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The following reports are Information Items for the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

- 1 2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report (Month 3).
- 2 Annual Review of Complaints received under the Social Services Complaints Policy
1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 12TH SEPTEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: 2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (MONTH 3)

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of projected revenue expenditure for Social Services for the 2023/24 financial year and its implications for future financial years.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The report will identify the reasons behind a projected underspend of £2,938k for Social Services in 2023/24, inclusive of transport costs.

2.2 It will also consider the implications of this projected underspend on Social Services reserve balances and for future financial years.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Members are asked to note the projected underspend of £2,938k along with its implications on reserve balances and future financial years.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To ensure Members are apprised of the latest financial position for Social Services.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Social Services Overview

5.1.1 On 30th May 2023, the Social Services Scrutiny Committee received the 2023/24 Social Services Revenue Budget report, which identified a total budget for Social Services of £127,137,247. There have been no budget virements approved across service areas since that date so the revised 2023/24 budget for Social Services remains unchanged.

5.1.2 Information available as at 30th June 2023 suggests a potential underspend of £2,587k against the revised budget identified above. Details of this potential spend are provided in sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 of this report and in appendix 1.

5.1.3 In addition to the revised budget for Social Services identified above, a further £1,753,733 is

included in the Economy & Environment Directorate budget in respect of transport costs for Social Services. Current information suggests a potential underspend of £351k against this budget as a result of reduced costs of transport to day centres.

- 5.1.4 This potential underspend in respect of transport costs would add to the potential underspend against the Social Services revised budget, resulting in a net underspend of £2,938k as summarised below:-

Division	Revised Budget (£000's)	Projection/ Commitment (£000's)	(Over)/Under Spend (£000's)
Children's Services	35,943	35,800	143
Adult Services	87,487	85,223	2,264
Service Strategy & Business Support	3,707	3,527	180
Sub-Total Directorate of Social Services	127,137	124,550	2,587
Transport Costs	1,754	1,403	351
Grand Total	128,891	125,953	2,938

5.2 Children's Services

- 5.2.1 The Children's Services Division is currently projected to underspend its budget by £143k as summarised in the following table: -

	Revised Budget (£000's)	Projection/ Commitment (£000's)	(Over)/Under Spend (£000's)
Management, Fieldwork & Administration	11,771	11,077	694
Residential Care Incl. Secure Accommodation	12,627	12,738	(111)
Fostering & Adoption	9,753	10,077	(324)
Youth Offending	478	435	43
Families First	4	4	0
After Care Support	771	1,031	(260)
Other Costs	539	438	101
Totals: -	35,943	35,800	143

Management, Fieldwork and Administration

- 5.2.2 Continuing recruitment difficulties have contributed to a potential underspend of £694k in respect of Children's Services management, administration and social work staff.

Residential Care Including Secure Accommodation

- 5.2.3 In response to Welsh Government's "Eliminating Profit" agenda, Caerphilly's Children's Services Division is in the early stages of establishing up to 4 additional in-house residential homes for children. Ultimately, these new locally situated homes will provide better outcomes for children and prove more economical as the reliance on independently run out-of-county placements will reduce. However, in the short term additional costs are being incurred in establishing the workforce to staff the new homes and in sourcing temporary premises while permanent premises are being commissioned. As a result, the division is anticipating an overspend of £111k in respect of residential care for children, despite the additional grant funding of £417k made available by Welsh Government to support this agenda.

Fostering and Adoption

- 5.2.4 An overspend of £324k is predicted in respect of fostering and adoption arrangements, largely as a result of an 11.5% increase in the number of children with Special Guardianship Orders and the associated legal costs of those arrangements.

Youth Offending

- 5.2.5 Following a freeze in contributions in to the Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Youth Offending Service over several years, the Local Management Board (LMB) agreed to uplift contributions by 10% annually commencing in 2022/23, in order to keep pace with increasing costs. However, in light of the financial pressures faced by partner organisations in 2023/24, the LMB subsequently agreed a one-off reimbursement to partners from service reserves to mitigate the 10% increase in contributions required in 2023/24. This has resulted in a £43k underspend in respect of Caerphilly Children's Services contribution to the YOS partnership.

