



# Director of Social Services Annual Report 2020 - 2021



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# Director of Social Services Annual Report 2020 - 2021

## 1. Introduction

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 we have delivered care and support services in a very different way to ensure we worked within the Welsh Government's Covid-19 guidelines and kept everyone safe. It has been necessary to change the ways in which we have engaged with citizens and key stakeholders, but we have kept the needs of individuals at the heart of our services when developing and delivering care and support services.

This report will provide an evaluation of Denbighshire County Council's performance in delivering social services functions over the last year. We will explain how we have achieved the Welsh Government's 6 quality standards for well-being outcomes:

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

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## 2. Director's Summary of Performance

This has been an unprecedented year for us all, but within Social Services we have found ourselves working in ways that we would never have anticipated and seen staff stretched both emotionally and physically as never before.

Throughout the last 12 months we have developed new ways of working to ensure we continued to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens and have seen innovation and creativity come to the fore.

For the most part we have had to put many of our plans and developments on hold, however the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated others. For example, the use of assistive technology has ensured that many of our citizens with learning disabilities and children and families supported by our Children's Services have been able to remain engaged and supported throughout the last 12 months.

Volunteers became an integral part of our delivery of support and through the success of the project is something we will develop and build on during the coming year.

Another exciting development is Bwthyn Y Ddol, which is being developed in partnership with Conwy County Borough Council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. During 2020 - 21 we have seen the introduction of a multi-disciplinary team to further enhance preventative work, with the team offering a bespoke intervention, led by a clinical formulation to complex, high risk cases.

We hope that in the coming year we will be able to build on the good practice that has come out of the last 12 months and further develop a range of projects and services to continue to meet the increased demand on our Social Services. This will include:

- The construction of Bwthyn Y Ddol
- To embed the ethos of Moving with Dignity into all services provided and commissioned by Adult Social Services and to ensure staff are skilled to be able to assess for / or provide right-sized care
- To join the Welsh Government's Early Years Integration Transformation Programme as a pathfinder authority, in partnership with Conwy CBC
- To ensure the effective implementation of the Liberty Protection Standards

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- To continue to work on Denbighshire becoming a Dementia-Friendly Council
- To see residents move into Awel-y-Dyffryn, Extra Care Housing in Denbigh



Nicola Stubbins

Corporate Director for Communities and Statutory Director for Social Services

## 3. How people help us to shape our services

During the 2020 – 2021 pandemic we have had to develop new and innovative ways to deliver services to ensure we continued to meet the care and support needs of the citizens of Denbighshire. Whilst we were unable to engage with people in the traditional way, it was still really important to us that our citizens were involved in helping us shape our services.

### Children's Services

Education and Children's Services have launched Mind of My Own, an app which has been co-designed with children and young people. This technology uses child-focused language and design to encourage young people to share their thoughts using a tablet or phone screen. It enables children to share information in a confidential environment whenever and wherever they want to, it also helps their allocated worker to monitor their wellbeing on a regular basis. In addition, it helps the service to analyse data to identify emerging themes or safeguarding issues.

### Summary information from use of Mind of My Own app:

Who are young people sending most statements to?

- Their social worker
- Their foster carer's social worker
- Their independent reviewing officer

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Which age groups of young people are using the app most?

1. 10 year olds
2. 11 year olds
3. 13 year olds

Which scenario type is the app most used for?

- My life
- Foster care review
- Preparation for a meeting

Of the statements received, 79% were positive and only 21% were negative.

Virtual Training for Staff and E Learning for Foster Carers has been provided with ongoing quarterly Staff Refresher Sessions. The platform went 'live' with children and young people across Children's Services and Integrated Families First Teams on 8 June 2020 and for Education as of 1 September 2020. Commissioning this platform defines our commitment to raising the profile of the 'voice of the child', we have seen a positive take up by young people across the service.

The Quarterly Assurance Framework report continues to be produced and its finding presented to senior managers within Education and Children's Services. This report has reflected the changes made to service delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic and has assisted the service in monitoring the impact of these changes.





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## Carers

Community Support Services (CSS) continue to implement improvements through the Supporting Carers in Denbighshire Project 2018-2022, which supports the Council's aim to develop 'independent and resilient communities. Pre-pandemic CSS was continuing to improve support for carers e.g. meeting eligible needs and commissioning and delivering what matters to carers.

Our Single Point of Access, Talking Points and Community Navigators continued to assist with identifying carers and signposting them to support. On Carers Rights Day we also launched the Carers Charter developed with the help of the Carers Strategy Group and local Carer networks. The purpose of the Charter is to improve recognition and raise awareness amongst the wider community.

Working in partnership with DVSC and other Third Sector organisations, we came together to focus on the immediate needs and support required by carers as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This included giving carers access to PPE from the Local Authority and specific Covid-19 information, advice and assistance for carers was added to the Denbighshire County Council website.

## Older People

During 2020-21 just under 20,000 citizens contacted our Single Point of Access (SPoA) and 47% of those were referred for formal health and social care services. 3983 citizens went on to receive an assessment of their health and social care needs.

At the beginning of lockdown in March 2020 we saw a dramatic increase in numbers of citizens contacting our Single Point of Access (SPOA) and we launched a dedicated phone line to provide additional support to citizens struggling with self-isolation and needing help during the Covid-19 lockdown. Talking Points became a virtual service and our Community Navigators took over the additional phone line. They were responding to around 240 calls per week and following a 'strengths based, what matters' conversation, provided a range of support including delivery of food, prescriptions and other essentials.

We tailored our Information, Advice and Assistance to ensure 'first contact right response'. In addition to undertaking prescription runs and dropping of food parcels and in response to

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the increasing isolation experienced by citizens we set up of a Telephone Befriending service with 45 telephone befrienders, 26 Councillors and 19 volunteers who were carefully matched to the 53 citizens who requested this support. Positive feedback was received, including; "We would like it known that we applaud what Denbighshire County Council are doing, thank you for the call we really appreciate it and we really appreciate all those still going to work and everything that has been done for us and everyone. Well done and Thank you."

A photo of a SPOA Wellbeing Coordinator and a Community Navigator on a prescription run, featured in a local paper under the heading; A Prestatyn "power duo" has delivered more than 1,700 prescriptions in the town during lockdown;



In November and December 2020 we commissioned Age Connects to run an engagement exercise for us looking at the appetite for a scheme to support the health, social care, housing and wellbeing needs of older people in the Corwen area. We then commissioned Practice Solutions to run an engagement exercise in the Denbigh area on the same theme. We are awaiting the final report from Practice Solutions.

In addition, work with older people in Denbighshire has been informed by:

- Engagement with Older People which is coordinated by the Older Peoples Commissioner's Office, every other month. This has included discussions on a range of topics including the impact on care homes and the impact that lockdown and social distancing has had on older people in our communities.
- Age Friendly Community of Practice meetings coordinated by Older People's Commissioner's office attended by range of citizens/workers



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- Quarterly Engagement Practitioners networks – attended by those representing citizens of all walks of life
- Quarterly Aging Well in Denbighshire meetings, also attended by citizens as well as practitioners
- Quarterly Wellbeing Network meeting, co-produced with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and including citizens as well as practitioners
- Quarterly DVSC Denbighshire Volunteers Third Sector Network looking at issue affecting volunteers and those in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector
- Occasional meetings with meeting North East Wales (NEW) Regional Cohesion Team, e.g. Celebrating Cohesive Communities: (an interactive workshop with community supporting organisations in Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire, and national organisations delivering support across North Wales).

