have their home adapted so it's easier for them to move around the property. The council provides grants to help people make these changes to their homes.

Supported living

Our Supported Living Service has continued to drive forward innovation.

We've been working with individuals, families, Registered Social Landlords and partners to create new and re-modelled spaces – transforming how we support people, and helping them enjoy independence through the very latest assistive technologies and design.

Jargon buster – ‘supported living’

‘Supported living’ is for people who don’t need to (or don’t want to) live in a residential care home, and are able to live in specially designed homes instead – often with two or three other people with similar needs (e.g. a particular disability or health problem).

We’ve taken forward some exciting schemes this year. The remodelling of Heddwch Supported Living Scheme, in partnership with Clwyd Alyn Housing Association, will help people enjoy improved lives within their local communities.

Funded through the ICF, individuals’ complex health and social care needs can be met by delivering appropriate specialist housing and support – providing greater opportunities, wellbeing and outcomes for users.

The bespoke environment reduces risks by delivering creatively designed living space and environments to develop independence and engagement opportunities for individuals in a safe way.

In partnership with First Choice Housing, we’re upgrading our supported-housing schemes with the latest assistive technologies – so more people than ever can live independently, and closer to home.

We’ve also been able to make use of the ‘Live at Home’ project – funded through ICF – to make smaller-scale adaptations to existing supported housing, based on the individual needs of people living there.

This means we’ve been able to keep up with people’s changing needs and aspirations – so they don’t have to move to alternative and potentially less independent settings.

We’re looking forward to launching our first ‘flexi home’ in 2020.

Working with First Choice Housing and other partners, we’ve been able to successfully apply for Innovative Housing Programme funding to develop a single person ‘flexi home’

Sited within the grounds of one of our other supported living schemes, it’ll offer an alternative to group living – with assistive technology giving the occupant easy access to care and support staff when they need it.

The support will focus on developing and maximising the person’s independence through a ‘progression support model’, and we hope to extend this housing model to other registered social landlords.

A tenant has already been identified, who is working with all stakeholders to champion flexi-homes and assistive technologies.

A new project with First Choice Housing – to deliver bespoke housing to people with complex health and social care needs requiring specialist support – is also underway.

Funded through a Social Housing Grant, a property has been purchased and – subject to planning approval – should be ready by September 2020.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Implement further phases of the review of day and work opportunities and co-produce new and alternative solutions to enable people to achieve greater economic and personal wellbeing.
- Expand the use of assistive technologies to enable people to live independently.
- Develop our model of community based care and support solutions for people with mental health conditions

Children's Social Care

This is what we said we'd do

- Reduce homelessness among care-leavers by continuing to increase the number of supported lodgings placements available.

This is what we did

New ICF funded provision

The department has secured ICF money for seven revenue projects – for children and young people on the edge of care, and for children with disabilities.

The edge of care projects include expanding our family group conferencing team – bringing in new staff dedicated to offering intensive and therapeutic support to young people at risk of placement breakdown and homelessness.

We've also used ICF funding to appoint a part-time co-ordinator and a part-time finance officer to develop an in-house supported lodgings scheme.

We've seen an increase in requests for respite and childcare to support families of disabled children and those with additional needs.

So we've appointed an Integrated Services Coordinator to look at developing the range of respite and inclusion options to help meet the increasing demand from families of disabled children and find sustainable solutions for families.

Transformation Fund

Through the transformation fund we're developing a North East Wales Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) to work with identified children and young people.

The team will aim to ensure the child is assessed by a clinical psychologist within 28 days, and will observe the child and their family / carer for up to 12 weeks.

This will inform the next steps for the child, and allow the team to develop the right package of support – cutting down on costly, unsuitable care placements that don't improve things for the child.

The MDT will ensure that North East Wales is able to;

- Reduce the number of children and young people requiring a care placement.
- Reduce the amount of time children and young people spend in care placements.
- Reduce the number of court proceedings.
- Reduce the time spent waiting for a psychological assessment.
- Reduce the number of placement breakdowns.
- Increase access to support for families/carers at the point of crisis.
- Improve outcomes for children and young people, their families and carers.

At the same time, we're working to identify accommodation for a short-term, 12-week residential assessment centre.

