

Director of Social Services



Annual Report 2024 – 2025

Contents

<u>1.</u>	Director's Summary	3
<u>2.</u>	Context section	5
	a. Leadership	6
	b. Workforce	7
	c. Financial Resources	11
<u>3.</u>	Performance Assessment	13
	a. People	13
	b. Prevention	23
	c. Partnership and Integration	44
	d. Well-being	49
<u>4.</u>	Other Information Section	53
	a. Inspections and Reviews	53
	b. Complaints and Representations	55
	c. Other sources of information	57

1. Directors Summary

Denbighshire County Council's Director of Social Services Annual Report demonstrates how we have promoted well-being and accounted for the delivery of well-being standards under the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 and Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 during the last 12 months.

Denbighshire like other Local Authorities in Wales is facing significant financial challenges with the cost of delivering Social Care increasing year on year. The demand and complexity of need continues to increase and throughout this year we have focussed on transforming our Adult Social Care service to ensure we have sustainable services that can meet future needs.

Children's Services are in no different position and have focussed on the need to increase our internal foster placement provision and prepare for the Health and Social Care Act (Wales), which introduces the Welsh Government's commitment to transform children's social care and remove profit from the care of looked after children in Wales.

My senior leadership and I continue to work collaboratively with our corporate colleagues here in Denbighshire, and with our counterparts across the North Wales region and nationally in Wales to address the challenges in social care. Our focus has been on reducing budget pressures and achieving efficiencies without compromising our statutory responsibilities, which is a key priority for the council. Waiting lists for assessments in adult services have started to increase but we monitor and reprioritise these regularly.

Both Adult's and Children's Services have ongoing recruitment and retention issues, but this is in specific areas and actions have been taken to improve the situation. We have invested in our 'grown your own' social worker training and this will see higher numbers of existing staff in social care practitioner roles become qualified social workers over a 2 – 3-year period.

We are very much aware of the ongoing challenges facing social care in the coming years, this is not just a local issue but a much wider national issue across the whole of the UK. Our focus for the coming year will be to continue our transformation

journey to develop sustainable services, ensure we have robust preventative services and work closely with partners to investigate and potentially implement digital technologies that will reduce the reliance on statutory services but also allow us to maximise the resource we currently have.

We will continue to lobby for investment in community health and social care services to reduce admissions into hospital and develop provision to allow the step up and step down of care in the community and enhance the provision to keep people independent at home for as long as possible.

In children's services the focus is on implementing the requirements under the new Health and Social Care Act (Wales) such as exploring opportunities and funding to develop our own small children's residential care, to stop our young people having to be accommodated out of county or even out of country. As well as progressing our ambition to have fewer children entering the care system and exiting care where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

I am delighted with the support and collaboration that has gone on across the council which has seen us introduce a Foster Friendly Policy to support any staff who are Foster Carers.

During this year we have seen the expansion of our Flying Start Childcare offer and this will continue into 2025 / 2026 and Bwthyn y Ddol welcomed its first children and young people into the residential assessment centre.

I would like to thank all of my team, who continue to work tirelessly and professionally, for all that they do – this is as much their report as it is mine.



Nicola Stubbins

Corporate Director for Social Services and Education

2. Context section

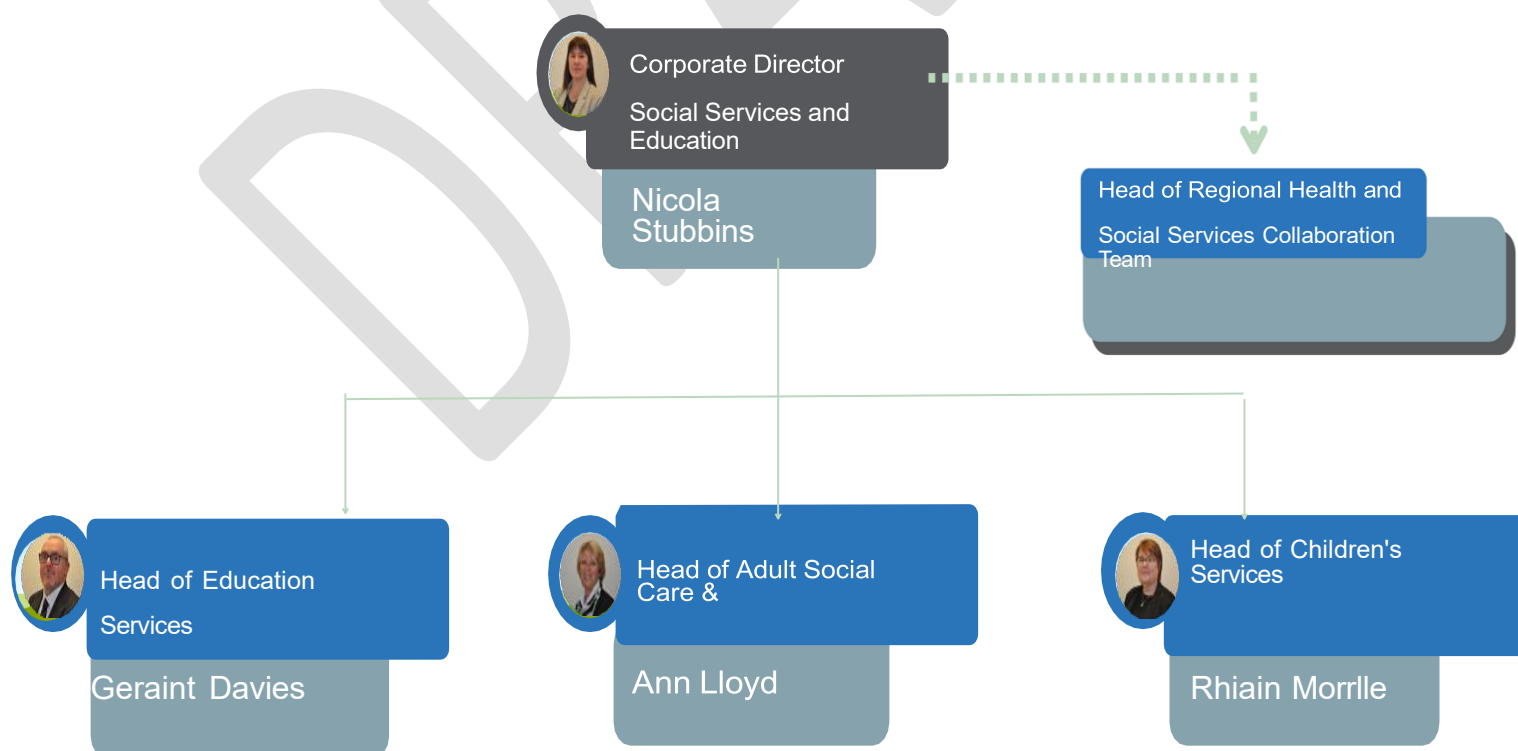
- AD/001 – [Number of adult contacts](#) - the number of contacts during 2024 / 2025 were 19374 this is a 2.5% reduction from 2023 / 2024
- AD/002 – [Adult provision of advice or assistance](#) - of the 19374, 47% (9085) were provided advice and assistance, this was predominantly from our Single Point of Access Advisors or Community Navigators within our Talking Points. This is an 8% reduction from 2023 / 2024
- AD/004 – [Adult assessments completed](#) there were 9818 assessments completed during the year, which is 823 less than 2023 / 2024 – a reduction of 8%
- AD/005 – [Adult eligible needs](#) Of the 9818 assessments completed 96% (9444) of people had eligible needs, this is 797 less people (8% reduction) than in 2023 / 2024
- AD/012 – [Adult care and support plans](#) 4075 people's needs could only be met by a care and support plan which is 43% of the number of people who had eligible needs and this is an increase of 1.2% compared to 2023 / 2024. This confirms that we are seeing people coming to us with higher and more complex needs that can only be met through a care and support plan.
- CH/001 – [Number of children's contacts](#) during 2024 / 2025 were 5743 this is an increase of 14% compared to 2023 /2024 (5,056)
- CH/002 – [Children's provision of advice or assistance](#) 219 contacts to Children's Services received the provision of advice or assistance during 2024 / 2025
- CH/006 – [Children's assessments completed](#) – during 2024 / 2025, 275 children's assessments were completed
- CH/015 – [Children's care and support plans](#) – the number of children with a care and support plan on 31 March 2025 was 413
- CH/007 – [Children's eligible needs](#) – this indicator is split into three parts, as shown in the following table, with a total of 275

Performance Indicator	Category of Eligible Needs	2024 / 2025
CH/007a	Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan	17
CH/007b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	181
CH/007c	There were no eligible needs to meet	77

Leadership

The Director for Social Services and Education forms part of the Corporate Executive Team in Denbighshire along with the Chief Executive Officer and 2 other Corporate Directors.

Denbighshire's Social Services sit within the Director or Social Services and Education directorate. Adult social services forms part of the Adult Social Care and Homelessness Service and children's social services are within Children's and Education Services.



Within the political structure in Denbighshire, we have a lead member for Adult Social Care and a lead member for Children's Services and Education, who both take an active part in the leadership of our social services.

The council has very robust internal governance arrangements in place to support the effective management of Adult Social Care and Homelessness and Children's and Education Services.

Reports are taken to various Scrutiny Committees during the year to enable Elected Members to scrutinise policy and performance relating to social services, and to monitor the progress of any actions required in response to the Director's annual report or CIW's annual report.

We also have a very well-established service performance challenge process, where each Head of Service is challenged annually on areas such as service performance and leadership. The panel for each service challenge meeting includes the Chief Executive; Corporate Directors; Lead Members; Scrutiny Members and our external regulators (the Wales Audit Office and Care Inspectorate Wales).

In addition to the service challenge process, the council also has a very robust performance management framework, which includes regular performance reports being presented to the Corporate Executive Team (CET); Senior Leadership Team (SLT); Scrutiny; and Cabinet, and various reports being presented to scrutiny periodically on service specific issues such as Homelessness, Contracts and Commissioning and Compliments and Complaints.

For 2024 / 2025 the council implemented a Budget and Transformation Board to monitor and manage the council's budget but also to make decisions and monitor the transformation of the council to reduce financial pressures and develop sustainable services for the future. The Board is made up of Cabinet Members and officers from the Corporate Executive Team. Both adult and children's services have presented business cases and reports to the Budget and Transformation Board during the year.

Workforce

On average the directorate employs **668** members of staff across both Adults and Children's Service areas.

Adult Social Care & Homelessness has had an average of **466** members of staff throughout the reporting period across operational teams and provider services. There have been on average **31** active vacancies throughout the period. This has been a mixture of social work posts, occupational therapy posts and social care worker posts. The service has employed on average **8** members of staff through agencies during the year. These generally cover social work posts in specialist areas such as Best Interest Assessors (BIA) in Safeguarding and Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs) in Mental Health Services.