## Learning Disabilities

During 2020 - 21 our day and work opportunity services have had to remain closed due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and to ensure we helped keep citizens safe.

However, staff have continued to work on ensuring we have services that meet the needs of our citizens.

Popty, which is a catering service within our work opportunities, was required to move from its current premises and we engaged with citizens and their families and carers to get feedback on how they would like to see the service change and the support they would need to manage any change. Feedback from this survey is feeding into the plans for Popty moving forward.

Throughout the lockdown period we facilitated workshops with parent carers to understand their experiences and understand what support they required. This resulted in us providing individualised alternative support for some families. As part of this ongoing engagement process, parent carers were expressing their concerns of being able to go out with their son or daughter when restrictions were being eased. We worked closely with the families and some of our commissioned services and arranged outdoor space within 2 of our rural projects which allowed families or support workers to take their son/daughter out into woodland or onto a farm and enjoy private time in a safe environment.

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Our Commissioning Officer and Operational team engaged with the families of citizens with learning disabilities to inform the service specification for Supported Living projects in Llangollen and Denbigh. They also have been instrumental in designing the properties and the questions for providers responding to the tender to deliver the projects.

The Regional Transformation Project have funded £30,000 of additional support to the NWAAA (North Wales Independent Advocacy Service) and Conwy Connect to work alongside All Wales People First to skill-up individuals with learning disabilities to feed into the commissioning of services for people with Learning Disabilities across the region. The North Wales participation group is made up of self-advocates from the 6 local authorities - Denbighshire has two self-advocates on the group.

The Regional Transformation Project has also allocated £150,000 for Third Sector and Voluntary Sector activities for people with learning disabilities across North Wales. The Advocacy Services skilled-up the group to choose the bids put forward, thereby allocating that funding directly as a group of citizens. This is a brilliant example of regional co-production.



## Care Providers

Over the last year we have been hosting weekly or fortnightly web-based meetings with domiciliary and residential care providers. We aim to share key information and for care providers to share their questions, thoughts and feedback with Denbighshire County Council (DCC) and with each other. It has therefore also become a really good space for peer support.

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The meetings have helped to create a more open dialogue between care providers and DCC and feedback from care providers has been really positive. We have just recently started to trial similar meetings on a monthly basis with homelessness prevention providers.

## Complaints and Compliments

Our Customer Connections Team manage and monitor compliments and complaints that are received for both Adult Social Services and Children's Services.

During 2020 - 21 we saw a 50% reduction in the number of complaints being received compared to the previous year, which would appear to be an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Complaints received in 2020-2021	Education and Children's Services	Community Support Services
Stage 1 complaints	9	7
Stage 2 complaints	3	3
Concerns	6	1
Compliments	82	132

One complaint against a member of staff in regard to their intervention with a citizen focussed on staff attitude and a lack of knowledge of the case.

Following analysis of complaints from the previous two years, we developed Conflict Management and Complaints Handling Training, which was rolled out across Community Support Services. There does now seem to be a greater awareness at customer facing level in terms of dealing with complaints, which we feel has also impacted on the reduced number of issues coming into the Customer Connections Team. Examples of recent contact;

- We feel the support we have received from the 'whole' department has been excellent. Our supporting Social Worker has been available to us if and when needed and has actively encouraged us to utilise any training opportunities that have been available. She has also been able to provide a level of reassurance and encouragement during times of doubt. X provides M (and us) with support if and when needed.

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The contact team have also played a part in providing positive feedback. Thank you for your comment at the end of this report; it is an emotional boost for its recognition which helps add another layer of resilience. A sincere thank you to you for it.

- I recently received a call from a lady from the proactive department, who after advising me that I was on the NHS shielding list gave me valuable information about available services for both myself and my wife, this included food and medication deliveries. I experienced difficulties with my local GP surgery over deliveries as they refused to do this and also provide a letter I could send to my employer. However, after leaving a message for X over this I later received a call from my surgery and everything was in place! And on Wednesday we received a food parcel with much needed essentials. Please pass on our thanks and appreciation to X and her colleagues in the department for everything they're doing for the community also everyone who are doing deliveries etc. in these difficult times.

## **4. Promoting and improving the well-being of those we help**

### **a) Quality standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve**

#### **This is what we said we would do**

- To ensure information, advice and assistance to support Carers is available digitally as well as through other channels.
- Improve access, skills and confidence of vulnerable citizens who could benefit from digital technology based care and support solutions
- To strengthen the 'Information, Advice & Assistance' offer throughout the citizen's journey, enabling citizens to develop resilience and maintain independence.
- To develop a new integrated Early Years' Service and Pathway

#### **This is what we have done and achieved**

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1974 adults had a care and support plan in place during this year this is a 9% decrease from 2019-20.</li></ul>      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 72% of assessments completed for children within statutory timescales this is an 8% decrease from 2019-20.</li></ul> |

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Our priority over the last twelve months has been to continue delivering care and support to our citizens in a safe way. We endeavoured to maintain co-production and keep the citizen at the heart of all we did.

The Coronavirus Act allowed Adult Social Services to take a more flexible approach to assessing and delivering care and support during 2020 - 21 year. All forms of assessment and support planning, including social work, occupational therapy, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) and Adult Safeguarding have continued throughout lockdown.

However, the majority of these were facilitated through the implementation of an effective Covid-19 risk assessment and relevant mitigation. In most cases this was done through a range of virtual platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Every citizen in receipt of a package of care and support was reviewed and assessed to ensure that their needs could still be met, albeit in different ways. Volunteers from our local communities were recruited into the service and they delivered a range of support to those citizens with lower care needs allowing our commissioned providers to continue to deliver care and support to those individuals with more complex needs.

Within our Children's Services the adaptation to remote working for staff and the use of virtual means of contact enabled work to continue in absence of face to face meetings. The use of technology as a means of communication has in some cases freed up capacity within teams and has resulted in meetings happening in a timelier manner. This has also resulted in staff being able to offer more frequent but shorter sessions.

Several pieces of work aimed at integrating the Early Years pathway have taken place during the last two years, this has included:

- Creating our **Pre-school Outreach Team** to ensure that childcare providers have access to advice and guidance when they have concerns relating to the development of a child in their care. During 2020-21 this service was extended to all childcare providers, including childminders, and incorporated the requirement of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Education and Tribunal Act Wales 2018 which will place a duty on the Local Authority to decide if a child or young person, from birth to age 25, may have additional learning needs and provide additional learning provision if deemed necessary. This year we implemented a programme of training to strengthen the skills and knowledge of the team to effectively support settings across Denbighshire.

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- Developing our **Team around the Setting** approach which aims to ensure quality childcare provision within the pre-school sector by creating a monitoring and support structure for settings. In January 2020 this began with the integration of Flying Start and Early Education delivery staff into one cohesive team managed by an Early Years Inclusion Officer working across Early Education, Additional Learning Needs and Flying Start. We intend to develop this approach further with education support officers from Flying Start, Early Education, Pre-school ALN Team and Early Education Teachers contacting and advising settings each half-term regarding self-evaluation, setting improvement and planning & delivery of the Early Years Curriculum. Mapping of this process has been completed and it will go live in September 2021.
- During 2019-20 and 2020-21 implementing the Solihull Approach, a parenting support programme which provides the foundation of our support for parents to understand their child, promoting good emotional health and wellbeing for families. This approach has also been adopted across Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board area giving professionals and parents a common approach and language to supporting parents. Throughout 2020/21 our Family Link Workers have provided direct support to over 300 parents, via phone and on-line, to access the **Solihull 'Understanding Your Child'** course.