Aftercare and Other Children Looked After Services

- 5.2.6 An increase in the number of care leavers with continuing support packages has increased significantly since the 2023/24 budget was set, with support also being provided for longer periods. This has contributed to a potential overspend of £260k

Other Costs

- 5.2.7 The demand for advocacy and family support services funded through spot purchase arrangements has proved to be much lower than originally anticipated, as has the contribution expected from Caerphilly to support the Gwent Missing Children Project. This has contributed to an underspend of around £193k. However, this has been partially offset by a £92k increase in the cost of supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children, resulting in a net underspend of £101k in respect of Children's Services other costs.

5.3 **Adult Services**

- 5.3.1 The Adult Services Division is currently projected to underspend its budget by £2,264k as summarised in the following table: -

	Revised Budget (£000's)	Projection/ Commitment (£000's)	(Over)/Under Spend (£000's)
Management, Fieldwork & Administration	10,041	9,786	255
Own Residential Care and Supported Living	9,329	8,309	1,020
Own Day Care	4,787	4,259	528
Supported Employment	77	70	7
Aid and Adaptations	865	902	(37)
Gwent Frailty Programme	2,750	2,615	135
External Residential Care	22,266	23,460	(1,194)
External Day Care	979	823	156
Home Care	12,496	10,043	2,453
Other Domiciliary Care	21,561	22,024	(463)
Resettlement	(1,020)	(1,020)	0
Services for Children with Disabilities	2,256	2,865	(609)
Other Costs	1,100	1,087	13
Totals: -	87,487	85,223	2,264

Management, Fieldwork and Administration

- 5.3.2 The management, fieldwork and administration budget for both Adult Services and Children's Services include an assumption that 4.5% of core funded posts will be vacant at any one time. The £255k underspend projected in this area within Adult Services reflects that actual vacancy levels throughout the first 3 months of 2023/24 have exceeded that assumption.

Own Residential Care and Supported Living

- 5.3.3 Of the £1,020k underspend forecast in respect of our own residential care and supported living homes, around £395k can be attributed to additional service user contributions following a recovery in occupancy levels in our residential homes, post-pandemic. A further £141k of the underspend stems from the closure of South View residential home for people with learning disabilities at Graig Road, Hengoed, which was formerly occupied by service users from Rhondda Cynon Taff. The remaining underspend can largely be attributed to staff recruitment difficulties.

Own Day Care

- 5.3.4 Alternative service provision within our own day opportunities is expected to result in an underspend of £528k. This assumes that service levels will gradually recover to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the financial year.

Aids and Adaptations

- 5.3.5 The projected overspend of £37k in this area includes a £50k increase in the management charge for the Gwent Integrated Community Equipment Service. This increase has been agreed by the Management Advisory Board in response to the inflationary pressures associated with operating the service.

Gwent Frailty Programme

- 5.3.6 The underspend of £135k in respect of the Gwent Frailty Programme reflects the continued difficulties faced in recruiting Reablement Support workers and Emergency Care at Home staff.

External Residential Care

- 5.3.7 Occupancy levels within residential and nursing homes have continued to increase, post pandemic. As a result, Adult Services are currently commissioning around 13,000 more bed days during 2023/24 than when the 2023/24 budget was set (i.e. almost 36 permanent places). This in turn has resulted in a potential overspend of £1,194k.

External Day Care

- 5.3.8 External day care provision has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels resulting in a projected underspend of £156k.

Home Care (In-House and Independent Sector)

- 5.3.9 The £2,453k underspend in respect of Home Care includes £2,115k relating to in-house service provision and £338k relating to independent sector provision. The underspends for both the in-house service and independent sector home care reflect the staff recruitment difficulties faced across the sector that have culminated in around 330 weekly hours of unmet need and around 74 vacant posts in-house. The forecasts included in this report reflect current service provision so if staff recruitment can be improved this underspend could begin to reduce.

Other Domiciliary Care

5.3.10 The underspend in respect of home care service provision identified in paragraph 5.3.9 has impacted on the level of income receivable from service users, resulting in a potential shortfall of around £397k. Furthermore, an increase in demand for supported living has added a further pressure of £257k. These pressures have been partially offset by reimbursements of excess balances received from direct payment recipients and a slow recovery in demand for Shared Lives services. The net impact of all these issues is a potential overspend of £463k in respect of other domiciliary care.

Children with Disabilities

5.3.11 Of the £609k overspend predicted in respect of Children with disabilities, £519k can be attributed to 3 new placements in residential care that have been necessary since the 2023/24 budget was set. The remainder of the overspend can be attributed to additional staffing required at Ty Hapus respite home.