Education and Children's Services has had an average of **202** members of staff during the reporting period and the average number of vacancies has been **9**. This has related mainly to social work posts within specific operational teams where there remain significant difficulties in recruitment and retention. The service has employed on average **6** agency workers over the period to cover both social work and support work posts.

The average turnover rate within Adult Social Care & Homelessness has been **6.6%**. The average turnover rate within Education and Children's Services has been **4.5%**. Backfilling these vacant posts has been significantly difficult, although we are finding that in key posts such as social workers, more hosted students are opting to apply for positions within the authority. We have also developed the 'grown our own' programme for social work and have increased the number of candidates being sponsored by the Local Authority on the Open University (Wales) Social Work Degree programme. In other areas such as Occupational Therapy we are continuing to work with Health Education & Improvement Wales (HEIW) and Social Care Wales (SCW) to increase the number of commissioned places on the Occupational Therapy Degree in Wrexham University with ring-fenced places for Local Authorities – recognition of the need for these posts within community as well as health settings. It is hoped that the development of these pathways will reduce future turnover.

A key issue has been the recruitment of qualified and experienced staff to more senior positions. Job vacancies within several areas have remained vacant – Children's Social Workers and Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHP's) most notably.

Recruitment to management positions remains a challenge and there does not seem to be the progression pathways for workers as there once were.

An aging workforce – currently **47%** of Adult Social Care fall into the age category 50-59 & 60+. Some of these are in key leadership roles. In Education and Children's Services this same age range accounts for **39%** of the workforce, again including key leadership roles. We are working toward succession planning and developing a robust talent management strategy.

The profile for care within Denbighshire favours commissioned services with Care Inspectorate Wales reporting **194** approved care home, childcare and play services across the county (as of 31st March 2024 <https://www.careinspectorate.wales/data-tools>).

These can be broken down as follows:

Care Settings

Service type	Number of services
Adults and Children without nursing	5
Adults with nursing	13
Adults without nursing	56
Children's home	10

Childcare & Play Services

Service type	Number of services
Childminder	34
Children's Day Care Centre	76

Care Inspectorate Wales reports that between 2024/ 2025, **663** new starters joined the social care sector in Denbighshire. The number of people leaving the sector in the area was **462**. The recorded turnover rate was **25%**. There remain difficulties in recruitment and retention across the care sector, particularly in Domiciliary Care Services and most notably in care services in the south of the county where the demography is more rural.

Denbighshire has a growing micro provider project with **77** providers currently providing **1211** care hours per week. This is now easing some pressure on the numbers waiting a domiciliary care package.

Wellbeing support for both directly provided and commissioned services is available through Canopi, who provide mental health support for NHS and social care staff across Wales free of charge. They provide a self-referral service and can offer support which includes self-help resources, wellbeing ally support, guided self-help and virtual consultations.

<https://wecare.wales/news/canopi-mental-health-support-for-nhs-and-social-care-staff-across-wales>

Directly employed Local Authority staff are able also to access the corporate Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): 'Vivup'. The EAP offers similar support to that offered by Canopi; Support, advice, and information to help with mental health and wellbeing; independent confidential counselling support; assistance with many different issues including relationships, finances, family difficulties, anxiety, bereavement, stress, depression, workplace issues and trauma.

As a service, the use of Stress Risk Assessments and Wellness Action Plans are encouraged, and staff are able to access training opportunities to better understand their purpose and value in supporting the workforce.

In addition, Local Authority staff have access to Occupational Health, Physiotherapy and support through referral. The Occupational Health Assessor is able to act in an independent and advisory capacity on all work health issues.

On average there have been **44** members of staff on sick leave during the reporting period.

The Social Care Wales Workforce Development Plan (SCWWDP) training plan is made available to the whole sector. For social care workers accessing a series of career development opportunities through the Higher Apprenticeship and other Learning and Development Frameworks.

Levels 2&3 Health & Social Care (Adults & Children)

Level 4 Professional Practice in Health & Social Care

Level 4 Leadership & Management in Health & Social Care

Level 5 Leadership and Management of Health & Social Care Practice.

Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) Level 4 & 5

We support social workers to complete the Applied Mental Health Practice qualification through Chester University and the Cheshire AMHP partnership.

Practice Educators for Social Work through University of Wales Bangor. Through Wrexham University for Practice Education for Occupational Therapists.

We have contributed to the regional First Three Years in Practice learning and development programme for social workers. Working regionally with HEIW to develop similar for Occupational Therapy and access to modules on various programmes.

Access to Team Manager Development Programme (TMDP) and Middle Manager Development Programme (MMDP) through Social Care Wales.

All managers have access to CCInform and Academi Wales

<https://academiwales.gov.wales/repository/discovery?sort=recent&categories=42d3b6f4-6978-4eb9-ba6b-4ef5d008e12a&strict=0> and CCInform.

Financial Resources

2024 / 2025 continued to be a financially challenging year, with the cost of Children's social care services exceeding the resources allocated for their delivery as shown below; however, the investment of additional resources in Adult Social Care exceeded the funding required:

	Budget	Actual Spend	Over / (Under) spend
Children's Services	£17,171,421	£18,896,213	£1,724,792
Adult Social Care	£54,047,796	£52,764,336	-£1,283,460
Homelessness	£5,234,670	£3,972,007	-£1,262,663
Adult Social Care & Homelessness	£59,282,466	£56,736,343	-£2,546,123
Grand Total	£76,453,887	£75,632,556	-£821,331

Each Autumn, financial forecasts are updated for the forthcoming years, which include assumptions for demand and inflation increases, with the aim of allocating sufficient additional budget to meet rising costs. However, the increased cost of children's care packages caused a larger than anticipated budget pressure, mainly due to higher provider fee increases, including some considerably expensive individual placement costs. Savings were achieved in Homelessness Services and Adult Social Care too, compared to the additional resources invested in 2024 / 2025 and additional grant funding that wasn't expected before the start of the financial year contributed towards the underspend in Adult Social Care.

The significant Real Living Wage increase of 10% for 2024 / 2025 continued to impact the cost pressures faced by providers and ultimately affects the additional funding required by Social Services.

In light of these and other cost forecasts for 2024 / 2025, the Council allocated additional budget to meet these anticipated pressures as follows:

<i>Additional Budget Allocation towards 2024 / 2025 Pressures</i>	
<i>Children's Services</i>	£2,000,000
<i>Adult Social Care & Homelessness</i>	£7,696,000
Total	£9,696,000

Given the significant financial challenge faced by the whole of the Council and acknowledging the statutory requirements, unfortunately, neither of these Services are exempt from budget reductions. Savings targets for 2024 /2025 were set at £263k for Children's Services. No actual savings targets were set for Children's services for 2025 /2026, although various schemes are under way to reduce costs. A savings target of £1,263k for Adults Social Care & Homelessness was set for 2024 /2025; which is increasing in 2025 / 2026 to a further £1,258k. Savings targets for future years are likely to increase and elected members and executive team officers are engaged in this process.

Both services are under continued pressures to review their commissioning decisions to achieve the same and sometimes more, with limited resources.

Budget monitoring meeting discussions are increasingly focussed on pressured budgets and exploring how care can be delivered in alternative ways whilst still achieving outcomes for citizens at a reduced cost.

Denbighshire County Council continues to face growing financial challenges due to the growth in inflation and demand outstripping increases in funding and the need remains for all departments to play their part in identifying even greater reductions in pressures and savings over the next few years.

3. Performance assessment section

People

“All people are equal partners who have choice, voice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them”.

“Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision”.

- CH/016: The total number of children with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment this is 14 for 2024 / 2025 which is a slight decrease of 6 from 2023 / 2024
- CH/056: The total number of “Active Offers” of advocacy for children during the year there were 133 active offers in 2024 / 2025 which is an 11% increase on 2023 / 2024 (118)
- CH/057: The total number “Active Offers” of advocacy for children during the year where an Independent Professional Advocate was provided this is 26, 1 less than in 2023 / 2024
- AD/013: The total number of adults with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment has dropped from 158 in 2023 / 2024 to 127 for 2024 / 2025.
- AD/032: The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified this was 121 for 2024 / 2025 which is a 15% decrease from 2023 / 2024 (143)
- AD/033: The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified and an independent professional advocate was provided – 102 adults were provided with an independent advocate during 2024 / 2025 which was only 5 less than in 2023 / 2024

Citizen’s want a Life not a Service

We are all different, as are the citizens we support, which is why we believe that every contact we have with our citizens provides an opportunity for them to exercise

choice, voice and control over their lives. We recognise individual strengths, aspirations and what matters most, and we do our best to offer a response that is individually tailored to meet eligible outcomes. Our commitment to strengths-based practice and community led support is the golden thread that runs through everything we do and through all levels. An approach that enables citizens, families and unpaid carers to benefit from a far greater range of community-based resources that complement and sometimes replace traditional forms of care and support.

Our **Single Point of Access** continues to be an important first point of contact for citizens across Denbighshire. SPOA has continued to work hard to listen effectively, put the citizen at the centre of their conversation and seek creative and proportionate ways of enabling people to meet their identified outcomes. Sometimes, this is done wholly from within SPOA through effective conversations as demonstrated by the following citizen feedback to the SPOA Team Manager

“Mr H rang me yesterday wanting to provide feedback / compliments for Olivia (SPOA advisor). He felt it necessary to talk to me rather than put it in writing, which he felt was very impersonal and wouldn’t get the emotions he felt across. He said that Olivia gave him the confidence to discuss the issue that would appear to be financial abuse, that she had exceptional listening skills and should be very proud of herself.”

The support and information provided by SPOA enabled the gentleman to feel in control of his situation and know what he needed to do to act. At other times, a more joined up approach is needed where SPOA will draw in appropriate resources as appropriate to get a successful outcome for the citizen, as the following case study illustrates:

SPOA received several phone calls from Mrs D and her relatives in one week. This lady was not known to services and on the face of it, there was nothing SPOA could do – the lady was staying in a hotel because she had moved out of her son's home but had a property of her own and was giving us inconsistent reasons why she couldn't go back there. Family calls said she was running out of money and needed to be found a sheltered flat. Something did not "feel right" about the situation so the SPOA Social Worker was asked to make contact and visit to get a clear picture of Mrs D's situation. A Housing Enforcement Officer joined the Social Worker on the visit to assess the condition of the property. It soon became clear that Mrs D only felt able to speak freely when the relative who had accompanied her was not in the room, and that many of her possessions had been removed during the time she had been away. The property was habitable but very cold as the heating wasn't working but Mrs D stated it was her home, and she wanted to be there. Contact was made with Community Navigator, who was able to quickly source portable heaters, microwave, slow-cooker and a food parcel so that she could manage until permanent solutions were in place. Mrs D agreed to be referred to the Community Resource Team for on-going social work to help her resolve her situation with her relatives and ensure she can live safely and independently in her own home for as long as she chooses.