Benefits of our joint working across all Early Years Services so far have included;

- a consistent delivery of services with improved communication and working relationships
- higher quality information sharing regarding speech, language and communication level and attendance for children who are due to start nursery
- production of guidance and advice for childcare providers regarding preparation and transition of children to school
- creation of a Single Early Years Panel meeting with improved engagement and contribution from professionals
- Solihull Training for professionals has been cascaded across not only Early Education and Flying Start, but also Team Around the Family and Family Support Workers who work in an integrated approach across Families First and Flying Start.



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Our Complex Disabilities team saw increased demand for our progression support service which is all about promoting inclusion and participation. Now a mainstream service, it has been effective in enabling citizens to consider outcomes previously not thought to be achievable.

Covid-19 sparked more innovation as traditional ways of co-production were no longer possible. Use of technology like the 'Owl' installed in a day centre to enable the transmission of sessions from the centre into Citizen's homes.

We have had a real drive to consider how we better implement person centred practice, especially at review stage, as it is key to co-producing outcomes with citizens.



The service has been able to adapt to meet changing needs of citizens in our community through use of technology. Video calling and media sharing apps. to keep in touch have continued to be used, while in-depth risk assessments have been completed to safely carry out any face to face contact.

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Using the owl device at the Glyndwr Centre for a Christmas disco, whilst maintaining social distancing is pictured below;



We have delivered cookery sessions over video and shared recipe ideas online, which has worked pretty well. We have worked closely with the Regional Transformation team and provided laptops and tablets to citizens who had no means to fund them themselves. This enabled access to virtual group activities held by Third sector agencies, maintaining well-being in an otherwise very isolating period.

In one case, boredom exacerbated behaviours which pushed a parent to seek support in a crisis. Provision of an electronic device enabling access to virtual activities helped fill the void that ceasing a work placement and face to face groups left, and helped avoid a complete carer breakdown.

Some achievement plans specifically looked at building skills around technology and accessing interactive applications that can support individuals. Some have focused on activities a citizen may not be able to do during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as sports and travel.

The ongoing change in government restrictions over the year has made it difficult for citizens to maintain these newly developed skills. This has meant many citizens have remained in the service longer than initially anticipated.

We have continuously looked at how to best promote and encourage technology within our intervention and have allocated a Support Worker to champion this and be a point of contact for information on virtual events and groups.

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During the last twelve months a large majority of our citizens have depended on their support networks or Third sector services to shop on their behalf. This was most evident during the initial lockdown when we identified dependency on this type of support and whenever appropriate we have incorporated essential shopping into achievement plans as this is a really meaningful and important occupation.

## **Case study:**

After the death of his father, Mr X was living in a caravan in the garden of a close friend with all meals provided and laundry and general housekeeping done for him. It was soon identified that the situation was not sustainable and a referral was made into the Complex Disability service to help support and develop independent daily living skills, with the aim for Mr X to live in his own flat.

He had never lived alone, taken any interest in cooking or taking care of his home. Mr X, was at risk of homelessness and there was a need for rehousing with significant care and support provision at that point.

Having a mild learning disability Mr X found it difficult to organise and focus on tasks, but with support of his friend had identified and set up a tenancy on a studio flat. Just Enough Support (JES) worked with Mr X to plan achievable outcomes over a period of four months, enabling him to move in. Weekly and then daily goals were set, increasing the level of complexity of tasks as Mr X progressed. A Support Worker focussed on practical sessions to increase skills and confidence in cleaning, laundry, cooking and shopping. Mr X enjoys fishing and was able to do this during the lockdown periods.

Initially he would cancel support sessions if he planned to go fishing and in the next scheduled session it was clear that the agreed targets had not been completed.

Weekly activity and meal planners were then developed to encouraged a sense of balance and this has worked well.

We supported Mr X to set up direct debits for most bills and pay as you go cards for electric and gas. Using a weekly planner meant that Mr X was able to set specific dates /times when he would go and top these up to ensure a consistent access to basic facilities and minimise risks of arrears. Mr X had always had support around his finances, but now he uses his online banking app to keep himself updated with his finances.

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Mr X was encouraged to reflect on each session and identify specific achievements that had been completed. This encouraged a sense of accomplishment which in turn promoted his motivation and focus on future tasks. Within three weeks Mr X had incorporated independently visiting the launderette into his weekly routine. This demonstrated his progression in new skills such as handling money, planning and time keeping.

"I am now living on my own for the first time in my life. My Support Worker is so helpful. I went to the laundrette by myself last week!"

## **This is what we still have to do**

Further develop care and support to allow people to remain in their own accommodation.
Promote use of direct payments and support budgets to improve Adults and Children's choice and control over planning and delivery of their care and support.
Embed use of pre-paid cards to increase efficiency.

## **b) Working with people and partners to protect people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being.**

### **This is what we said we would do**

- To progress developments to establish 4 co-located & integrated Community Resource Teams (CRTs) across Denbighshire to ensure citizens receive a seamless and responsive service.
- To continue to develop and review services that meet the needs of carers across Denbighshire through ongoing dialogue and consultation with partners and through carer fora.
- Introduce a peripatetic multi-agency team across Denbighshire and Conwy to work with children and families who are at risk of having children placed in long-term residential care

### **This is what we have done and achieved**

0.86 - The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 of the population aged 75 or over. A significant improvement from 2.27 in 2019 – 20.
The Average age of adults entering residential care homes in 2020 - 21 is 85 compared to 81 in 2019 – 20.

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Supporting our citizens to protect and maintain their mental health and emotional well-being was critical during the Covid-19 lockdown and a range of innovative and creative solutions were found to achieve this.

A collaboration between our Contracts and Commissioning team, Complex Disabilities service, day service providers and the farm & woodland skills centre enabled individuals with a learning disability to gain respite from lockdown through safe access to outdoors.

Face to Face Mental Health Act assessments have been maintained through the utilisation of social distancing and issue of Personal Protective Equipment and scrubs.

Through the use of digital technology, we were able to accelerate the development of our Community Resource Teams, this also helped us develop much stronger links with Primary Care health colleagues.

In July 2020 the 2 Community Resource Teams based in South Denbighshire linked up with GPs, resulting in 1924 patients being discussed in complex case reviews. Through this process we have now been able to deliver seamless health and social care services which has supported citizens achieving better outcomes.

Feedback from GPs on the value of these complex case discussions:

- Effective and efficient use of time.
- improved communication and sharing of information across the spectrum of health and social care professions
- reduced number of phone calls
- reduced process and bureaucracy
- improved relationships and joint working within the CRT
- provided a co-ordinated way to improve the quality and consistency of services for patient.

Reaching out to support to both Adult and Young carers during the Covid-19 lockdown was essential and one of the first things that we recognised was that there was an increase in need but a reduction in the availability of services such as day care or respite. This was due to the ability to deliver services safely and meet the Welsh Government Covid-19 Guidelines to reduce transmission and keep people safe.



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To support our carers, we added Covid-19 information for carers onto the Denbighshire County Council website and we arranged for carers to have access to PPE from the Local Authority store. Adult Social Services also supported individual carers with solutions such as laptops and other digital media devices to maintain communication and reduce isolation.

We ensured carers assessments continued, but this had to be in a different way as we could not always carry out face to face meeting, so we conducted them either through digital technology or over the phone. The Single Point of Access and NEWCIS continued to provide emergency cards and supported carers to put into place contingency planning.