Other Costs

5.3.12 An overspend of £61k is projected in respect of additional staffing cover for the Telecare help line. However, this has been more than offset by limited demand for services purchased through spot contract arrangements, resulting in a net underspend of £13k in respect of other costs for adult services.

5.4 **Service Strategy and Business Support**

5.4.1 The service area is currently projected to underspend by £180k as summarised in the following table: -

	Revised Budget (£000's)	Projection/ Commitment (£000's)	(Over)/Under Spend (£000's)
Management and Administration	2,299	2,112	187
Office Accommodation	331	357	(26)
Office Expenses	133	114	18
Other Costs	944	944	0
Totals: -	3,707	3,527	180

Management and Administration

5.4.2 The underspend of £187k in respect of management and administration includes £95k as a result of the vacant director's post. The remaining £92k can be attributed to delays in filling newly created posts within the Caerphilly Cares Service.

Office Accommodation

5.4.3 Increased energy costs at the North Resource Centre and Ty Graddfa offices have contributed to a potential overspend of £26k in respect of office accommodation costs.

Office Expenses

5.4.4 The underspend of £18k in this area can be attributed to reduced printing costs as a result of a growth in virtual meetings and home working.

5.5 **Impact of the Potential Underspend on Service Reserve Balances and Future Financial Years**

5.5.1 The projected in-year underspend of £2,938k could increase the Social Services general reserve balance by £1,469k to £4,182k and increase corporate reserve balances by the same amount. These additional reserve balances could provide some temporary breathing space within the corporate medium-term financial plan for 2024/25.

5.5.2 The underspend forecast for Adult Services in 2023/24 is largely due to staff shortages within the domiciliary and day care market, while further staff shortages within Children's Services have masked increased demand for special guardianship arrangements and aftercare support. If these recruitment issues can be resolved then the savings achieved in 2023/24 will not be realised in future years to offset other pressures. Furthermore, the increasing costs faced by social care providers is likely to translate into demands for significant fee increases in 2024/25. The anticipated increase in Social Services reserves could help mitigate the impact of these additional pressures, in the short-term.

5.6 **Conclusion**

5.6.1 Despite a number of areas where sizeable cost pressures are being experienced, staffing shortages across the social care have led to projected in-year underspend of £2,938k for Social Services in 2023/24. If those staffing shortages can be resolved then the increase in service reserves that would result from the 2023/24 underspend could provide a welcome boost to the Social Services budget in 2024/25.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 The projections within this report assume that any impact of the outstanding pay award for 2023/24 in excess of 5% will be corporately funded.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not needed because the issues covered are for information purposes only.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 As detailed throughout the report.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 All consultation responses have been incorporated into this report.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2003 and the Council's Financial Regulations.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Social Services Budget Monitoring Report 2023/24 (Month 3)

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APPENDIX 1 - Social Services Budget Monitoring Report 2023/24 (Month 3)

	Revised Budget 2023/24	Projection	(Over)/ Under Spend
	£	£	£
<u>SUMMARY</u>			
CHILDREN'S SERVICES	£35,942,914	£35,799,613	£143,301
ADULT SERVICES	£87,487,295	£85,222,926	£2,264,369
RESOURCING AND PERFORMANCE	£3,707,038	£3,526,921	£180,117
SOCIAL SERVICES TOTAL	£127,137,247	£124,549,460	£2,587,787

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Management, Fieldwork and Administration

Children's Management, Fieldwork and Administration	£13,535,801	£12,810,354	£725,447
Appropriations from Earmarked Reserves	(£876,424)	(£844,960)	(£31,464)
Less Wanless Income	(£51,115)	(£51,115)	£0
Performance & Improvement Grant	(£40,000)	(£40,000)	£0
Regional Integration Fund Grant	(£797,575)	(£797,575)	£0

Sub Total	£11,770,687	£11,076,704	£693,983
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Residential Care Including Secure Accommodation

Own Residential Homes	£2,784,544	£3,191,117	(£406,573)
Appropriations from Earmarked Reserves	(£401,525)	(£401,525)	£0
Welsh Government Grants	(£637,848)	(£637,848)	£0
Gross Cost of Placements	£10,965,812	£10,666,207	£299,605
Contributions from Education	(£84,162)	(£80,154)	(£4,008)

Sub Total	£12,626,821	£12,737,797	(£110,976)
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Fostering and Adoption