Moving with Dignity and Turn Only Once (TOO)

For many years it's been common practice across health and social care for citizens requiring hoisting, or care in bed, to have their care and support delivered by two staff (double handed care). However, innovations in moving and handling equipment, and person-centred care & support provide an opportunity to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff and enable them to adopt new approaches that focus on the well-being and dignity of the citizens and unpaid carers and the safety of care staff.

To further embed the Moving with Dignity (MWD) ethos during 2024 we have successfully recruited two Moving with Dignity Facilitators. Their roles are to support domiciliary care agencies / carers to confidently and competently implement the change of equipment and techniques required to safely embed the MWD ethos and reduction in the package of care. They will visit with the care staff for as long as needed.

Mrs A has a diagnosis of dementia and was receiving a double handed package of care prior to the involvement of MWD team. During the transition to a single -handed package of care, which involved slower movements and implementing techniques which reduced the sensory stimulation of her personal care routine, it was noted that Mrs A started to chat to the care staff. Mrs A had not spoken for at least 6 months, and this was put down to the presence and actions of the two- care staff which provided too much sensory stimulation during her personal care routine.

The Moving with Dignity team have successfully been involved with several hospital discharges where initial recommendations have been for double handed care however this has been reduced to single handed care following our involvement. This has significantly reduced the length of time waiting for discharge and preventing a move into residential care on a temporary basis whilst awaiting a double handed package of care.

The main challenge remains the need to educate care agencies and staff and persuade some professionals that the approach is safe and can have a positive impact on citizen's wellbeing.

The focus for the next year is to continue to train care agencies /staff in the use of equipment and techniques and review citizens currently receiving double handed care to establish if they can benefit from Moving with Dignity equipment and techniques.



Turn Only Once can be adopted to support the Moving with Dignity approach, due to the approach advocating that a personal care routine and dressing / undressing is completed by one person. Work has continued throughout 24/ 25 to promote the use of the Turn Only Once personal care routine with citizens in Denbighshire. Evidence shows that citizens with Dementia can develop Paratonia. Paratonia is defined as an increase in muscle tone which occurs in response to passive movement, proportional in degree to the stimulus applied. Paratonia therefore occurs on contact, and any passive movement and sensory stimuli which is delivered as part of a person's washing and dressing routine is unintentionally causing Paratonia and making the delivery of personal care more difficult.

Paratonia is associated with anxiety, agitation and active opposition of movement however to care staff this comes across as the citizen being aggressive and resisting care. The solution to this is often increasing the number of care staff providing personal care however this is observed to increase the anxiety and aggression displayed and doesn't reduce these behaviours or more importantly support the citizen to feel safe.

Sara Thelwell OT continues to apply for ethical approval to complete a small research study however as the citizen's involved may not capacity to consent to being part of the research additional safeguards are required for the Research Ethics Committee to approve the project.

Sara continues to talk on a national basis both in Wales and England to other professional groups across health and social care as word spreads about the work she is completing.

Recognition for effective leadership Nicky Ellis Jones, Team Manager in South

Locality who have been recognised as an Amazing Team by the British Association of Social Workers ahead of Social Work week on 17th March 2025. The team was nominated by Louisa Lloyd, with BASW saying 'with a heartfelt thank you for your selfless dedication to our profession and the people we support'.



Welsh Language is important to us

We are pleased that we have three Welsh Language Champions in Adult Social Care, and one in Children's Services, who offer advice and help with the Welsh language. From answering our small questions to proofreading short texts, they are a friendly team who can provide support. All three are enthusiastic leaders, leading by example and always looking for ways to raise the profile of the language in the workplace.

Megan signed up to become a Welsh Language Champion during 2024, this is her story, as to why:

- My name is Megan, and I work as a Senior Social Worker within the Denbigh Community Resource Team. As a first-language Welsh speaker, I am deeply committed to ensuring that the residents of Denbighshire have access to services in their preferred language.
- Growing up in a fully Welsh-speaking household and receiving my education through the medium of Welsh, I had limited exposure to the English language. This personal experience has given me a profound understanding of the challenges and apprehensions that come with expressing oneself in a second language.
- In the realm of social care, where interactions are deeply personal and impactful, it is imperative that individuals can communicate in the language they are most comfortable with. This not only fosters a sense of trust and understanding but also ensures that their needs and concerns are accurately conveyed and addressed.
- My passion for promoting the Welsh language in social services is driven by a desire to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all. By advocating for language choice, we honour the cultural heritage of our community and enhance the quality of care provided.
- I have recently taken on the role of Welsh Language Champion, providing my colleagues with swift translations and facilitating services through the medium

of Welsh. Recently, I had the privilege of attending the St David's Day Parade in Denbigh, a vibrant celebration of our rich Welsh culture and history. It was heartening to hear Welsh music playing through the streets and to see schoolchildren, residents, and employees of Denbighshire walking together up Vale Street.

- The saying '*Do the little things*' (*Gwnewch y pethau bychain*) from St David holds profound relevance in our line of work. In this context, something as simple as offering services in Welsh, which might seem minor to some, is immensely significant for individuals who have spent their entire lives conversing in Welsh. This seemingly small gesture can have a substantial impact, fostering a sense of inclusion and respect for their linguistic heritage.

The Mwy na Geiriau strategic board meet regularly to review all activity across Social Services and look at how we can ensure that Welsh Language and the Active Offer is embedded in everyday activity. For example, linking into Menter Iath and getting Welsh Language materials such as newspapers / books into residential care homes across Denbighshire.

Both Adult and Children's Social care teams are working with corporate colleagues to develop an action plan and implementation actions in line with Social Care element of the Anti-Racism Wales Action Plan. One key element is to ensure we have robust data to ensure we understand our workforce and engage with them to hear about their experiences through recruitment, racism in the workplace and developing a plan with them to address key issues raised.

Complex disability team have been able to implement person centred planning (PCP) approaches across services with a specialist PCP coordinator in post for the past 12 months. The coordinator describes some of the work she has been involved with to support people to have choice, voice and control in the following ways: -

- Supporting people to develop their Person-Centred Plans, these detail the persons likes and dislikes, how they communicate, how they like to be supported, what a good and bad day looks like to the person, signs they are becoming anxious and ways to support them relax, things that are important to and for them and favourite activities. These plans are

developed with the person and shared with their support providers and support staff so that they can work with the person in way that is best for them. In addition, services have been supported to develop one-page profiles with citizens to detail a quick insight into the person and the best way to support them.

- Working in community living settings with citizens, families and providers to improve the quality of citizens lives. The following case summary demonstrates the positive impact of the approach for both citizens and staff.

A house meeting was organised in a community living scheme as there were ongoing issues between the two tenants and staff morale was low. There were some incidents of behaviours of concern and complaints from the tenants which staff were struggling to manage. At the meeting we discussed what was working at the house, what was not working, issues to resolve and house rules. We developed an action plan together with the tenants, which included developing a one-page profile and Person-Centred Plan (PCP). With a lot on input and engagement with both the tenants and the staff team things settled down, the tenant was supported to be able to speak up about things that were concerning them and morale has improved and the tenants are happy in their home environment.

Part of the role has been to promote person centred approaches across services, and a series of training events have been held for staff. There is collaborative working with PCP coordinators in other local authorities and together we promote the PCP approach with staff across services. It has been very good to see staff grow in confidence and awareness of PCP and utilising it effectively with citizens to provide higher quality care. Further PCP training sessions are being developed with the Workforce Development Team for 2025 / 2026, with PCP set to be the foundation for care and support planning for people with learning disabilities going forward, and ongoing training and support for staff will ensure good practice is maintained.

Corporate Parenting

Denbighshire County Council have signed the Welsh Governments [Corporate Parenting Charter](#) and are fully committed to its aims and principles. The Charter places a responsibility on key public, third and private sector bodies to ensure care experienced children and young people receive support and are able to access services without restrictions given their own life experiences. Education and Children's Services are currently reviewing our strategy, ensuring that it fully reflects the Welsh Governments Corporate Parenting Charter and feedback received from our care experienced children and young people.

Participation Groups

The KIC Club which is the forum for Denbighshire's looked after young people aged 7-15 are still meeting up at half term holidays and taking part in fun activities.

202024 / 2025 was again a busy year for members of the KIC Club and here are some of the things they have been up to: -

- In May, members decorated cakes and sold them to staff in Russell House, Rhyl. An amazing £130 was raised which went towards their Summer activity.
- The Summer Activity in August was Paddle Boarding / Kayaking in Llyn Padarn, Llanberis along with some games and a little BBQ. Everyone had a great time and a little tired!
- In October's session, members took part in spooky Halloween games and were asked to design Christmas Cards to sell and raise money for the 2025 Summer Activity. Although all the cards were amazing and festive, only 5 could be picked to re-print and sell. Again, an amazing £262 was raised.
- February's session was a short walk to Rhyl Beach where the young people picked a variety of pebbles and went back to the office to decorate them. They did an amazing job and were warmed up with some hot chocolate and marshmallows.



Independent Living Skills Group – This is a group for young people aged 16+ who meet on a monthly basis and aim to help them become more independent and provide them with living skills. The group is facilitated by Social Care Practitioners in the 14+ Team within the Child Looked After Service and below are some of the activities they've identified as important to them: -

- Health and well-being
- Healthy living
- Healthy relationships
- Employment (rights / responsibilities)
- Budgeting (needs and wants)
- Online safety
- Practicing household tasks such as ironing

Participation and engagement

The Service encourages children and young people to take part in various consultations and activities to help shape Children's Services and in the past their views have impacted on the language professionals use when talking to them about their care and shaped key contracts e.g. Care Leaver Service and Regional Advocacy Service.

Following the consultation in 2023 /2024 where we asked our children and young people about the language Children's Services use when talking about their care, we are currently revising our Corporate Parenting Strategy and producing a young person version with the involvement of members of the Independent Living Skills Group.

The voices of the children / young people - The Service ensures our children and young people have their voices heard on things that are important to them. There are a number of various tools available to them and they are encouraged to use which they can access and complete either face to face with their worker, via an electronic link or by scanning a QR Code.

Child Protection Conference and Child Looked After Feedback Forms

All attendees of Child Protection Conferences and Child Looked After Reviews (professionals, parents / carers and young people are continuously being

encouraged to complete a feedback form to gain their views which they can access via an electronic link, scanning a QR code or complete them face to face with their worker. The Business Development Officer is continuously raising awareness and encouraging participants to provide their feedback.

Have your Say Surveys

A range of Have your Surveys are available to be used to gain the views of children/young people and parents on the impact Education & Children's Services has had on their lives and how useful the service received is or has been. The results assist in improving the service as well as recognising what has worked well.

End of Placements

At the end of a placement (regardless of the cause of the placement coming to an end) children / young people, foster carers, parents and social workers are encouraged to complete a survey to gain views about user and staff experiences of the placement and services they have received. The information provided is an important source for identifying potential quality improvements.