The Healthy Carers Worker continued to deal with a range of referrals, maintaining and improving carers physical and mental well-being. We also continued to share opportunities for carers and encouraged them to attend on-line training events and activities.

## **Case study:**

Carer went into crisis when her husband fell ill with Covid-19 and she was caring for two grandparents at home alone. As her husband did not have stable employment their finances were also affected. A referral was made to NEWCIS Carer Assessor and the following support was put in place:

- Referral to Citizens Advice Denbighshire for full benefits check and employment advice.
- Emergency Bridging the Gap code issued to support carer with increased caring role
- Carer grant given to purchase a bigger washing machine to support with laundry for family and grandparents.



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- Counselling referral for six sessions to discuss stress levels around caring role and her husband's illness. Carer was finding it very difficult to cope with so much going on and fears for the future.
- Emergency plan completed to support with general stress and to ensure carer had what she needed in place.
- Sitting service application taken to panel for authorisation

Carer felt she had lost control over her own life and stress and anxiety over all the things she was trying to manage were making her unwell. Once she started to receive the support from NEWCIS she felt she knew where to turn. She appreciated the support given to help her in her caring role and felt more in control and able to manage. She shared with us that she had felt close to breaking point but had not been able to reach out previously.

Education and Children's Services made a successful funding bid to develop a Young Carers identity card, which has now been developed in partnership with other North Wales Authorities, 3rd Sector and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. A virtual launch event was held on 16 March 2021 at Wrexham Football Club.

Within our Education and Children's Services, the need for increased communication with partner agencies was noted by all parties, early in the pandemic, with recognition that decisions made in one agency would impact on the work of others. To this end, weekly meetings were held with colleagues in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and North Wales Police where service delivery plans, emerging issues and service priorities were shared. As the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased, partners have met less frequently but the commitment to robust partnership working remains and is voiced by all.

In March 2020, in readiness for a possible nationwide school closure, schools were requested to provide details of pupils that they considered to be vulnerable. This list was considered by staff from across Education and Children's Services. All names were cross referenced on Children's Services client database and relevant information noted. Plans were put in place for all the identified children to have contact over the 'lockdown' period that resulted in school closure, utilising staff from across Education and Children's Services alongside school staff. An escalation procedure was also agreed should contact with vulnerable children prove problematic.

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During the first lockdown and period of school closure, education was effectively suspended, but vulnerable children could be offered a form of child care within schools. Denbighshire, like many authorities, opted for a hub approach, opening a small number of schools for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers. A pathway was agreed across Education and Children's Services that ensured that open cases were allocated places at school hubs and vulnerable children were appropriately assessed to ensure that the limited places were available to those most in need.

Communication with our schools, and services to our vulnerable children did not cease over the first period of school closure and we have worked in partnership with our schools to offer continued support.

During the most recent period of school closures, education was not suspended. Unlike the first period of school closures, it was up to the school to decide who was eligible for and be offered in person teaching. A system was agreed where schools would share their lists of children attending in person teaching with Children's Services via a dedicated email address. This ensured that social care was aware of any vulnerable children who may not be accessing allocated school places. Schools have also shared their lists of self-isolating pupils due to Covid-19 incidents within the school. Again this has ensured that social care has been able to offer additional advice and support to vulnerable families during this time.

A weekly briefing has been held for Head Teachers hosted by the Interim Head of Education. These meetings are also attended by the Interim Head of Children's Services and other Senior Managers within Education and Children's Services. These meetings have been invaluable and are set to continue post pandemic.

Funding was secured via the Children and Young People's Transformation Programme for a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) collaboration between Denbighshire County Council, Conwy County Borough Council and BCUHB. The team consists of a clinical psychologist, two therapeutic social workers, two therapeutic family support workers, a dedicated administrator, a team manager and is supported by a service manager. The MDT will therapeutically work with children and young people and their families within the regional children's assessment centre (Bwthyn Y Ddol) when work on this facility is completed or within community settings if appropriate. The main aim of the MDT is to support children to remain in the care of their family of origin, wherever it safe for them to do so. Each case will have a clinical formulation, led by the principal psychologist with input from the whole team.

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This formulation will guide the evidence based interventions that will be delivered by agreed team members. These interventions will be subject to review and amended to ensure maximum benefit to the child and family.

## **This is what we still have to do**

Review opportunities for alternative services, share information from the Micro enterprises and Community Catalyst project, with carers and carer organisations.
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To review our Information, Advice and Assistance offer in aiming to increase independence and resilience in hard to engage groups.
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## **c) Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm**

### **This is what we said we would do**

- Ensure all practitioners are meeting the 7day deadline for completion of safeguarding enquiries.
- To ensure the Safeguarding theme is embedded in everyone's practice, which includes embedding any lessons learnt from Safeguarding audits and / or Adult Practice Reviews.
- To Embed revised All Wales Safeguarding Procedures across Children's Services

### **This is what we have done and achieved**

99.2% of all adult protection enquiries were completed within statutory timescales, this is an 8 percentage point increase on last year.
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Of those children who were placed on the child protection register during the collection year, the number that has been previously registered under any category, at any time during the previous twelve months. Denbighshire County Council figure was 1.
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The total number of days on the child protection register for children who were removed from the register during the year = 36,581 and the total number of children removed (de-registered) from the child protection register during the year = 82. This gives us an average of 446 days. Increased from 311 days in the previous year.
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Safeguarding responsibilities have continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with new referrals being actioned within 24 hours and direct visits or assessments being undertaken as required, whilst adhering to appropriate health and safety measures.

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## Case study:

### **Effective and Responsive Assessment of Care and Support needs during lockdown - Ben's Story**

Throughout the pandemic we have widened our 'Strength based what matters conversation' with citizens and carers to capture their knowledge, skills and access to ICT.

Ben had formal care and support. Equipment, assistive technology and support for his wife was all arranged over the phone. The video assessment of him attempting to stand from his armchair identified a need for just one home visit from the Occupational Therapist. Creative remote working enabled Ben to be assessed in a timely manner and ultimately enabled him to stay in his own home. The family took the time to thank the practitioners involved for being so thorough and helpful.

Safeguarding has remained a priority throughout 2020-21 within Education and Children's services. All new referrals in to the department have continued to be actioned within 24 hours, with child protection visits and assessments continuing.

All open cases within Children's Services have been routinely risk assessed with a view to how contact would be managed and plans made regarding continued communication.

In person visits continued for the highest risk cases with staff adhering to appropriate health and safety advice and virtual meetings taking place for those cases that presented lower risk.

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Following on from the Exploitation Panel, Denbighshire Therapeutic Service have been developing group work for parents of those children and young people to empower them and enable them to share their experiences.

## **This is what we still have to do**

To continue to embed the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures into all aspects of Children's Services.
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Ensure effective implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards.
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## **d) Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society**

### **This is what we said we would do**

- To build on existing and develop links with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Working Denbighshire and other potential employers to create opportunities for work experience for younger homeless people.
- Improve access, skills and confidence of vulnerable citizens who could benefit from digital technology based care and support solutions.
- Implement the Moving with Dignity Project.