Gross Cost of Placements	£8,615,585	£8,760,607	(£145,022)
Other Fostering Costs	£91,006	£100,195	(£9,189)
Adoption Allowances	£64,246	£58,947	£5,299
Other Adoption Costs	£403,004	£403,004	£0
Professional Fees Inc. Legal Fees	£578,899	£754,286	(£175,387)

Sub Total	£9,752,740	£10,077,040	(£324,300)
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Youth Offending

Youth Offending Team	£478,133	£434,666	£43,467
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Sub Total	£478,133	£434,666	£43,467
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Families First

Families First Team	£266,484	£257,933	£8,551
Other Families First Contracts	£2,909,565	£2,918,116	(£8,551)
Grant Income	(£3,171,546)	(£3,171,546)	£0

Sub Total	£4,503	£4,503	£0
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Other Costs

Preventative and Support - (Section 17 & Childminding)	£35,000	£35,000	£0
Aftercare	£770,814	£1,030,576	(£259,762)
Agreements with Voluntary Organisations	£617,130	£424,188	£192,942
Regional Integration Fund Grant	(£100,000)	(£100,000)	£0
Other	(£12,914)	£79,139	(£92,053)

Sub Total	£1,310,030	£1,468,904	(£158,874)
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TOTAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

£35,942,914	£35,799,613	£143,301
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ADULT SERVICES

Management, Fieldwork and Administration

Management	£148,171	£147,441	£730
Protection of Vulnerable Adults	£462,746	£459,211	£3,535
OLA and Client Income from Client Finances	(£385,279)	(£369,146)	(£16,133)
Commissioning	£564,680	£597,670	(£32,990)
Section 28a Income Joint Commissioning Post	(£17,175)	(£17,175)	£0
Older People	£2,661,135	£2,705,331	(£44,196)
Less Wanless Income	(£44,747)	(£44,747)	£0
Promoting Independence	£3,284,480	£3,388,167	(£103,687)
Provider Services	£614,295	£629,370	(£15,075)
Regional Integration Fund Grant	(£282,079)	(£328,110)	£46,031
Learning Disabilities	£883,233	£807,178	£76,055
Appropriations from Earmarked Reserves	(£171,259)	(£145,600)	(£25,659)
MCA/LPS/DoLS grant	£0	(£62,570)	£62,570
Contribution from Health and Other Partners	(£44,253)	(£45,061)	£808
Mental Health	£1,619,523	£1,741,264	(£121,741)
Section 28a Income Assertive Outreach	(£94,769)	(£94,769)	£0
Drug & Alcohol Services	£439,418	£444,232	(£4,814)
Emergency Duty Team	£402,585	£373,171	£29,414
Further Vacancy Savings	£0	(£399,788)	£399,788
Sub Total	£10,040,705	£9,786,068	£254,637

Own Residential Care

Residential Homes for the Elderly	£9,090,388	£8,505,095	£585,293
Appropriations from Earmarked Reserves	(£435,597)	(£174,301)	(£261,296)
Regional Integration Fund Grant	(£92,563)	(£92,563)	£0
-Less Client Contributions	(£2,230,000)	(£2,624,984)	£394,984
-Less Section 28a Income (Ty Iscoed)	(£115,350)	(£115,350)	£0
-Less Inter-Authority Income	(£55,161)	(£47,999)	(£7,162)
Net Cost	£6,161,717	£5,449,898	£711,819
Accommodation for People with Learning Disabilities	£3,804,414	£3,169,798	£634,616
-Less Client Contributions	(£89,641)	(£61,000)	(£28,641)
-Less Inter-Authority Income	(£546,971)	(£249,972)	(£296,999)
Net Cost	£3,167,802	£2,858,826	£308,976
Sub Total	£9,329,519	£8,308,724	£1,020,795

External Residential Care

Long Term Placements			
Older People	£16,096,581	£17,005,260	(£908,679)
Less Wanless Income	(£303,428)	(£303,428)	£0
Less Section 28a Income - Allt yr yn	(£151,063)	(£151,063)	£0
Physically Disabled	£1,059,617	£1,549,130	(£489,513)
Learning Disabilities	£5,000,538	£4,540,298	£460,240
Mental Health	£1,135,777	£1,385,136	(£249,359)
Substance Misuse Placements	£42,487	£42,487	£0
Social Care Workforce & Sustainability Grant	(£1,032,639)	(£1,032,639)	£0
Net Cost	£21,847,870	£23,035,180	(£1,187,310)