This will provide three beds for children, plus one emergency bed for when crisis situations arise. Once the centre is up and running, the MDT will re-locate there.

A third sector provider will be commissioned to make sure it meets statutory requirements, before taking over the management of the facility.

The residential staff will be part of the MDT, as they'll also provide outreach support to children, families and carers when they can.

This model will transform how we provide integrated early intervention and support to children, young people and families/carers experiencing crisis.

The community-based approach will allow us to get an accurate, current assessment of the child's situation...so we can be sure the right support is implemented.

If keeping the child at home isn't an option, we'll source the best residential option, as near to home as appropriate.

Making the right decisions

The Children's Single Point of Access (SPoA) team includes a housing officer, who helps us make the right decisions in social services and the housing department.

Helping families find somewhere to live

Families evicted from council housing often find it difficult to get new accommodation, and can fall into a cycle of homelessness.

Aside from the negative effect on families, it can also add to the pressure on resources for tackling homelessness.

The housing officer plays a key role in preventing homelessness by sharing knowledge and information that helps parents struggling to keep up with their rent.

Helping young people avoid homelessness

Working with Children's Social Services, the housing officer will also help 16 or 17 year olds who tell us they're homeless.

And we have an additional post based in our Leaving Care Team, helping young people on the edge of care build bridges that allow them to remain at home where it's safe.

Locating the housing officer in the Children's SPoA has strengthened relationships between housing and children's social services, which is a positive thing for children and their families.

Positive Pathway

The Welsh Government 'Positive Pathway' framework promotes support for young people on their journey to economic independence and success through housing advice, options and homelessness prevention.

This ties in with Barnardo's 'Care Leaver Accommodation and Support Framework', which is specifically for young people leaving care in Wales.

4C's Framework

Wrexham joined the 4C's Framework in 2019-20. This is a partnership of councils across Wales who work together to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, and achieve value-for-money.

The framework aims to improve the way local authorities commission looked-after children (LAC) placement services. As well as saving money, benefits include improved management information, consistent and secure collaborative tools and processes across authorities to facilitate individual placement-matching, contract award and contract monitoring, collaborative risk management, and quality assurance of providers.

When they sign-up to 4C's, councils contractually agree to search for placements with providers on the framework first. If there are no suitable placements, then they can open the search to other providers.

4C's works with CIW to make sure all registered providers have up-to-date inspection reports, and is informed of any care standard concerns.

If a provider has care standard or safeguarding issues, CCSR can temporarily stop it from tendering for placements until standards have improved.

Care Leavers Offer guide

During the year we've also developed a guide that tells care leavers about the support available in Wrexham.

It was put together with help from local care leavers, and we'll continue to listen to their views and make sure the services we offer are what they need.

Helping young people achieve independence

We also have access to the St David's Day' Fund, which is a Welsh Government grant to help people aged 16 to 25 who are still in care – or leaving care – progress towards independence.

The fund is used to support them with their education, housing, employment, or general health and wellbeing.

Following a Welsh Government review from April 2019, Families First, Flying Start, Childcare and Play, St David's Day Fund, Promoting Positive Engagement and the Communities First Legacy Fund will be amalgamated into one grant-funding stream known as the 'Children's and Communities Grant'. This will let us use grant resources where and when they're needed.

This will also lead to a second fund known as the 'Housing Support Grant', which amalgamates Supporting People, Homelessness Prevention and Rent Smart Wales Enforcement.

In simplifying grants, Welsh Government aims to enable local authorities to explore opportunities to redesign services, drive sustainable long-term preventative approaches and improve outcomes for vulnerable people.

Breaking the cycle of homelessness

We continue to run the Family Aide Scheme – part of Welsh Government’s ‘Supporting People’ programme.

This aims to break the cycle of homelessness and ensure families can remain in their community by giving responsive housing support. The service is highly regarded by the families that use it.

“I was not aware how much I needed the service when it was offered. It helped take the pressure off when dealing with other services.” - Family Aide service evaluation form.

There is a duty on councils to allow fostered young people in stable placements to remain until they’re 21...or 25 if they’re in higher education.

The scheme is called When I am Ready and although there’s no additional funding for it, all North Wales councils have worked together to develop the scheme.

Take-up has been consistent with predicted demand for 2018-19.