### **This is what we have done and achieved**

4.69% of looked after children during the year to 31 March have experienced one or more changes in school during periods of being looked after that were not due to transitional arrangements. This is down from a figure of 11% in the previous year.
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Percentage of children achieving the core subject indicator at key stages 2 and 4 – This data is not available this year due to the Covid-19 lockdown and schools being closed for much of the year.
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The closure of libraries required Denbighshire 'Talking Points' to go virtual, providing Information, Advice and Assistance via a dedicated telephone line in SPOA. At the peak of the crisis the service was responding to 240 calls per week and following a 'strengths based, what matters' conversation, support provided included the delivery of food, prescriptions and other essentials and referral to the integral telephone befriending service created to support citizens experiencing social isolation.

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Denbighshire County Council redeployed 114 staff to proactively call the 10,361 Denbighshire citizens receiving shielding letters to ensure they were aware of all the support available to them during lockdown. They conducted 240 home visits to citizens not contactable by phone and referred 1,300 citizens for ongoing support.

Across our Operational Services, teams adopted regular proactive calling to monitor and support the well-being of citizens and carers currently open to their service.

To reduce social isolation and continue support to our citizens with lower care needs we introduced a volunteering project early on within the first Covid-19 lockdown. The Project has been successful in encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society. As of Feb 21, there are 24 volunteers still working with us and we are confident that many will continue post Covid-19. Our volunteers include a school cleaner, an Easy Jet redeployee, a retired CEO, a taxi driver and retired GP to name a few. Our youngest is 16 and our oldest in their 70's. Through the ongoing success of the Volunteer Project it is our aim to embed it into our Community Resource Teams.

We will carry on recruiting based on best practice throughout the last 12 months including:

- Through our Community Navigators;
- HR recruitment campaigns via Social Media;
- Word of mouth – one lady saw how much her friend was benefitting from volunteering and she has put herself forward to help.
- Future plans to promote via Talking Points, recruitment days and internal staff communications.

Here are some examples of what our Volunteers have been doing:

- Shopping
- Gentle walking exercise
- Light Housework
- Dog walking
- Gardening
- Helping to read mail and pay bills
- Prompting to prepare meals
- Supporting to set up on-line shopping services



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People who have benefitted from volunteer support:

- Young mum with small children – volunteer support to make her garden safe for her children to play in, and encouragement and support to enjoy being a mum again following a relationship breakdown. Mum now enjoys taking her children to the park etc. without support.
- Mr R, 92yrs. Support to get his scooter fixed and confidence to get out on it again.



The Moving with Dignity project, which aims to improve quality of care and to ensure access to the right equipment to carry out tasks as safely as possible, continued during the Covid-19 pandemic but not at the pace we had originally anticipated.

For many years, people who have needed to be hoisted or cared for in bed have needed two people to assist and attend to them. In the last few years there have been lots of developments in the design and safety of the specialist equipment used to help people move. So, in many cases, just one carer can safely provide care to an individual and for some people it will enable them to be cared for safely by a relative for longer, if that is their choice.

One individual commented; “I feel I have more independence, choice and control, a better relationship with my care worker, more dignity and privacy.”

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Specialist and accredited training was delivered between January and March 2020 to 36 staff across health staff, domiciliary care providers and Adult Social Services Staff and was completed just before the pandemic hit. Unfortunately, since this time it has been impossible to maintain skills and a number of domiciliary care agency staff have moved from their positions, leaving some agencies without day to day support from someone appropriately trained.

It is anticipated that training will re-commence during 2021 as soon as it is permitted to deliver training. Cascading the training to other staff will start shortly afterwards. Investment has been made to ensure the required equipment is in stock, substantially reducing delay in getting it to the citizen.

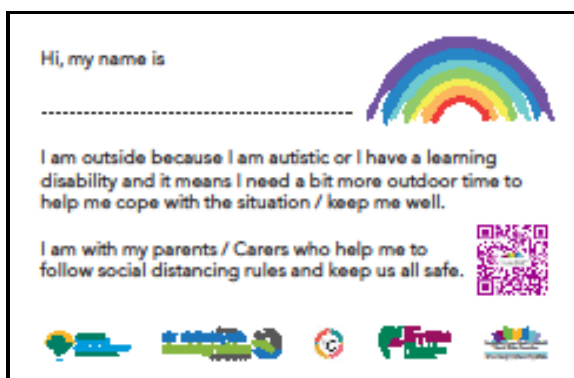
Discharges from all hospitals have continued to consider this approach in the first instance, however due to difficulties providing face to face training to domiciliary care agencies it has proved to be difficult to reinforce the new ways of working over the last 12 months.

Through our Regional Transformation Project, we have seen great strides being made in the use of technology to support many of our citizens with learning disabilities remain engaged and participating in activities during the Covid-19 lockdown. This included providing iPads, epilepsy smart watches, Fitbits, iPads, portals and smart scales purchased through the Communities Transformation Fund.

Working with our Day and Work Opportunities Team online sessions were set up to support those no longer able to attend day services, such as a Fitbits and wellbeing group online with community nurses and the Denbighshire self-advocacy group. The Regional Team also supported Cartref Ni to trial a care-planning app in Community Living projects. 'Here to There', a care planning and communications app, was also trialled in Denbighshire.

The Regional Transformation Team designed the rainbow card. Families and carers supporting individuals with a learning disability and/or autism were able to show the card to police when they needed to travel outside their area and/or needed to exercise more than once a day to maintain their wellbeing. North Wales Police formally accepted the use of the card across North Wales and over 1300 have been distributed to citizens.

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Social care staff within Education and Children's Services identified Looked After Children and Care Leavers who required additional technology to enable virtual meetings and / or family contact to take place. Appropriate technology was provided using grant funds where applicable. In addition, some foster carers who had several children in placement were provided with additional equipment to ensure that each child within the household had individual access to technology.

Children's Services have worked closely with the Personal Advisor Service, provided by Barnardo's, monitoring the impact of lockdown on the wellbeing of care leavers. Focussing primarily on the impact on their employment, training / education and housing. We have collated statistics weekly and responded to increased needs as required.

## **This is what we still have to do**

To sustain and expand the successful Volunteers Project set up in response to Covid-19.
To embed the ethos of Moving with Dignity into all the services provided and commissioned by CSS and also to ensure that all relevant staff are suitably skilled to be able to assess for or provide right-sized care.
Build upon work done so far and further develop Assistive Technologies to increase access and knowledge within Community Support Services and the community

## **e) Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships**

### **This is what we said we would do**

- Review the provision of childcare and respite for parents with children with additional and complex needs, and grow that provision within existing childcare settings

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- Development of an improved and expanded Edge of Care Service, focussed on supporting children to remain at home or return home as part of the strategy to safely reduce the number of looked after children.
- Further develop and review services that meet the needs of Denbighshire carers, working with partners and carers to identify / reduce gaps in support

## **This is what we have done and achieved.**

16 children returned home from care during the year.
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On 31 March, 12 looked after children have had three or more placements during the year.
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In Education and Children's Services the Therapeutic Team have developed a Parenting Group to work directly with parents of children and young people assessed as being at high risk of exploitation. The Therapeutic Practitioners use the PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) Model. This is based on developmental attachment theory and research and is the primary model for relationship development and trauma resolution.

The enhanced offer from our Edge of Care Service continued throughout the pandemic, with therapeutic work with children and families continuing both virtually and in-person.

The development of the regional Bwthyn Y Ddol multi-disciplinary team has further enhanced preventative work in the region, with the team offering a bespoke intervention, led by a clinical formulation to complex high risk cases.