Short Term Placements			
Older People	£237,321	£237,321	£0
Carers Respite Arrangements	£45,063	£45,063	£0
Physical Disabilities	£17,146	£17,146	£0
Learning Disabilities	£118,634	£125,496	(£6,862)
Net Cost	£418,164	£425,026	(£6,862)
Sub Total	£22,266,034	£23,460,207	(£1,194,173)
Own Day Care			
Own Day Opportunities	£4,121,996	£3,507,325	£614,671
-Less Attendance Contributions	(£37,560)	£0	(£37,560)
-Less Inter-Authority Income	(£24,986)	£0	(£24,986)
Mental Health Community Support	£917,187	£941,641	(£24,454)
Appropriations from Earmarked Reserves	(£21,186)	(£21,186)	£0
Regional Integration Fund Grant	(£87,100)	(£87,100)	£0
-Less Section 28a Income (Pentrebane Street)	(£81,366)	(£81,366)	£0
Sub Total	£4,786,985	£4,259,313	£527,672
External Day Care			
Elderly	£43,830	£34,251	£9,579
Physically Disabled	£153,843	£130,886	£22,957
Learning Disabilities	£848,914	£707,637	£141,277
Section 28a Income	(£72,659)	(£72,659)	£0
Mental Health	£5,010	£22,801	(£17,791)
Sub Total	£978,938	£822,916	£156,022
Supported Employment			
Mental Health	£77,465	£69,550	£7,915
Sub Total	£77,465	£69,550	£7,915
Aids and Adaptations			
Disability Living Equipment	£613,706	£656,189	(£42,483)
Adaptations	£243,370	£243,370	£0
Promoting Independence Grant	£0	£0	£0
Chronically Sick and Disabled Telephones	£7,887	£2,673	£5,214
Sub Total	£864,963	£902,232	(£37,269)
Home Assistance and Reablement			
Home Assistance and Reablement Team			
Home Assistance and Reablement Team (H.A.R.T.)	£6,139,346	£4,025,267	£2,114,079
Wanless Funding	(£67,959)	(£67,959)	£0
Regional Integration Fund Grant	(£32,306)	(£32,306)	£0
Regional Integration Fund Grant	(£159,452)	(£160,538)	£1,086
Independent Sector Domiciliary Care			
Elderly	£6,589,493	£6,123,216	£466,277
Physical Disabilities	£889,412	£1,028,539	(£139,127)
Learning Disabilities (excluding Resettlement)	£290,640	£234,961	£55,679
Mental Health	£82,397	£127,714	(£45,317)
Social Care Workforce & Sustainability Grant	(£1,235,943)	(£1,235,943)	£0
Gwent Frailty Programme	£2,749,903	£2,614,873	£135,030
Sub Total	£15,245,531	£12,657,824	£2,587,707

Other Domiciliary Care

Shared Lives			
Shared Lives Scheme	£1,681,470	£1,579,211	£102,259
Regional Integration Fund Grant	(£173,790)	(£173,790)	£0
Net Cost	£1,507,680	£1,405,421	£102,259
Supported Living			
Older People	£267,923	£343,049	(£75,126)
Physical Disabilities	£1,970,993	£1,758,947	£212,046
Learning Disabilities	£14,989,169	£15,521,807	(£532,638)
Less Section 28a Income Joint Tenancy	(£28,987)	(£28,987)	£0
Mental Health	£2,387,097	£2,248,493	£138,604
Social Care Workforce & Sustainability Grant	(£408,304)	(£408,304)	£0
Net Cost	£19,177,891	£19,435,005	(£257,114)
Direct Payment			
Elderly People	£117,541	£95,618	£21,923
Physical Disabilities	£1,004,667	£917,406	£87,261
Learning Disabilities	£782,286	£777,948	£4,338
Section 28a Income Learning Disabilities	(£20,808)	(£20,808)	£0
Mental Health	£4,339	£4,139	£200
Net Cost	£1,888,025	£1,774,302	£113,723
Other			
Extra Care Sheltered Housing	£745,323	£769,806	(£24,483)
Net Cost	£745,323	£769,806	(£24,483)
Total Home Care Client Contributions	(£1,757,767)	(£1,360,571)	(£397,196)
Sub Total	£21,561,152	£22,023,963	(£462,811)

Resettlement

External Funding			
Section 28a Income	(£1,020,410)	(£1,020,410)	£0
Sub Total	(£1,020,410)	(£1,020,410)	£0