Prevention

“The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best outcomes for people are achieved”

“Resilience within communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including carers to learn develop and participate in society”

- CH/002: [The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided](#) – 219 contacts received advice and assistance during 2024 / 2025
- CH/007: [Total number of new assessments - CH/007b: Needs were able to be met by any other means](#) – of the 275 new assessments completed in 2024 / 2025, 181 had their needs met by any other means
- AD/002: [The number of new contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided](#) – during 2024 / 2025 advice or assistance was provide to 9085 adults, this is a 7% decrease on 2023 / 2024 (9787)
- AD/005: [Total number of new assessments - AD/005b: Needs were able to be met by any other means](#) the number of new assessments during 2024 / 2025 was 9818 and of those 5369 had needs met by other means this

- equates to 55% of the total number of new assessments completed.
- AD/010: [The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year](#) this was 183 and it the same number as in 2023 / 2024.
- AD/011: [Total number of packages of reablement by outcome](#) see table below

	2023 / 2024	2024/ 2025	Percentage Difference
Reduced the need for support	13	35	62% increase
Maintained the need for the same level of support	25	24	4% decrease
Mitigated the need for support	132	101	23% decrease
Neither reduced nor mitigated the need for support	13	23	43% increase

Community Navigators and Talking Points

Talking Points are a way for Denbighshire citizens to find out what help, and support is available in their local area, to help improve their health and well-being.

The service provides information about what is available in an area, such as community services, activities or support groups. The service is set up in all libraries throughout the county, with a range of third sector organisations also in attendance – including Working Denbighshire, Citizen Advice Denbighshire (CAD), volunteering services and many more. The Talking Points service offers a face-to-face conversation with a Community Navigator about what matters and what is important, as well as an opportunity to share knowledge, skills and experiences to improve the well-being of others within the community. Throughout the year we have seen an overall increase in footfall across the Talking Points from April '24 to March '25, they effectively helped 1,131 citizens, preventing 1,096 (97%) from needing a referral into Denbighshire Social Services. A valuable addition to the Talking points during 2024 /2025 has been the support from Edge of Care Volunteers.

This is what one Volunteer told the Edge of Care Volunteer Coordinator when asked why do you volunteer at the Talking Point.

‘B told me how much it helps her and does her good mentally and physically, it gives her a sense of purpose and a reason to get out and about. B is passionate about helping people and loves to meet new people and add to her wealth of knowledge by finding out new things and what’s available by helping at Talking Points. B told me she always feels better after attending Talking Points and feels like she has helped to make a difference’.

We are also pleased that Citizens Advice Denbighshire now has a regular presence in three of the Talking Points particularly with the rising cost of living. Going forward, we are planning to hold a ‘pause and review’ event with all stakeholders including citizens and Volunteers with the aim of identifying how we can develop the Talking Point ‘offer’.

Nesta was referred by the Community Resource Team, she had a small package of care in place which was due to be reviewed so a joint visit was requested. At this time, Nesta was described as self-isolating and in fear of losing her independence. She said she was happy at home doing her own thing but that she had mobility problems, Nesta said that she would very much like to go out into town and do her own shopping, maybe pop into M&S for a drink and a bite to eat but stated that she would need support, she also explained that her doorstep was too high for her to use and that she would need it changing. A referral was made to Care and Repair, along with Citizen’s Advice to ensure that she was claiming all the right benefits.

A follow up phone call date was made for six weeks’ time as this would allow time for her claim to be processed. Six weeks later, the Community Navigator called Nesta for an update and she explained that she was now receiving the correct rate of pension credit and attendance allowance. Nesta also confirmed that Care and Repair had been and had provided a half step and fitted a grab rail so she had already been able to go into the garden and feed the birds which she had missed doing for a very long time.

Each Community Navigator employed by British Red Cross is assigned to one of our four Community Resource Teams and as such are key to delivering our 'team around the individual' approach. During the period from April '24 to March' 25 they provided information, advice and assistance to 2,093 citizens, some of which was via Talking Points.

Micro-Providers – More citizens are benefiting.

Micro-providers provide increased choice and control for care and support options, supporting citizens to live in their own homes for longer and improving the quality of their lives by delivering a range of services from personal care to helping citizens to have active social lives.

As of the end of March 2025 we anticipate that there will be 80 Micro Providers operating in Denbighshire (an increase of 26 during the financial year), supporting around 280 citizens. In addition to growing the numbers of Micro-providers, during 2024 / 2025 we have established a yearly MOT, to check adherence to 'Good Practice Standards' which we have shared on our Denbighshire website. Looking ahead to 25/26 we are keen to see more Micro-providers offering services to other demographics for example younger people (aged 14 to 18), also offering groups activities, basically extending the reach of this valued initiative to Denbighshire residents.

Recognising and Valuing our Unpaid Carers

Research shows that unpaid carers were and still are disproportionately impacted by challenges including the Covid Pandemic, rising cost of living and the recruitment crisis and pressures on health and social care services. We are seeing a rising number of referrals, demanding closer working with NEWCIS, who are commissioned to provide Carers Needs Assessments for Adult Carers in Denbighshire.

Mr & Mrs C's story – what mattered was being together at home.

Mr. and Mrs. C faced separation when Mrs. C's declining health led to hospitalisation and then placement in a care home. Their shared wish was always for her to return home, but Mr. C as the primary carer needed support to make this possible. A micro-provider was identified to facilitate visits home, help Mrs. C regain independence with outings, and gradually reintroduce Mr. C to his caring role. The micro-provider also assisted Mr C with household tasks, ensuring the home remained suitable for Mrs. C's eventual return.

With the addition of a second micro-provider, ongoing care and home maintenance were ensured, making Mrs. C's full-time return possible. Mr. C has expressed deep gratitude, acknowledging that without the micro-providers, his wife would not have been able to come home. Their support not only reunited the couple but also restored their quality of life.

During 2024 / 2025 we set ourselves an ambitious list of things to do:

What we said we would do	What we have done
To continue to improve the short break experience for more unpaid carers and families in Denbighshire.	Research and evidence-based practice has informed our approach. Guided by the recommendations set out in 'A Vision of Short Breaks for unpaid Carers in Wales. During 2024 / 2025 we have produced a short breaks guide for staff, designed to encourage more creative and bespoke solutions outside of traditional provision. Throughout the year Practitioners have been encouraged to attend training offered through Social Care Wales, Carer Aware project and we are continuing to embed academic research in practice e.g. using pictures to encourage unpaid

<p>To actively promote a partnership approach and supporting local service providers (including those signed up to accept Bridging the Gap vouchers) to develop more responsive, flexible and creative short break options. Our approach is underpinned by co-production and creating opportunities for unpaid carers to contribute to the design of services.</p> <p>The Edge of Care Team will look to extend the volunteer offer to more carers in the future. Recruitment opportunities will focus on the specific characteristics that individuals bring to this highly valuable and rewarding roles.</p>	<p>carers to reflect on what a good break looks like.</p> <p>We have continued to embed collaborative communications by offering training and support to help staff to define and co-produce personal wellbeing outcomes that people wish to achieve. We continue to develop good relationships with providers, supporting them to develop and adapt their services, co-producing support with carers 'doing with rather than doing to'.</p> <p>We have extended the menu of support available to unpaid carers to improve the availability of short breaks and considering more creative solutions available through local networks and communities. This includes the difference volunteers can make to supporting carers, e.g. the Edge of Care Team recruited a volunteer with a wealth of volunteer experience having been a carer for a partner who had a Dementia diagnosis.</p> <p>We have grown the number of Micro Providers to provide additional capacity and choice alongside commissioned provision and a range of voluntary organisations that offer support groups and activities.</p>
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<p>To offer more choice with control, promoting the uptake of Direct Payments for carers.</p>	<p>We have promoted the uptake of Direct payments which means eligible unpaid carers have more choice and control over the support they need and can receive and organise more flexible arrangements e.g. leisure or equipment if that gives the carer a break. <i>(data to be added end of year –source: Finance)</i></p>
<p>To continue with Carers', Think Tanks to promote creative and innovative thinking in relation to bespoke breaks for carers.</p> <p>To develop a specific Carers Peer Forum to ensure each 'carer offer' can be carefully considered by a range of professionals in order to promote a 'team around the family' approach to supporting the best outcomes for families.</p>	<p>We have continued the Carers Think Tank and in October 2024 we launched the Carers Peer Forum with 9 Carers Peer Forums being held. There was an average of 6 cases discussed per forum. The Forum is attended by a range of professionals and organisations and offers person-centred and strengths-based support; helps staff to deliver more tailored support; an opportunity to reflect, share ideas and celebrate successes.</p> <p>The Peer forums help us to audit progress and identify priority areas for our Carers Action Plan.</p>

Mrs B needed to go into hospital for a planned operation and knew this would also require bed rest following the operation. Mrs B was very stressed and panicky about what would happen and who would care for Mr B in her absence. Mrs B was offered a cancellation at short notice but thought she would have to turn this down because of her caring responsibilities.

Mrs B was able to talk through their fears during the 'what matters' conversation with a Carer (Wellbeing) Assessor and was supported to develop an emergency plan. Adopting a strengths-based approach it was identified that her sister was able to sleep over and a neighbour would also visit morning and evening, staying until the sister arrived.

Bridging the Gap was also discussed as a way of providing extra day time support outside of those hours, Bridging the Gap over six weeks for a Micro Provider to help at lunch times and daily tasks. Mrs B was also given the option of staying at NEWCIS's respite house in Prestatyn to get uninterrupted rest whilst maintaining contact with family and friends.

Outcome – Mrs B felt more in control and able to plan knowing that the right support for Mr B and herself was available, which meant she was able to agree to having her operation.

Our priorities for 25/26 include:

- Continue to develop and deliver on our Carers Action Plan with NEWCIS
- Increasing our own understanding and awareness of carers and the issues they face, bite sized training sessions, power hours, team meetings.
- Use Talking Points differently to reach out to more carers particularly those who are traditionally hard to reach.
- Link with HR to refresh initiatives to encourage staff who are carers to seek support and also co-ordinate with Working Denbighshire on support they offer for carers seeking work or volunteering and help from employers to stay in work.

- Denbighshire County Council has volunteered to take part in the Welsh Government's pilot to test information in preparation prior to the introduction of the new Carers Census from April 2025.

Dementia – Life does not end when dementia begins

We are fortunate to have Dementia Social Care Practitioners as part of our Community Resource Teams in Denbighshire, who work closely with the Older People Community Mental Health Team. They have access to resources that will assist their work, for example doll therapy and specialist training etc. and crucially they have the time to build relationships and work with citizens living with dementia and their Carers. The Dementia Social Care Practitioners play an important role in the 'team around the individual' providing person-centred and coordinated care and support which means the escalation of need is prevented whilst achieving the best outcomes.

Mrs M's story – what mattered was to remain at home with her husband and son.