Quotes about the work of Bwthyn Y Ddol;

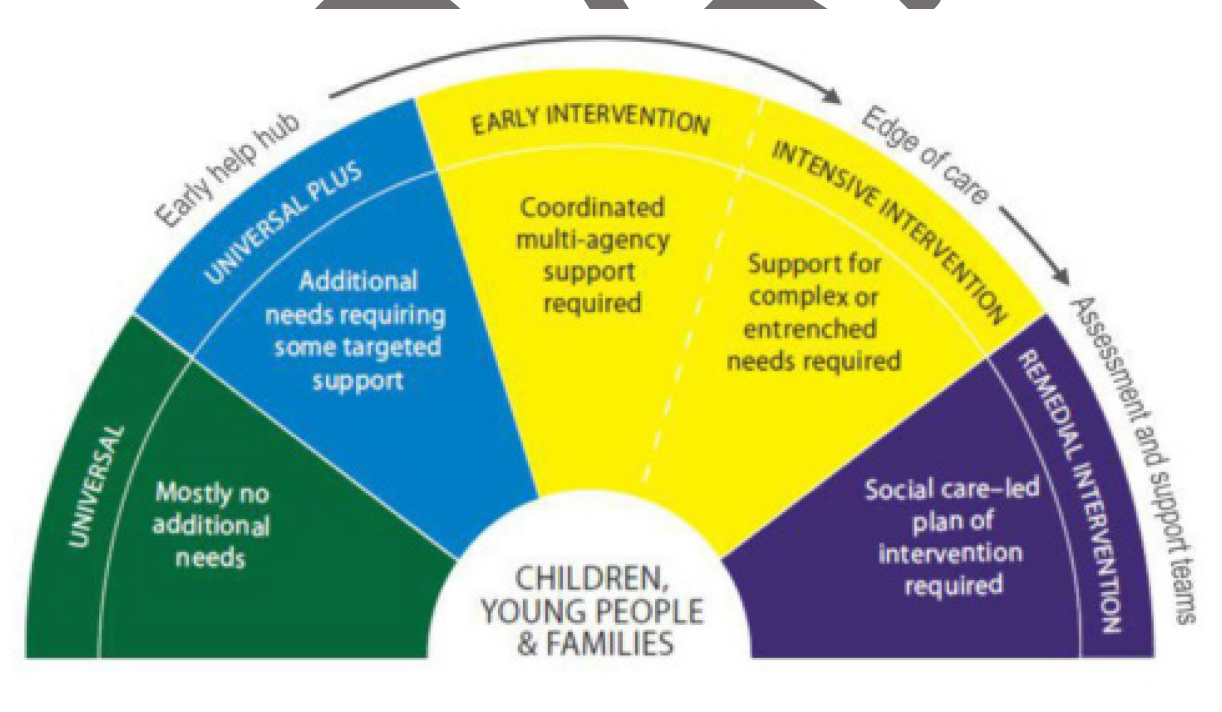
- We launched our parent group on 9 November 2020 and we meet once a fortnight. We have had great support from other colleagues within services who also advocate for parents as partners.
- We want to have guest speakers from any services that are working with our young people because then we are educating parents on exactly what that role looks like. Quite often these parents aren't sure what these professionals do and how they can support them and their children. The guest speakers are so important to our group. We've had a range of different speakers who believe in the Relational Safeguarding Model and how important parents are in protecting their children.
- In this safe environment we have created, parents feel comfortable to ask their questions to these professionals and what exactly their role is in their child's case. The group are incredibly supportive of each other and we always check-in on their wellbeing.

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- On the week we don't run the group, we offer parents the chance to have a chat with one of us in private. The need is there especially if the family is in crisis. Although we only started in November, we have made such a difference for those parents and carers. They feel more supported, listened to and much more educated on a lot of things.
- Our parents are amazing. It is an educational programme and for us, it's all about safeguarding. Not just the child, but the whole family. The best people to safeguard the child are the parents. Empowering our parents has made a huge difference. When we don't have the knowledge and education about things, those things scare us. But this group and the journey we go on enables parents to learn about child sexual exploitation and they are better equipped to support and safeguard their children.

The Bwthyn Y Ddol multi-disciplinary team 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 will 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 what the requirement and specific needs of the children and young people within Denbighshire and Conwy.



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This innovative approach to an evidence based model of care, along with the reflective practice adopted by the team, has already seen very positive results with the 5 children/ young people successfully completing the intervention and safely remaining at home with family.

Putting the child or young person at the centre of the clinical formulation and taking a whole family approach has seen multi-agency collaborative discussions routinely taking place which has promoted partnership work across all agencies.

Planning has been approved and contractors have been appointed for the Bwthyn y Ddol residential assessment centre.

This state of the art centre will contain three separate buildings which will comprise of the pre-planned assessment accommodation for four children or young people, short term, unplanned, accommodation for two children or young people and an assessment and intervention centre. The development is expected to be completed during 2022.



New Carers were identified through the Local Authorities shielding calls and North east Wales Carer Information Service (NEWCIS) 'Keeping in Touch' calls also provided ongoing and regular contact with isolated carers during lockdown.

A Supporting Carers project was set up with NEWCIS & Citizen's Advice Denbighshire, building on the supportive calls during the pandemic and targeting hidden carers in rural areas.



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Another innovative solution that was implemented during the lockdown was Push to Talk which is a joint project with Conwy County Council which will offer opportunity for carers to have a chat and share their experiences. This has allowed carers who are experiencing a high degree of loneliness and isolation to stay connected.

Bridging The Gap voucher scheme – take up maintained and domiciliary care providers continued to provide a service unless a member of the household was symptomatic.

## **Carer case study:**

Terry is a full time carer for his wife and both are on a low, fixed income. During lockdown he accessed the local foodbank a number of times and a volunteer there thought that Terry may benefit from a conversation with a Community Navigator, so with Terry's consent a referral was made. The Community Navigator phoned Terry to chat about his circumstances. Gently and sensitively they explored any issues or struggles that Terry or his wife had that they needed support with. Terry shared that due to fear of Covid-19 both he and his wife were shielding at home. He had not been able to get a delivery slot with his regular supermarket and their food had nearly run out before he was forced to contact the foodbank for help. The Community Navigator provided information of a local volunteer group that could assist with shopping and dog walking, along with a list of shopping resources including supermarkets offering services for vulnerable citizens.

Terry was shocked to learn there was so much out there and he wished he could have known about some of them sooner. He also shared that he was worried because they had a letter about their energy bill going up in price. The Community Navigator put Terry in touch with Age Cymru, who offered a free telephone benefit check and advised of programs and services that can help to reduce energy bills.

Following his initial call with the Community Navigator, Terry has not needed to access the Foodbank and is using a different supermarket that can offer him priority deliveries. Terry and his wife are in the process of lowering their monthly bills and have been reconnected to Carers support.

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## This is what we still have to do

To continue the work on Denbighshire becoming a Dementia Friendly Council.

To continue to review and develop services that meet the needs of carers in Denbighshire.

To continue with the development of Bwthyn Y Ddol and the multi-disciplinary approach for children on the edge of care.

## f) Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

### This is what we said we would do

- To roll out Ready for Work programme to develop young people's skills for employment
- Continue to develop work on Assistive Technologies
- Further improve support for young people at risk of homelessness through the Young People's Positive Pathway

### This is what we have done and achieved

The total number of care leavers who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training in: a) the 12 months since leaving care was 7 and b) the 13 -24 months since leaving care was 5

2 care leavers have experienced homelessness during the year, within 12 months of leaving care.