This is what we want to do in 2020-21

- Progress the ‘Kick-Start’ project offering intensive and therapeutic support to young people with complex needs at risk of placement breakdown and homelessness.
- Ensure 4C’s Framework is embedded in practice and results in improved, cost effective placements.
- Deliver on the Care Leavers Offer.

5. How we deliver for our citizens

A. Developing our workforce

Our Workforce Development Team continues to provide a wide range of training opportunities for council staff, as well as people employed across the health and social care sector – including providers, the third sector, personal assistants and informal carers.

The indicative training support programme from the Welsh Government via Social Care Wales is £441,696.

This includes the £309,187 grant, as well as a 30% match-funding council contribution of £132,509.

The council will also invest £29,7985 so a total investment of £73,9681 in workforce development to support the SCWDP.

To secure the grant, we submit a regionally-agreed plan. We communicate regularly with the wider partnership via newsletters, meetings and our QCF team who assess qualifications within the social care sector. The partners receive flyers for all relevant training events.

The council has set up a joint Social Care Workforce Development Partnership, whose membership and function is explained in our communication plan.

We continue to promote the Social Care Wales Information and Learning Hub within the sector, and encourage the use of available training materials, guidance and resources.

socialcare.wales/hub/home

Information and training

Community Care information (adults and children's) is available as an electronic resource to everyone employed in our social care departments.

The care sector, including partners and providers, has had access to Wrexham Council's e-Learning provision since May 2019. Online modules have been created to promote good practice around safeguarding and manual handling, and more modules will be available soon.

All of our training programmes have been updated to reflect the key messages and terminology in the Social Services Well Being (Wales) Act 2014.

Developments in safeguarding will be shared with our employees through a series of SCW events. We'll also hold 'train the trainer' events, to help cascade the information, which can also be accessed via the North Wales Safeguarding Board.

northwalessafeguardingboard.wales

A regional practice forum has been held with 'responsible individuals' within the partnerships to consider the implications of the Registration and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 to identify opportunities, concerns and priorities.

Further 4 Practice forums will be arranged, and we're further supporting the social care sector with the implementation of the All Wales Induction Framework and Registration of the Workforce...through workshops, information sessions and a 'guidance for managers' document.

'Train the trainers'

The Assessment Team has been preparing for the new health and social care qualifications, began delivering these in the New Year.

Workforce Development has started to deliver the accredited Introduction to Trainer Skills course to staff in the independent residential sector. This is the first step towards supporting the development of in-house trainers to deliver induction and training programmes to workers.

The next step will be to share our own training programmes with learning and development representatives – again adopting a 'train the trainer' approach.

Support will be given through allocated mentors, twice-yearly support meetings and ongoing quality assurance processes.

We have a representative on the 'We Care' group, which aims to improve recruitment and retention across the social care sector, and are supporting national media 'bursts' to promote the project.

Working with care homes

The Best Practice in Dementia Care project continues to be successful, with increasing numbers of care homes continuing with the programme this year – led by their accredited facilitators.

We're now on Cohort 4 of the Six Steps Palliative and end of life care programme. The programme now includes nursing and residential homes in Wrexham.

Sustainability of the programme is a priority, with continued visits to homes who've already completed the programme. This year we've been piloting support through forum groups, which enables good practice to be shared.

All cohorts are continuing to embed the principles of the programme, and evaluation shows that 92% of supported individuals are receiving support in their preferred place of care.

The new programme has just been aligned to the CIW line of enquiries, which links to RISCA regulations and will run in 2020. The partnership between BCUHB and Workforce Development goes from strengthen to strengthen, and we've just been accepted for the Bevan Adopt and Spread programme – focusing on domiciliary care. This will be the first time it's been run in Wales.

Supporting social workers

We continue to support social workers across the sector in training and studying for qualifications, with particular emphasis on the Graduate Certificate in Social Work Practice (now as mandatory requirement of ongoing registration).

We've facilitated a 'First Year in Practice' group to support newly qualified staff, as part of our commitment to SCW's The First Three Years in Practice Framework.

We've been part of the development of a regional approach to common learning outcomes for this group of staff.

An identified priority for the forthcoming year is around addressing the 'qualification gap' that's developed as a result of the review of the SCW Continued Professional Education and Learning Framework.