Mrs M has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's and is in the advanced stages of Dementia. Mrs M has been assessed as lacking mental capacity. Mr M supported with all personal care and needed help and was considering a Care Home for her. The Community Resource Team asked the Dementia Social Care Practitioner to visit as Mr M's declining health, meant he could not continue to provide care and a package of care was identified for morning and afternoon.

Family asked about placement supported by a Community Psychiatric Nurse, but the Dementia Social Care practitioner suggested that as Mrs M's wishes were to remain home for as long as possible that day care could be explored that would provide respite during the day and allow Mr M time to recover. The package of care identified to support Mrs M and day care was originally for 5 days however had been increased to 7 days whilst Mr M was undergoing further treatment.

The Dementia Social Worker maintained regular visits and Mrs M accepted the care at home and it is now part of her routine.

During April 2024 to March 2025, the Dementia SCPs have helped 897 citizens living with dementia. As a result of their support, 868 unpaid carers reported that they felt supported to continue in their caring role.

We regularly collect feedback, examples below from 2024 / 2025:

'You've changed my life, I'm so grateful to have had you as a SCP for mum – you're fab!' – daughter

'I enjoy talking to you and you letting me express how I feel' - Citizen living with dementia

Mental health services have been working collaboratively with Denbighshire's Homelessness Prevention Team to support citizens who are homeless or at risk of becoming so and who are presenting with mental health support needs. A dedicated team of support workers seeks to ensure that citizens are accessing appropriate mental health services, and that a person-centred support plan is in place to assist citizens to maintain their mental well-being and prevent an escalation in need. The team have built positive relationships with primary care services and support citizens to access support from health services and also access a range of 3rd sector and local community services to maintain their well-being. The preventative work undertaken by the team seeks to prevent any deterioration in mental health through access to appropriate support.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Team provide short term support to citizens open to secondary mental health services. The focus of the team is to ensure that any care and support needs are person centred and focussed upon the citizen achieving their outcomes to remain as independent and resilient living in the community. The following case study evidences the work undertaken with a citizen to support him to regain lost independence and be able to access his local community independently,

Case study

We received a referral for someone who needed support to assist with the condition of his home. The person presented with a variety of symptoms relating to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and was socially isolated and was suffering from low mood. The team supported with de-cluttering and organising the house to make it safe and more comfortable. As the relationship developed the person disclosed that he had accrued several debts with energy providers and so was supported to set up payment plans to clear these arrears and claim the winter fuel allowance, as well as updating their claim for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and sourcing a bus pass, which enabled him to travel to social groups etc.

The team supported the individual to register with both a pharmacy closer to where he lived and a Dental practice in his area. The individual was supported with useful tools to remember when he needed to take medication and when to eat and shower. A referral was made to an Occupational Therapist who provided equipment that made day to day living much easier and they also linked the person in with local community groups / activities to reduce social isolation and were slowly able to withdraw their support.

UK Resettlement Team (UKRT)

The UKRT support all families arriving in Denbighshire through the various refugee / resettlement routes set out by the Home Office and Welsh Government. They deliver a holistic support service that ensures families achieve maximum independence and community integration. The team supports sanctuary seekers across Denbighshire embedding equality, diversity and inclusion through creative community led approaches. The team deliver art-based projects that combine conversational English with cultural expression and will soon launch Welsh Cultural Arts which will align with the Eisteddfod. Partners include, Welsh Rugby Union, Ty Pride and are forming links with the local faith groups. The team are now

establishing a co-production panel to ensure that the voices of those with lived experience shape our services and strategic direction.

Case Study

A family of five arrived in Denbighshire after living in a refugee camp for over a decade. One member of the family had a disability, requiring care and support, while the entire family needed help with basic tasks, such as using a kettle and responding to a smoke alarm.

The UKRT provided person centred support and worked closely with other services and the family quickly adapted. Two daughters are on paid placements in care and hope to gain long term employment from this, they also support their mother and as a result she does not require planned care and support. Meanwhile, the child integrated into the town, fully embracing educational and social opportunities.

Removing profit from the care of looked after children

Welsh Government have developed a programme for reforming services for children social care. The policy aim is to ensure that public money invested in accommodation for care experienced children does not lead to profit extracted for individuals and shareholders, but instead any surpluses are reinvested into children's services to deliver better outcomes, service improvement and further professional development. Welsh Governments' strategy is to rebalance the market so that the duties on local authorities in relation to looked after children are not contracted out to for-profit companies and remain with public sector or not-for-profit providers. The new Health and Social Care Act (Wales) requires:

- independent providers to demonstrate a not-for-profit status, based on a new pre-defined definition of non-profit, by 1 April 2026
- any current "for profit" providers will need to transition to, and register with Care Inspectorate Wales, as not-for-profit by 1 April 2030

This programme is reflected in Denbighshire's Placement Commissioning Strategy, where the ambition to reduce the reliance on external placement providers is articulated. Ultimately our ambition is to have fewer children entering the care system and exiting care where it is safe and appropriate to do so. To support this ambition, we have developed a range of preventative and support services, including

- Edge of Care support, offering a range of therapeutic interventions to prevent escalation into care
- Expansion of support to children, and the carers, who are subject to and Special Guardianship Order or Supervision Order.
- Parental advocacy which supports parents to access the multi-agency solutions they need to enable them to safely support their children
- The establishment Bwthyn y Ddol assessment centre and MDT
- Collaborative Communication and Effective Child Protection models of service delivery, ensuring a strengths-based approach to working with families.

Foster Wales Denbighshire

22 Local Authorities across Wales have come together to form a national network of local fostering expertise known as Maethu Cymru / Foster Wales. With a clear focus to make an impact on a national level, to work together with each other and with Foster Carers and to build better futures for local children.

Work with Foster Wales Denbighshire continues with a consistent and effective approach to recruitment and marketing on both a national and regional basis. This includes face to face events with regional employers and education provisions as well individually identified opportunities such as supermarkets. Advertisement at relevant local sites continues, as does the focus on Social Media advertising and raising awareness. For Foster Wales Denbighshire Social Media has been the most effective tool for encouraging enquiries, whilst other marketing activities offer a community engagement approach designed to drip feed the Fostering message. The National strategy has resulted in a significant increase in national media interest with TV adverts, radio campaigns, social medias posts and blogs that portray 'real stories' from both children looked after and foster carers – these have focused on the theme of 'Bring Something to the Table'. One aspect of this was the development and

printing of a cookbook – entries were requested from all LA's and for Denbighshire long standing foster carers Vonda and Peter saw their recipe chosen.



As a local authority Denbighshire has supported our recruitment efforts and recently the Foster Friendly Policy was approved at Cabinet. This is a real positive and this will allow us to commence some internal promotion that shows the value placed upon Foster Carers who work for our Local Authority.

The Big Welcome is a tool which offers children and young people an opportunity to view the placement they are going to in real time on their Social Workers mobile phone has been launched – this is a huge step forward in supporting the young people to 'see' where they are going to be staying and hopefully to reduce some of the anxieties around going to a new place. Our foster carers are equally excited by this and have worked closely with their SSW to complete the work, the real benefit of this for foster carers is that they can update their profiles as and when things change thereby ensuring that the information is up to date.

CIW undertook an inspection of Foster Wales Denbighshire over 5 days in February 2025. The Quality of Care, Adequacy of Resources and Statement of Purpose reports were all provided as well as the raft of other statistical information that was requested. It was particularly pleasing to see the engagement from our Foster Carers and in addition a mention was made of the positive working relationships between our Child Care Social Workers and Supervising Social Workers which is noted in the report. At the time of writing the draft report has been received which is positive and the team are quite rightly proud of the outcome.

There has been a marked increase in enquiries and Denbighshire are highlighted as being the most successful at converting home visits into applications. Home visits are the point at which the enquirer can more fully explore fostering, and the outcome of these is always seen as positive, even if the visit doesn't result in an application as the sharing of information and the enquirers suitability cannot be predicted. However, we have ensured that we have been responsive to all enquiries and that each circumstance has been considered on its individual merit.

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support

The SGO Service has been further developed with additional support to both individuals and the establishment of support groups. Regular coffee mornings are held to promote peer support, and a regular newsletter is compiled. Annual reviews of support plans are completed and the SGO support workers are available for both specific pieces of work and for general advice and guidance.

Early Intervention Services - Families First & Flying Start

2024-25 has been a busy and productive year for the Families First and Flying Start programmes. We appointed a new Early Help Service Manager in September and Flying Start Health lead in December and also created a new Strategic Parenting Co-ordinator who has been reviewing and developing our parenting support offer to meet the changing needs of parents' post-pandemic and in the digital world.

We implemented a new case management system, Synergy, at the start of the year and teams are making full use of the new functionality the system provides, ensuring clear record of activity and robust and accurate data collection. This more structured data management will allow us to use data to better monitor progress and provide more robust needs assessment for future planning.

This year we also completed our recommissioning and mobilization of new Families First Services including new Mental Health and Wellbeing services for Children, Young People and Adults and a support project for children with Additional Needs and their families commissioned from Barnardos Cymru. We continued to deliver services to support children and young people who have witnessed or experienced Domestic Abuse in partnership with Domestic Abuse Safety unit (DASU) and a Family Relationship Service, provided by Y Bont, who support families to make plans together to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their child. We expanded our in-house team to support these new services and managed transfers from previous projects. The new services are fully embedded and operating well.

In Flying Start we continued with the second phase of Flying Start childcare expansion in line with our approved plan to meet the Programme for Government commitment to deliver 12.5 hours of funded, high-quality childcare per week for 39 weeks of the year to all two-year-olds. We have worked to bring on board 10 new

childcare settings, of which 3 were Cylchoedd to deliver the Flying Start funded childcare offer. At the end of the year Flying Start childcare was available across half of the county and supported 129 additional children to access the scheme in phase two. We will continue to progress our coverage across the remainder of Denbighshire during phase three of the expansion in 2025/26.

As with other areas of business the retention and recruitment of some specialist Health posts continues to be a challenge. As well as delivering an Enhanced Health Visiting Service (provision of additional visits and developmental checks) our Flying Start Health colleagues continued to provide Antenatal Support, Infant Feeding and Health & Nutrition, School Readiness and Toileting Support as well as programmes around Immunisations, Smoking Cessation, Obesity and Unintentional Injuries. Vacancies in the Health Visiting team can impact the availability and range of support we can offer under the programme.

Our Flying Start Health lead who had been with the programme since the programme began in 2007 retired in October which we were able to plan for and recruit a replacement in early December. We have continued to have difficulties recruiting for experienced Health Visitors and Speech and Language Therapists and have carried vacancies in both roles during the year. We did successfully recruit one part-time Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) in July. The Early Language Development team have greatly benefitted from joint visits with the SLAT to support best practice and share appropriate speech, language and communication strategies for parents to use with their children. Our Early Language Development team also organised Forest School sessions for families over the summer and shared Talk with Me messages at Denbighshire Leisure's beach events.