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## Dementia Friendly Council (DFC) Project

Our work to be a Dementia Friendly Council has continued over the last 12 months, despite the impact of Covid-19 restrictions. Since the recognition from the Alzheimer's Society we have achieved the following:

- Completed the majority of our action plan activities;
- Shared good practice across all of Denbighshire County Council services, through information on our staff intranet (Linc);
- Promoted training to increase awareness of dementia throughout the Council;
- Extended and consolidated our connections with dementia friendly communities and groups across Denbighshire and the wider North Wales region.

We are currently working with partners to evaluate our effectiveness over the first year of recognition with the Alzheimer's Society and to document our forward work plan for the coming year.

## Dementia Social Care Practitioners

Dementia Social Care Practitioners are working well within each of the 4 Community Resource Teams. They are working with Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and the Dementia Friendly Denbighshire Project Manager is helping to support the development of new dementia friendly communities in Llangollen, Rhyl and Ruthin, as well as the existing ones in Prestatyn, Denbigh and St Asaph.

Having Dementia Support Workers in the Community Resource Teams has strengthened our relationships and links with Older People's Mental Health Services and the Memory Clinic. The Dementia Support Workers work creatively and autonomously, using themselves as a resource when required and have delivered 'A team around the individual' approach. They utilise Peer Forums and Cluster meetings to share expertise and knowledge and provide general advice to Community Resource Team members.

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**Case study:** Due to memory issues, Alice was over medicating herself, having reoccurring Infections, was reliant on daily input from family and was this exceptionally problematic with the Covid-19 restrictions. Family were visiting daily to ensure that she had a cooked meal and would often find that 2-3 days' worth of tablets had been taken from their mothers' blister packs and felt that her memory and health were deteriorating so started considering residential care. A referral was made to a Dementia Support Worker who had discussions with Alice's family and got a referral to Memory Clinic. Following this, Alice received a 30-minute morning call to support with breakfast, drinks and morning medication, a key safe was also installed. It soon became apparent Alice was not managing her medication, family were also struggling to provide daily visits to support with this, so support calls were increased to two 30- minute calls a day. Alice's overall health has significantly improved, as has her wellbeing – the support calls have taken away the social isolation she was experiencing. "I am so pleased. The care calls are working very, very well. It has made a huge difference to us as a family, we can now enjoy the time we spend with her, without all the stress and worry."

The work we intended to implement in relation to a robotics project and other new initiatives had to be put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, early in 2021 work begun to establish the implementation of the following assistive technologies:

- Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activities (RITA) technology is aimed at augmenting the care delivered to older people, those suffering with dementia, mental health conditions, acute brain injuries and learning difficulties as a means of supporting them, reducing their agitation, isolation, depression and delirium.

Evidence suggests that the systems facilitate:

- a) Reducing Falls by up 76.9%
- b) Reducing need for single or multiple handed high cost care packages
- c) Supporting dementia care mapping
- d) Dramatically improved patient, family and staff experience
- e) Significant improvements in patients with dementia who are unable to sleep
- f) Supporting dignity, respect and wellbeing for patients
- g) Clinically led, improving the quality of patient-centred care
- h) Improved interaction between the individual and their carers and relatives

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- Pepper Robotics – Pepper is a humanoid robot that perceives emotions and adapts its behaviour accordingly. It can memorise personality traits amongst its interacting contacts. Initially Pepper will be used for community engagement within enhanced care, for awareness raising and to facilitate reminiscence activities. It is anticipated that a project tackling community loneliness will be the next phase of exploration into the use of social care robotics.
- PARO Seal is designed as, and evidence shows that the baby harp seal is, an advanced interactive therapeutic robot that brings psychological enrichment and joy to citizens in particular where they are experiencing any of the following:
  - a) Dementia, emotional and behavioural distress
  - b) Cognitive disorders
  - c) Developmental disorders
  - d) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and social isolation
- REM PODS– is another interactive reminiscence solution. It features a liquid crystal display (LCD) television disguised as a train window. The room is also transformed to mimic a train carriage and this provides people living with dementia and citizens with cognitive disorders opportunity to enjoy the experience of a train ride, brought to life through the playing of hours of countryside footage on the LCD screen

The implementation of the above technologies has been facilitated by creating a small project team from the Community Equipment Service, Workforce Development, and Provider Services. The approach is designed to bring together a number of skills to ensure that a fully inclusive service is introduced across enhanced care and in-house care provision. The collaboration is expected to create a new way of working to ensure new technologies are explored and that citizen and staff engagement is maximized to promote the use of self-funded solutions. It will also enhance the provision alongside traditional technologies that have been established across the community.



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Throughout the Covid-19 lockdown support has been provided to young people at risk of homelessness through multi-agency support. This has included input from our Education and Children's Services, the Homelessness Prevention Team and delivery partners such as, Clwyd Alyn's Dyfodol Project. Work has continued to review the provision of services to those young people at risk of homelessness, across different services within Denbighshire County Council, and our Youth Services will be leading on the Young People's Pathway from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. The team will include a dedicated Youth Worker and a Homelessness Youth Support Worker. A priority for the team will be care leavers and Looked After Children.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic an audit was completed by the Fostering Service that mapped all available placements, and which foster carers could offer additional placements in an emergency, accepting that this may require additional equipment and changes to approval status. In addition, the Fostering Service highlighted which carers had potential vulnerability due to their own or their household members (including LAC) health needs. The Fostering Service has continued to engage with the work of the National Fostering Framework, including on the forthcoming national fostering brand and recruitment drive.

We have continued to be able to effectively support and care plan for our children and we have successfully returned children home where this was appropriate. Looked After Children have continued to be placed into adoptive placements, using guidance and risk assessments provided by the National Adoption Service. Adoption and Fostering Panels have continued to be held, albeit virtually, with excellent attendance by Panel members and applicants.

Social workers have been successful in continuing to permanency plan for children, moving some children from residential homes to foster care, other children into permanent kinship arrangements, discharging care orders for children placed with parents and supporting carers to gain special guardianship orders.

## **This is what we still have to do**

To embed the Young People's Pathway into Youth Services.
To work with partners to focus on recruitment to care and career pathways for young people



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## 5. How we do what we do

### a) Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

The President of ADSS Cymru, Nicola Stubbins has underlined the seriousness of the current pressure on social workers and care workers and praised the sector for its resourcefulness, in a report published today by BBC Wales.

The President said, "Social care staff are stretched now to a point I've never seen before and at this moment in time, stretched far more than any point during this entire pandemic. They are exhausted, but they keep going."

"The pressures of being able to maintain service delivery is becoming more and more challenging and with certain aspects we are only able to cover some critical services - that isn't anything that anybody ever came into this job to do, to have to choose between who you may or may not be able to help." February 2021

Providing ongoing support to our staff during the Covid-19 pandemic has been one of our key priorities. Working closely with our Human Resources team we have identified a range of resources to support individuals and ensure we maintained the wellbeing of all our staff. Many struggled with the impact of working from home and not having the close interaction with their colleagues and for many of our care home staff the impact of having to manage Covid-19 outbreaks will have a long lasting impact. We sourced and shared a range of online materials, access to workshops and ensured we ran informal keeping in touch sessions such as virtual Tea at Three and when restrictions would allow Walk and Talk supervisions with line managers.



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## Workforce Development

During 2020 - 21 we had to take a whole new approach to learning and development for the Social Care workforce across Denbighshire. Classroom based learning was no longer possible and all of our training had to move to on-line / virtual sessions and our training room was taken over as the PPE store. Where learning required supervision to complete the qualification / certification then blended learning was put in place with the face to face element done in a very safe manner.