We're supporting developments with the National Fostering Framework – Post Approval Learning and Development for Foster Carers. We're supporting this to enhance social workers' skills when working directly with foster carers.

We've also held sub-regional events to promote the importance of Life Story Work to enhance self-esteem in our looked-after children.

B. Finances and planning for the future

During the last four years Adult Social Care delivered £6,848,821 of savings and Children's Social Care delivered £1,062,000 of savings. In addition, our budgets have been reduced through the loss of WG demography money (£2,000,000) and Supporting People money (£200,000).

We've updated our medium-term financial and service-efficiency plans, and continue to factor future pressures into our budget-planning.

The council has a rigorous budget process that asks managers to identify potential savings over a three-year period.

Departments like social services – who have a duty of care – are supported as much as possible.

To meet these significant challenges, we've had to reshape and re-tender services to reduce costs. But we've made every effort to reduce the impact on vulnerable people.

C. Political leadership, governance and accountability

On a political level, the council is supported by an executive group of councillors – called ‘lead members’ – who make key decisions.

They’re supported by scrutiny committees. Social Services comes under the Safeguarding, Communities and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

On a management level, the Director of Social Services (Chief Officer) reports directly to the Chief Executive of the council, and they are supported by a Departmental Management Team.

Councillors and senior managers with these lead-responsibilities understand the importance of social services, and council policy states that we’ll prioritise services that support vulnerable people when setting budgets, making savings and changing how we do things.

Partnership working

The Wrexham Public Service Board (PSB) was established as a result of the Future Generations Act.

It aims to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wrexham County Borough – in a sustainable way that won’t harm future generations.

To help do this, the PSB has different boards working on different things.

PSB priorities are:

- That children and young people have the best start in life.
- That all people can learn and develop throughout their lives.

Safeguarding arrangements

Our Corporate Safeguarding Policy promotes greater understanding among staff, councillors and people working on our behalf about guidelines in place for safeguarding children and adults.

An associated action plan was developed to help us meet recommendations in the Wales Audit Office review Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils (published in June 2015).

As part of the Corporate Safeguarding Action Plan, training was successfully rolled out across all departments and an e-learning module for Corporate Safeguarding is now part of the council’s mandatory modules for all staff.

The council also remains compliant with the 'prevent' duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

This requires councils to play a part in responding to the ideological challenge – helping to prevent people being drawn into terrorism.

So if we think a person is at risk of radicalisation, we'll work with other organisations to assess the situation, and develop a support-plan for the individual.

As we've already mentioned, we've made significant changes and improvements within our Adult Safeguarding Team.

We're also represented on the North Wales Safeguarding Board and local delivery groups, and a great deal of work is undertaken in to publicise safeguarding – including taking part in National Safeguarding Week.

6. Further information

This final section lists where you can find more information about some of the things mentioned in this report.

Council structure

wrexham.gov.uk/council

Wrexham Public Service Board

wrexhampsb.org

North Wales Safeguarding Board

Helps ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and neglect.

northwalessafeguardingboard.wales

Council Plan

Overarching plan that defines where the council focuses its energies.

wrexham.gov.uk/service/adult-social-care/key-adult-social-care-documents

Your Voice Wrexham

Public Service Board consultation website – used by the council for online surveys.

yourvoicewrexham.net

Council complaints and compliments

wrexham.gov.uk/service/contact/complaints-and-compliments

Dewis Cymru

dewis.wales

Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspects local authority social services, and reports on their effectiveness.

careinspectorate.wales

Wrexham Council reports:

- Annual performance 18-19
- Performance evaluation report 14-15
- Older adults – 2019
- Childrens services -2017
- Report on regulated care services in Wrexham

Council reports and documents

wrexham.gov.uk

- Charging Policy
- Contract monitoring report
- Safeguarding report
- Corporate Safeguarding Policy (Child Protection)
- Review of Day Services
- Wrexham Council Workforce Strategy
- Workforce Development training plan, brochure and mid-year report
- Welsh Language Standards
- Wrexham's Ageing Well plan
- Transport web-pages
- Wrexham travel plan – Wrexham Connected
- Housing Strategy

Supporting People funding programme

wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/housing/supporting_people/supporting_people_directory.pdf