The Families First Team Around the Family (TAF), found that more families were allocated to TAF for whole family assessment, as expected with the new recommissioned service model. Attendance at community events and Family Fundays continued and saw TAF working closely with other services such as Homeless Prevention and Play Rangers.

Our Family Support Workers delivered courses including Baby Massage: Come & Cook - Preparing a Healthy Meal; Swim Academy; Time Out for Parents – Teenage Years; Time Out for Parents – Additional learning Needs; and Eat Smart Save Better.

The team also ran Family Fun Days and continued to support events in Denbighshire, including National Play Day.



Feedback from families included: -

“I thought the class was brilliant. Thank you for all your help”.

“The course helped with my family/partner and weaning my little one. Plus, it was a really good social channel for me”.

In 2025/26 Denbighshire will continue to improve our Families First and Flying Start services to respond flexibly and collaboratively to the needs of children, young people, and families. We are constantly reviewing our policies and procedures to reflect the challenges of managing increased demand due to our families' increasing level and complexity of need.

Collaborative Communication - Denbighshire continues to invest in Collaborative Communication. This aims to deliver outcome focused service delivery which works collaboratively with children and families and where personal outcomes are explored to overcome various life challenges. Collaborative Communication also enhances and invests in the wider workforce through developing mentors and trainers to enable Collaborative Communication to be embedded into practice. It focuses on a

series of skilled, thoughtful conversations that aims to resolve the service user dilemmas.

Collaboration in establishing sustainable outcomes whilst maximizing autonomy, independence and strengths is at the heart of the model. Collaborative Communication notices people for the problems they face not the problems they cause; notices the resources and strengths people have to overcome their personal obstacles and explores their strengths, values, hopes and aspirations. The Collaborative Communication model of service delivery aims to move away from the traditional problem focussed approach with task focussed plans to holistic approaches that focus on the person and their networks / family whilst understanding the unique identity of each person and situation. The ultimate goal of the model is to enable people to live as fulfilled a life as possible and achieve a sense of wellbeing.

Collaborative Communication has developed a number of mentors and trainers across both children's, adults and early help services with reflective groups forming the thrust of cultural change. The training has also been delivered to staff within Youth Services with more services across the council showing an interest in the model. All new starters are provided with Collaborative Communication skills to ensure that this approach is embedded into practice as The Denbighshire Way.

We have expanded our training team and are rolling out increased training days for all services.

ForMi App – Continues to be embedded within the **Therapeutic Service**. ForMi is a person-centred planning and outcome recording tool for individuals receiving personalised support. The system makes the planning, goal setting and review process come alive and gives ownership to the individual as far as possible which in turn motivates them to achieve and develop. It supports engaging conversations where an individual and their aspirations can be understood, and goals developed that are aligned to their strengths. With the support of a Mentor from the Therapeutic Service, each individual creates a strength-based personal profile and set of outcome focused goals. Actions are agreed that will support the individual to achieve each goal. These are jointly reviewed at regular intervals, including a judgement of progress against each goal on a 0 to 10 scale. Uniquely, the individual captures their achievements through words and pictures on a smartphone, very similar to a

newsfeed used on many social media apps. This has the result of empowering the individual to take ownership of their own development and progress. Where wider professionals are involved in supporting the individual, ForMi enables a more joined-up approach through their Circle of Support. Each person who is involved with the family's Circle of Support can see how the individual is progressing and provide encouragement, coaching, feedback and additional evidence of progression. They also have access to the individual's story, seeing their achievements in real time. This in turn enables recognition to be given on a continuous rather than periodic basis.

Lifelong Links – Children's Services have reinvested in this programme due to the success of the programme so far. Lifelong Links aims to identify and engage relatives and other supportive adults connected to a care experienced child who are willing to make a lifelong commitment to that child. Research shows that the continuity and permanence of these relationships can offer young people ongoing support, provide an explanation of historical events, and reinforce their identity and sense of belonging.

The Lifelong Links process provides the child or young person with supportive connections for the future. The process is guided by the young person, parents and the Lifelong Links coordinator. However, the allocated social worker for the young person has specific responsibilities and expectations during the different stages of the Lifelong Links process.

If staff are considering a young person for Lifelong Links, they request a Therapeutic Consultation with the Therapeutic Service, to discuss the appropriateness of the referral. If it is decided that the Lifelong Links process is a good fit for the young person, the young person will be required to consent before being allocated a Lifelong Links Coordinator. The allocated social worker and the Lifelong Links coordinator will discuss the process further and define the expectations. Further consent is required from the individual who has Parental Responsibility for the child or young person to progress to a planning meeting which is arranged by the Lifelong Links Coordinator where all significant professionals are invited. Links to Lifelong Links is about to launch live on Denbighshire landing page to ensure care

experienced children and young people can also have this information to hand and contact Denbighshire Lifelong Links direct.

Family Group Conference - The Therapeutic Service provide a Family Group Conference (FGC) Service which is a process led by family members to plan and make decisions for children whom professionals have expressed concerns and who may be deemed to be at risk. This risk can be from many quarters and may be a risk of significant harm towards the children and/or a risk of the children becoming or remaining looked after by someone other than family etc. The FGC is a process that aims to build on a family's strengths to empower them to understand the wider concerns and plan, where necessary, with the support of professional services and community networks, to keep their children safe. An FGC is often effective in making safe plans for children, enabling many to stay within their family network as an alternative to going into or remaining in care and the allocated FGC coordinator remains independent of the family situation.

Young Carers

The WCD Young Carers service, delivered by Ceredu Cymru, is jointly commissioned by Wrexham, Denbighshire, Conwy & BCUHB. WCD offers 3 levels of support: Tier 1 Membership & Information; Tier 2 Activities and Groups; and Tier 3 Direct Support.

Denbighshire	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Tier 1	227	242	226	225
Tier 2	349	329	349	364
Tier 3	8	10	15	14
Under 8s	18	19	19	23

In Denbighshire, at the end of Quarter 4:

- 230 children and young people were holding a Young Carers ID Card.
- 51 initial Young Carers' needs assessments had been carried out
- 35 Young Carers Support Plans had been reviewed.

Group sessions were held in Rhyl, Prestatyn and Denbigh / Henllan for children across the county, throughout the year.

Activities for young carers this year included:

- Art & Craft sessions including Halloween pumpkin carving; Art in the Dark; a Glass blowing workshop; and workshops at Ruthin Craft Centre.
- A series of walks leading up to the Snowdon Walking Challenge.
- Days out to: Crocky Trail; Welsh Mountain Zoo; Chester Zoo; Ninja Tag at SC2; Jesters Day at Conwy Castle (& crabbing on the quay); Halkyn Woods Play Day; Pavilion Theatre, Storyhouse; a trip with Denbighshire Countryside Services to Gronant Dunes to see the Little Terns nesting; and more.
- Attending the All-Wales Young Carers Festival at Builth Wells Showground.

Young Carers Case Study

S lives at home with her Mum and 2 brothers, one of whom has a diagnosis of ASD. S's brother J has displayed aggressive behaviour towards S and her brother. Their parents' separation was difficult, and this relationship is still very strained. S asked for 1:1 support around issues at school, exams and her home life / caring role. Mum wanted S to have space and time for herself – this is a struggle due to her brother's behaviour and S's confidence to improve and for her to meet children in a similar situation.

S has the confidence to ask for support when struggling emotionally with various issues and has been able to keep going through this tough period, despite reporting that she has no motivation to study. S felt her main strength was art but felt her challenges were: - not having the time and space to study for her exams; the physical & emotional impact of her brother's behaviour; isolation and lack of emotional support from Mum; and not feeling able to confide / speak to Mum about how she is feeling.

Initially support was provided fortnightly, then moved to weekly, which S stated gave her time and space to chat about any worries / challenges that she's facing. With intervention and support S was allowed to drop one of her GCSEs to allow more time to study her core subjects and request 'special consideration' with the marking of her GCSE's, due to the stress of her home life and caring role. Whilst studying for her exams S was able to stay at her Dad's then returned to Mum's

1:1 sessions will continue, to provide support and an outlet for S. She is anxious about exam results in August and about starting her A Levels. S was supported to speak to her trusted contact at school before leaving for the summer and she reported feeling better for this.

Partnership and Integration

“Effective partnerships are in place to commission and fully deliver fully integrated, high quality sustainable outcomes for people”

“People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners”

Our partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) is important to us if we are to deliver a seamless health and social care in line with the Social Services and Well- Being Act.

The Denbighshire Integrated Services Forum is proving to be effective at fostering open and collaborative conversations in the wider development, implementation and reporting of integrated service delivery across Denbighshire, alongside representatives from Health and Adult Social Care, an important stakeholder is the Third sector, effectively represented by Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC).

The Community Resource Teams (CRT) made up of Health, Social Care and Third Sector staff, who work closely with local General Practitioner (GP) practices continue to deliver integrated models of working to benefit citizens. An identified lead for each of the 4 Denbighshire CRTs meet regular with Senior Managers and leads from Conwy CRTs at the CRT Leads Focus Group, to share learning, plan and seek support for new developments. To test our view that we do deliver better services together, we continue every month to contact citizens for feedback on the service they have received. This is some of the feedback from 2024 / 2025:

“Everything discussed was useful”.

“There was nothing that could have been done better. The Practitioner has given me the tools needed to be more independent. The Practitioner was perfect and went above and beyond in completing a supporting letter to move council house for me to be nearer my friend. The Physiotherapist is being very helpful and the micro providers list will be helpful once I get around to contacting them”.

“they were really help with everything that goes into the care for a dementia person like my mum”.

“very great, supportive, understanding, friendly”.

The complex disability team continue to provide an integrated and collaborative approach to the assessment and provision of care and support services to people with learning disabilities. Effective partnership working at an operational level between Denbighshire staff and BCUHB Learning Disability nurses has ensured citizens receive a seamless approach to care and support.

A collaboration between Denbighshire, Conwy and 2 independent sector providers has ensured that citizens have a clear pathway to access and explore opportunities for work with a team of specialist support workers ensuring that opportunities are fully explored and appropriate support provided to access work. Since the start of the project 9 citizens from Denbighshire have been referred to the service to explore work opportunities. Of these 2 citizens are now in paid work, 3 are volunteering and 4 attending work placements to develop their skills.

The collaboration between the learning disability team, supported employment pathway coordinator and providers has ensured that each citizen has experienced an integrated approach to their support with person centred outcomes achieved. Monitoring activity has confirmed an overall satisfaction level of 70.4% in feedback from citizens.

Work within mental health services is being undertaken to review citizens in care home placements to explore person centred outcomes and utilising strengths-based approaches to enable citizens to take an active role in the design and delivery of their care and support. This approach is a core value of the operational team and the following case study highlights how a citizen was supported to identify her outcomes and return to live in the community with her daughter. The citizen was able to identify the areas of her life she required support with, and how she would like support to be provided.