Our Workforce Development Team continued to support the ongoing learning and development of our workforce in a number of different ways including:

- The sharing of information about free resources / training which supports learning.
- Providing a monthly Workforce Development Team newsletter with information for providers.
- Working quickly to create digital access to training materials, utilising the Social Care Wales Learning Hub, CCInform and SC-TV which have all provided accredited training on-line.
- Social Work students being supported to complete as much of their placement as possible during the initial COVID lockdown. This was to ensure that a cohort of students would be ready to graduate and take up posts in available Social Work vacancies.
- Developing an e-Induction for redeployees and volunteers to the Care Sector.
- Working with TGP Cymru (Tros Gynnal Plant, our partner agency) around Advocacy training for all of Children's Services.
- Delivering "Working with Cannabis and Substance Misusing Parents" commissioned to reflect the learnings from Child Practice Reviews and North Wales Safeguarding Board 2021.
- Dementia courses – including challenging behaviour in dementia care, dementia and hearing loss and one of the most popular sessions - communication in dementia care.
- Covid-19 related courses – as a result of the pandemic the training team identified a need to ensure support was available for workers directly impacted from this, courses included COVID 19 dealing with loss and grief as a professional worker and a course entitled The Way Forward – focussing on ways to help people move forward.

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- Frontline care courses – a number of courses were offered to ensure continued development of frontline care workers, including medication awareness, nutrition and hydration, falls prevention plus many more. The team continued to offer important training such as those listed and were able to work with training providers to ensure vital training and workshops to support frontline staff continued even during turbulent and uncertain times, by adapting delivery to be online.
- Other courses offered included, substance misuse and awareness training and safeguarding (new procedures).
- Additional courses included workshops around supporting managers with the All Wales Induction framework, new to the 2020-2021 training plan.
- Tidal Training to deliver a Psychological First Aid and post incident facilitators debriefing course to the workforce, a new course offered during 2020-2021 to further support members of the workforce dealing with unprecedented situations.

Our training room has now been transformed again following the relocation of the new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) store. The photographs below show it as the PPE store and then back to being a training facility as the Covid-19 restrictions are starting to ease.



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## More Than Just Words

An online course was commissioned, aimed at equipping care staff across Adults and Children's services with the skills to greet and meet the public in Welsh and to make the Active Offer.

In addition, specific online courses have been commissioned for Denbighshire care staff across Adults and Children's services. These have included a short online Welsh taster course and workbook, and also an online course suitable for staff who understand spoken Welsh with ease but lack confidence in speaking Welsh.

During 2020-21 we have also shared the details as to where Providers can order the free 'Iaith Gwaith' resources.

We have promoted the orange speech bubble sticker which we recently produced in Denbighshire. The sticker is useful as a quick and visual indication of language choice on any paperwork, e.g. individuals' files in residential homes or 'what matters' forms. Some care providers are also using the large stickers on residents' bedroom doors. This year the Welsh Language Commissioner celebrated 15 years since the launch of the orange speech bubble badge. A Denbighshire member of staff and residents of a Denbighshire Care Home were included in social media posts about the importance of the 'orange bubble as part of the care package for carers'.

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We have shared information about the free 10-hour Welsh on-line course available for the care sector, together with the resources produced by Digital Communities Wales. In addition, within our monthly social care newsletter, we have shared the details with Providers of a range of Welsh resources which promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language. This included a variety of language apps and details of the new Social Care Wales training resource which supports bilingual working for people working in health and social care.

Within Children and Education Services we have commissioned the 'Mind of My Own' app which was launched in June 2020. The app is available for children and young people who are referred to Children's Services to express their views. The app is available in English and Welsh.

In Adult Services, we have ensured that those involved in a newly commissioned piece of work in partnership with 'Community Catalysts' from York are fully aware of the requirements of the Welsh Language standards as they deliver Community Micro-enterprises.

A dis-used building at Ysgol Glan Clwyd has been refurbished and is now a Welsh Centre offering Welsh-medium provision for all ages, including pre-school pupils and support for latecomers to Welsh-medium education. Following the completion of the building work during 2020 the 'Canolfan Gymraeg' building is now available for use. To date a Welsh medium teacher sabbatical (Bangor University), a post-16 Childcare course (Mudiad Meithrin) and also the Cylch Meithrin St Asaph has opened on site. Use of the 'Canolfan Gymraeg' is expected to increase when Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed and its further use as a facility for developing the use of the Welsh-language within Denbighshire can be explored.

A representative from the Workforce Development team has also been asked for input into the workshops to support the pilot of the online Welsh language Champion induction for Dementia Friends Wales and involvement in a National project to lead on the work to standardise health and social care terminology.

## **b) Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future**

Monthly financial outturn reports are presented to the executive forecasting the year-end position. Exceptions or pressures are referenced in the reports, with mitigating actions.



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The annual budget is set following a lengthy process of reviewing of pressures and savings across all services and engaging with elected members and others as part of that process.

In the medium term, the council has a rolling three-year Medium-term Financial Plan which sets out the council's estimated funding position over the period and, working with services, builds in estimates of required savings or additional funding requirements. This medium term planning process helped to identify and secure, through the council's budget, additional funding in 2021/22. This helped to support growing pressures mainly due to annual care fee inflation and the rising costs of homelessness accommodation in adult social care (£2.4m).

Main stream financial internal planning takes place on a monthly basis at Service leadership / management team meetings. There is a focus on performance and financial monitoring areas of the areas under greatest pressure. The Service finance officers also meet regularly with Heads of Service and the Management Executive Team.

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

Support for our Social Care providers became increasingly important as the pandemic progressed. In Denbighshire we implemented daily proactive calling to our care homes and domiciliary care agencies led by the Contracts and Commissioning team. We also introduced a weekly virtual meeting which allowed us to share messages, discuss issues and concerns, share best practice, but most importantly allowed the participants to provide peer support to each other. We feel that as a result of this increased communication and engagement we have seen a positive shift in the relationship between the Local Authority and Providers, we have got to know our providers like never before and we are working much more collaboratively.

In the CRTs digital technology has enabled stronger links with Primary Care and the broader health and care community.



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This has been particularly successful in central and south Denbighshire where in July GP's joined a range of other health and care professionals attending complex case reviews. In North Denbighshire the daily update meetings set up during Covid-19 to communicate service and staffing pressures, COVID patients and issues have worked really well throughout the pandemic serving to build strong relationships with Older People Mental Health, Children's Services and Primary Care.

Denbighshire's Complex Disability Team developed very strong working partnerships during Covid-19 with their delivery partners. modifying traditional provision to ensure those most in need of services were supported. This has included virtual means of support and alternative use of environments i.e. Use of outside spaces to enable support to be provided to citizens whose mental health was at particular risk. A quote from one mother; "Woodlands was a godsend to us and our son. It gave us a very welcome return to some sort of normality for him. He spent most of the evening after his first session back laughing! Personally, it was such a relief that someone else was responsible for planning what he did, for the next 2 hours at least."

The council has very robust internal governance arrangements in place to support the effective management of Community Support Services and Children's and Education Services. Reports are taken to various Scrutiny Committees throughout the year to enable Elected Members to scrutinise policy and performance in relation to social services, including reports to monitor the progress of any actions required in response to the Director's annual report or the 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 the 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 Senior Leadership Team (SLT); Scrutiny; and Cabinet, and various reports being presented to scrutiny periodically on service specific issues, such as Compliments and Complaints.

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## **Accessing Further Information and Key Documents**

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