Helen is a 42-year-old woman who has been in contact with mental health services from a young age. Following several admissions to hospital under Mental Health Act 1983 Helen was discharged from hospital to a care home. Initially a 3-month plan was devised to support Helen to transition back to live in the family home and to have contact with her daughter again. The 3-month plan ended up being in place for 2 years as the relationship between Helen and her partner broke down very quickly. Staff from the residential home witnessed domestic abuse and it transpired that his behaviour towards Helen had been coercive and controlling all along. This significantly impacted upon Helen's mental health leading to attempts to end her life and admissions to hospital.

Whilst in residential care Helen's mental health remained stable and a Mental Health Support Worker was allocated to work alongside her to promote independence and build confidence. Over a period of time Helen became the main carer for her daughter again and an opportunity for a property which was part of an independent community living became available. It was a chance for Helen to be a full-time mum but to also received support in her own right. Support has continued in the community with a care provider allocated to support Helen and her daughter. The outcomes evidenced that Helen was at the core of her care and support planning, with support being focussed upon areas she identified and provided in a way which enabled her to achieve her goals and return to the community.

The Local Integrated Family Team

Denbighshire hosts the Local Integrated Family Team (LIFT), a Regional Integrated Fund project that aims to intervene early to support families experiencing difficulties with managing their child's challenging and harmful behaviours at home. LIFT helps by supporting parents to build resilience through learning and increasing parent/carer's knowledge, skills and confidence regarding responding to and managing behaviour that challenges. We also support families to build resilience by assisting them to access support networks and organisations that may help them. Our aim is to reduce the likelihood of families needing more intense and resource heavy interventions from statutory services (i.e. Social Services, Police, CAMHS etc).

Now in its 4th year the project is a partnership collaboration between Denbighshire and Conwy County Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and supports families living within the Central Area. LIFT offers three branches of support: direct assessment and intervention, consultation, and advice and signposting.

In the last 12 months the team has begun to incorporate the Family Systemic Therapy into the team's interventions and continued to implement the Positive Behavioural Support Framework, specifically developing their skills in supporting families to create 'capable environments' for young people. As well as evidence suggesting that there is no child behaviour change without main carer/parental change the evidence also suggests that there may not be behaviour change without environmental change.

The last 6 months have continued to be quite challenging for the LIFT team as two of the key clinical positions within the team have been vacant. However, this small team has received 138 referrals for support this year and has provided direct to support to more than 110 families.

LIFT also has a role in workforce development, upskilling staff working directly with families to better understand how they can support families manage behaviour that challenges at home. We do this by providing consultation, training and support to both professionals and families, building skills and capacity in workforce. The team completed 223 consultations with professionals supporting families during the year. Helping services to 'hold on', rather than 'refer on' in line with the regions 'No Wrong Door' ethos.

Bwthyn Y Ddol

Bwthyn y Ddol is a residential assessment centre and multi-disciplinary team established in partnership with Conwy CBC and BCUHB. The multi-disciplinary team continues to work with children and young people who are at the edge of care and are at risk of becoming looked after as their parent or carer, for a variety of reasons, is unable to manage a healthy family dynamic. The team initially focus on completing a holistic formulation of strengths and difficulties, risks and needs through a consultation process, in order to recommend a program of interventions.

The model of care has been developed through a multi-agency team with a focus on the requirements and specific needs of the children and young people within Denbighshire and Conwy. This innovative approach to an evidence-based model of care, along with the reflective practice adopted by the team, has already seen positive results with children / young people successfully completing the intervention and safely remaining at home with family.

The construction of Bwthyn Y Ddol was completed as planned and following CIW registration we began welcoming children and young people into the accommodation. There is a clear pathway for referral into the unit and children from both Conwy and Denbighshire have been successfully supported within the residential element of the centre. CIW registration of the accommodation for emergency and unplanned stays is ongoing and we are expecting CIW to confirm registration in the Autumn.

Parent Advocacy – Child Protection

For parents of children in the Child Protection Arena, Tros Gynnal Plant since September 2023 have been providing an independent professional advocacy service across North Wales which entitles parents to be supported at related meetings including Child Protection Case Conferences, Review Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Groups up to a maximum of three interventions. During 2024 / 2025, Denbighshire have submitted 19 referrals making us one of the highest referrers to the Service.

Mind of My Own – is an online platform that allows children and young people working with our Education and Children's Services to engage with their worker and share their views about the care they receive, their concerns, worries and successes. Children and young people can use Mind of My Own to contribute to their wellbeing outcomes as part of their care and support plans.

In 2024-2025 Denbighshire reached the milestone of 'Club 1000'; the service has received 1000+ statements from children and young people sharing their views since 2020.

A Denbighshire young person and foster carer also provided positive feedback to Welsh Parliament as part of '[children on the margins](#)' inquiry (focusing on children

who go missing and/or who are criminally exploited). Further information was provided by Denbighshire Children's Services on its use of Mind of My Own for a Case Study being undertaken as part of the inquiry.

Foster & Kinship Carer Online training sessions facilitated by Mind of My Own were held throughout the year.

Links have been made between schools and Education Engagement Placement Officer to extend current pilot and support usage of Mind of My Own within the schools for those open to the service, ensuring their views are heard at Child Protection Conferences for example and exploring views of those scoring low in 'attitude to learning' identified in PASS data.

Well-being

"People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm"

"People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible"

- CH/020: [The number of Initial Strategy Meetings for children concluded during the collection year.](#) There were 958 initial strategy meetings concluded for children in 2024 / 2025 this is a 15% reduction on 2023 / 2024 (1125)
- CH/021: [The number of Strategy Meetings held during the year that progressed to Section 47 enquiries.](#) 351 strategy meetings progressed to Section 47 enquiries compared to 384 in 2023 / 2024
- CH/022: [The total number of Section 47 enquiries completed during the year that progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference.](#) 71 cases progressed to Initial Child Protection Conferences, which is a slight decrease to 2023 / 2024 (77)
- CH/024: [The number of children who were added to the child protection register during the collection year: all children](#) There were 58 children added to the child protection register which is a 43% reduction from 2023 / 2024 (101)
- AD/020: [The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during the year.](#) In 2024 / 2025 this totalled 355, a reduction of 36 from the previous year.
- AD/023: [The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at](#)

risk where it is necessary for enquires to be made. This was 355 during 2024 / 2025

- AD/026: The total number of enquiries where it was determined that additional action should be taken. In 50 cases it was determined that additional action should be taken

Complex Case Support (Adults)

This team supports citizens in the community where more traditional community support has been withdrawn as care providers have been unable to manage behaviours. The Complex Care Team have been established to support citizens with more complex care and support needs to improve their independence. Working with a multi-disciplinary team they follow care plans including components of Social and Rehabilitative Care as well as supporting people with hoarding and other complex issues that may lead to homelessness or the need for higher levels of care e.g. residential placement or hospital admissions.

Since its inception in July 2023, twenty-nine people have been supported. Some interventions are long term, others have been for a few months until long term support has been secured, others have been crisis intervention.

Case study

Citizen A has a history of carer breakdown and frequent hospital admissions, one lasting 12 months due to not being able to secure a care provider, they were eventually discharged home with support from District Nurses even though there were no medical needs. The complex case team has been able to maintain care and support in the community for two years, during this time their living environment has been improved, ensuring personal safety and wellbeing. There have been no hospital admissions during this period.

Citizen B has had several care providers, all of whom have withdrawn due to behaviours and allegations made towards carers. The team has been able to sustain stable support for two years. The carers are given additional time to complete care calls, to have more autonomy with their daily interventions, delivering a holistic solution focussed support package.

Edge of Care Programme - sits within the **Therapeutic Service** and aims to:

- Support families to address their problems and make positive changes that can reduce the risks for their children, as well as helping them make a positive contribution to the community in which they live.
- Provide intensive support to vulnerable families with multiple complex problems, where there is or has been a strong possibility of a child becoming looked after.
- Enable a child's circumstances to improve and to give the family skills so they can sustain their own improvements.

The program has a clear focus on providing intensive home-based intervention for the whole family where children are considered to be 'on the edge of care'. The Edge of Care Programme also provides a similarly high intensity intervention for care-experienced children including those in residential settings where the plan is for them to return to their family of origin or general foster care or children who have been adopted where significant support is required to prevent their placement from faltering. The Edge of Care Programme works within the Integrated Family Support Team (IFST) model of assessment and intervention and provides the intervention over a maximum of 12 weeks delivering practical short and building community/wider resources using clear outcome focused goals co-developed with the child/young person and their family.

Parent/Carer Participation Group

We have established a Parent/Carer Participation Group in the community for any parent or carer whose children are or have been impacted by exploitation, be this sexual or criminal. We work closely with the community and provide a safe space where participants can attend for self-care, broaden understanding and knowledge of the many forms of exploitation faced by our children. The group facilitate and share their own personal stories and help and support each other to ensure their children are safe. The group invite key speakers from Health, Police, Social Care and third sector and continues to grow. The group is free to attend.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Skills Groups - The Therapeutic Service have

delivered a well-respected therapeutic intervention Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) for nearing six years. DBT is a skills-based experience that allows parents and carers to develop core life skills that help individuals regulate strong emotions, manage stressful situations and experience a kinder relationship with themselves and others. The group covers four sets of skills: -

- Mindfulness (increasing self-awareness to help a person cope)
- Interpersonal Effectiveness (feeling able to communicate with people more effectively)
- Emotion Regulation (learning how to understand emotions and how they affect behaviours)
- Distress Tolerance (increasing ability to tolerate feelings of distress and to cope more effectively in a crisis).

When brought together, these skills build towards a life worth living. Where parents and carers may struggle to attend the group, 1:1 DBT skills can be offered as a way of building confidence to join a future group as the messages from attendees highlights the powerful nature of being alongside others in validating progress and potential barriers to recognizing and celebrating personal strengths.

The Therapeutic Service has great success in working with men as fathers and carers and a male DBT Group is now part of the DBT offer.

Effective Child Protection Model

In June 2024, an ISRO was allocated the task of developing the Effective Child Protection (ECP) Model in Denbighshire who arranged scoping meetings with all managers and attended the ECP and Risk 2 training. The ISRO has monthly meetings with the ECP mentors from the other North Wales Local Authorities as well as attending the regional ECP reference group. Risk 2 training and ECP training have been booked to take place in June, July and September 2025 which will be mandatory for all social workers and managers to attend. The processes and forms are currently being looked at in order to support the implementation of the model, with task and finish groups to complete this work.

Back to Basics sessions have been provided to partner agencies around what to expect and how to contribute effectively to Child Protection Conferences and feedback from these sessions was very positive.

Going forward there is an action plan in place for the project which includes arranging further briefing sessions to partner agencies about the ECP model. The ISRO team are working on the logistics to ensure that Initial Child Protection Conferences can return to being face to face and the ISRO is in the process of setting up a forum for Child Protection conference chairs across North Wales to share good practice which will include the implementation of ECP in conferences.

4. Other information section

Inspections and reviews

Both of our care homes have been inspected by CIW during 2024

Cysgod Y Gaer CIW Inspection August 2024

<https://digital.careinspectorate.wales/backend/directory/service/SIN-00009248-HCLP/LatestInspectionReport>

The summary of the report said - People living in Cysgod y Gaer are happy with the care they receive and praise the staff for their caring and respectful approach. They are happy they can communicate in their preferred language of Welsh as staff are Welsh speaking. There are plenty of opportunities for residents to express their views; they meet regularly with the manager who seeks their opinion on things such as activities and food. The kitchen staff provide choices at every mealtime and people can choose where to spend their day. There have been changes made to the home to help people achieve their outcomes. One room has been altered to provide therapy, treatment or hairdressing; new blinds and curtains have been purchased and lockable furniture is provided. Covered wooden seating areas have been erected outside so people can sit in shelter outdoors. All staff are properly vetted to ensure they are suitable for working in the home and they all receive training related to their roles.

The inspection indicated potential issues with effectiveness of current staffing levels and the manager and RI (responsible individual) have promptly set about reviewing this.

Dolwen CIW Inspection February 2024

<https://digital.careinspectorate.wales/backend/directory/service/SIN-00009247-MGND/LatestInspectionReport>

The summary of the report said - Dolwen is a friendly and welcoming service. The residential home has four units and there is a day centre which is accessed by people in the local community. When this facility is not in use for day services it is available for meetings and activities for people living in the home. People have plenty of comfortable spaces to sit and chat within the home, or to enjoy some activities the service has to offer.

Care staff know people well and are attentive to their needs. They follow clear and detailed personal plans, ensuring health and support needs are met. Care staff are clear about people's personal outcomes and support them to achieve these.

The management of the service carefully monitor how the service is performing and their systems help to identify and act upon any issues they find. The responsible individual (RI) visits the service regularly to ensure good quality care and support is being delivered.

Denbighshire County Council's Children's Services February 2025

<https://www.careinspectorate.wales/sites/default/files/2025-04/250416-Denbighshire-IC-en.pdf>

CIW conducted this improvement check inspection between 17 and 19 February 2025, to review the progress made by the local authority following the [Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements \(JICPA\)](#) in 2023.

Summary of Improvement Check Findings

- Children's services are experiencing ongoing pressures in terms of increase in demand and complexities of need of children and families, against a backdrop of challenging financial times.
- The service has progressed from its position in 2023, supported by consistent and supportive leaders working with practitioners and managers. Managers are visible and approachable, and this instils a trusting, non-judgemental and learning culture.
- Practitioners feel well supported by both leaders and colleagues.
- Recruitment and retention of staff has been, and continues to be, a challenge. However, there is a core of permanent long-term staff in post to deliver a service supporting longer term stability. Despite staffing challenges, there is greater stability in some teams supported by agency workers. This means caseloads in some teams have reduced, and the workload is more manageable.
- There is a focus on effective partnership working to address the complex presenting needs of children and young people. The importance of an effective integrated offer of support is a priority for leaders.
- Improvements have been made at the 'front door' with greater oversight of recording of rationale and decision making. There continues however to be significant pressure in this area.
- Whilst leaders are aware of the progress made, they are also aware that further improvements are required. There is corporate and political support for children's services, and it is imperative this support continues, to ensure the local authority continues to drive improvements and meets its statutory responsibilities.

Complaints and representations

Complaints relating to Social Services are processed under two separate procedures. These procedures are managed by a dedicated and statutory officer namely the Statutory and Corporate Complaints Officer.

1. Social Services Complaints Procedure Regulations (Wales) 2014 where the subject of complaint is receiving a service from the authority or the complainant is acting with consent. This could be a family member or, for example, an advocate.

2. Your Voice Complaints Policy. This is the council's own complaints policy and adopted from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales own Model Guidance for Complaints 2019.

This enables members of the public, who whilst not directly receiving services, to make appropriate complaints where they feel a service failure has occurred.

Complaint areas are broken down into the following areas: Communication, Confidentiality, Courtesy and Respect, Equality, Information, Service and Staff. Equality complaints are further broken down into the Protected Characteristics.

The complaints process has two stages, informal resolution at Stage 1 and formal resolution at Stage 2.

Complaints received by both Children and Adults Services in 2024/25

Service Area	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Upheld/Partly Upheld Complaints
Education and Children Services	5	6	3
Adult Social Care and Homelessness Service	10	4	8

Whilst the number of complaints is relatively low in total there are complaints / concerns that at a point in time cannot be subject to the complaints policies. These would be complaints involving, for instance, court proceedings or adult/child protection matters. In those cases, a complainant is invited to resubmit their complaint when the relevant processes have been concluded.

In addition, where a complaint is raised verbally and responded to within 24 hours to the satisfaction of the complainant this is not recorded as a complaint and is classed as an informal concern. This accounts for a number of issues that might arise on home visits where prompt and detailed explanations of processes are able to satisfy

initial concerns. The majority of complaints in 2020/21 / 2021 / 22 were towards those levelled against 'Service'. This would be where, for example, an assessment might be challenged as incorrect or late in implementation.

An example of a complaint relating to service was raised against the Financial Assessment Team and alleged shortfalls in care funding. This complaint was upheld and the service implemented a revised process to improve communication internally between different teams where responsibilities cross.

There were no discernible trends or specific areas of concern that were repeatedly raised in 2020/21 / 2021 / 22. The authority continues to monitor complaints made to the services and the Complaints Officer has one-to-one time with new social workers to explain the process and to press the need for timely intervention as indicated in the Statutory Legislation.

There were no complaints or representations received by the Authority in 2020/21 / 2021 / 22 linked to the Protected Characteristics. The council received no complaints or representations from the Citizen Voice Body. The Arbiter for Local Authority complaints processes is the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and no investigation decisions were made against the Authority in 2020/21 / 2021 / 22.

Other sources of information

Glossary of terms

Bwthyn y Ddol

This is a multi-disciplinary team approach to working with children and young people who are at the edge of care and are at risk of becoming looked after as their parent or carer, for a variety of reasons, is unable to manage a healthy family dynamic. The team initially focus on completing a holistic formulation of strengths and difficulties, risks and needs through a consultation process, in order to recommend a program of interventions.

The model of care has been developed through a multi-agency team with a focus on the requirements and specific needs of the children and young people within Denbighshire and Conwy. This innovative approach to an evidence-based model of

care, along with the reflective practice adopted by the team, has already seen positive results with children / young people successfully completing the intervention and safely remaining at home with family.

Community Navigators

Work alongside the local authority's Single Point of Access and conduct a What Matters assessment to determine what help they can provide and/or signpost you to suitable support in the community. See details available on [DEWIS Cymru](#) resource.

Community Resource Teams (CRTs)

Offer a more holistic approach to community-based health and social care with health staff (including community nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and older person's mental health teams) and social services staff (including social workers, occupational therapists and social care practitioners) all based together. There are nine joint teams in Denbighshire and Conwy focusing on working closer together to provide care closer to home, offering better provision for the population and an increased focus and investment on prevention and early intervention. See details in [County Voice](#).

Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC)

Aims to promote, support, enable and develop a sustainable Third Sector in Denbighshire. Supports organisations to deliver their services in an effective and sustainable manner by provision of low-cost training courses, funding advice and information, supporting volunteers to enable them to get more involved in their communities. See details available on [DEWIS Cymru](#) resource.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Skills Groups

DBT is a skills-based experience that allows parents and carers to develop core life skills that help individuals regulate strong emotions, manage stressful situations and experience a kinder relationship with themselves and others.

Edge of Care Team - Adults

The Edge of Care team is based within Adult Social Care Services and recruits, trains and deploys Volunteers. The Team has demonstrated how the project can positively impact on planned care pathways, supporting discharge from hospital for

citizens, working closely with our Community Resource Teams in delivering a 'team around the individual' approach, reducing demand for traditional planned care.

Edge of Care Service - Children

This is support for vulnerable families whose children are on the at risk of becoming looked after by the local authority. Details available on [Welsh Government](#) website.

Families First

Families First is a program designed to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families by offering early intervention and support to whole families, rather than just individuals. It emphasizes a strengths-based approach, focusing on what's working well within a family to build resilience and self-reliance. The program promotes multi-agency collaboration to ensure families receive joined-up support when they need it, aiming to prevent problems from escalating and reduce the need for costly statutory services later on. [Get help from Families First | GOV.WALES](#)

Flying Start

Flying Start is a Welsh Government program targeting disadvantaged areas to improve outcomes for children aged 0-3 and their families. It provides enhanced services like childcare, health visiting, parenting support, and language and play programs, aiming to give children a "Flying Start" in life before they begin school. The program is geographically targeted, focusing on areas with high proportions of children living in income-deprived households. [Flying Start programme | GOV.WALES](#)

Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Denbighshire 2023

Together with (HMICFRS) His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services ([External link](#)), (HIW) Healthcare Inspectorate Wales ([External link](#)), and Estyn ([External link](#)), CIW carried out a joint inspection on the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Denbighshire. Read the report [here](#).

Moving with Dignity

Since 2019, an Occupational Therapist has been working on this project within the Review Team, moving forward with practical plans to implement changes to the way Denbighshire residents are assessed for and receive moving and handling support.

She has been tasked with scoping the issue, researching best practice, and identifying ways of providing effective training and reaching the right staffing groups (including local authority, health colleagues and provider services).

This potentially has the benefit of speeding up the hospital discharge process and it could have a positive impact on the well-being and sense of control of citizens and their carers, increasing resilience and engagement.

National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

Guidance from Welsh Government on the statutory requirements for training across the public service and specialist third sector. More information available on [Gov.Wales](https://gov.wales) website.

North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS)

Deliver information, one to one support, training and counselling to unpaid carers in North East Wales. Details available on [DEWIS Cymru](https://www.dewis.cymru) resource.

Single Point of Access (SPoA)

The team consists of experienced staff from health, social care, and the third Sector, who are able to provide information, advice and assistance about the services available. SPoA acts as the 'front door to services' to ensure you receive the right care, in the right place by people who have the right skills at the right time, first time. Details available of [DCC](https://www.dcc.wales) website.

Social Services and Well-being Act (SSWBA) 2014 and Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act (RISCA) 2016

The SSWBA provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. More information available on the [Social Care Wales](https://www.socialcare.wales) website.

The RISCA strengthens protection for those who need it, establishes a regulatory system that is in-line with the SSWBA and creates a regulatory system that is centred around people who need care and support, and the social care workforce.

The Act provides the statutory framework for the regulation and inspection of social care in Wales. More information available on the [Social Care Wales](#) website.

DRAFT