Services for Children with Disabilities

Ty Hapus	£526,314	£606,467	(£80,153)
Residential Care	£910,745	£1,429,361	(£518,616)
Foster Care	£517,101	£543,259	(£26,158)
Preventative and Support - (Section 17 & Childminding)	£10,596	£10,596	£0
Respite Care	£99,421	£66,536	£32,885
Direct Payments	£192,402	£209,105	(£16,703)
Sub Total	£2,256,579	£2,865,324	(£608,745)

Other Costs

Telecare Gross Cost	£876,579	£937,559	(£60,980)
Section 28a Income	(£6,866)	(£6,866)	£0
Less Client and Agency Income	(£417,555)	(£417,555)	£0
Agreements with Voluntary Organisations			
Children with Disabilities	£320,536	£264,366	£56,170
Elderly	£77,270	£88,129	(£10,859)
Learning Difficulties	£67,006	£78,404	(£11,398)
Section 28a Income	(£52,020)	(£52,020)	£0
Mental Health & Substance Misuse	£48,651	£8,964	£39,687
MH Capacity Act / Deprivation of Libert Safeguards	£124,534	£124,534	£0

Other	£61,699	£61,699	£0
Gwent Enhanced Dementia Care Expenditure	£152,106	£76,053	£76,053
Gwent Enhanced Dementia Care Grant	(£152,106)	(£76,053)	(£76,053)
Sub Total	£1,099,834	£1,087,214	£12,620
TOTAL ADULT SERVICES	£87,487,295	£85,222,926	£2,264,369
<u>SERVICE STRATEGY AND BUSINESS SUPPORT</u>			
Management and Administration			
Policy Development and Strategy	£198,181	£103,776	£94,405
Financial Services	£983,158	£910,737	£72,421
Appropriations from Earmarked Reserves	(£120,632)	(£49,856)	(£70,776)
Caerphilly Cares	£2,212,885	£2,050,861	£162,024
Appropriations from Earmarked Reserves	(£974,468)	(£903,750)	(£70,718)
Sub Total	£2,299,124	£2,111,768	£187,356
Office Accommodation			
All Offices	£437,926	£448,638	(£10,712)
Less Office Accommodation Recharge to HRA	(£106,654)	(£91,654)	(£15,000)
Sub Total	£331,272	£356,984	(£25,712)
Office Expenses			
All Offices	£132,662	£114,490	£18,172
Sub Total	£132,662	£114,490	£18,172
Other Costs			
Training	£370,143	£370,143	£0
Staff Support/Protection	£10,519	£10,519	£0
Information Technology	£64,549	£64,549	£0
Management Fees for Consortia	(£56,330)	(£56,330)	£0
Insurances	£277,770	£277,770	£0
Other Costs	£277,329	£277,028	£301
Sub Total	£943,980	£943,679	£301
TOTAL RESOURCING AND PERFORMANCE	£3,707,038	£3,526,921	£180,117



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12TH SEPTEMBER 2023

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED UNDER THE
SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS POLICY 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 31ST
MARCH 2023**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Committee with information and analysis on the operation of the Social Services Directorate's Representations and Complaints procedure from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The report will also include a summary of the compliments received in the same period.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Representations and complaints relating to Social Services are dealt with by the Directorate's Complaints and Information Team, who also record compliments received.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 For Scrutiny Committee to note the content of the report.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To monitor the complaints process to ensure effective delivery of Social Services.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 This report provides details of representations, complaints and compliments for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The report describes the activity carried out during the period and is contained within section 5 of the report.

REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.2 A representation is a request for information or a referral for a service made by a third party (including Elected Members) on behalf of another person.

- 5.3 During the period 2022/23, the Complaints and Information Team have made every effort to ensure compliance with the Protocol that governs the sharing of information with Councillors (Cllr)/Member of Parliament (MP)/Member of Senedd (MS), ensuring that relevant consent is obtained where necessary. A flowchart has been produced and shared to provide additional guidance around representations.

COMPLAINTS

- 5.4 In 2014, Welsh Government undertook a review of the “*Listening & Learning*” complaints guidance which resulted in the introduction in August 2015 of the “*guide to handling complaints and representations by local authority social services*” (the guidance). The revised complaints process adopts a three-stage approach to complaints:

Stage 1 (Local Resolution) - The majority of complaints are dealt with in this way and most are concluded without the need for a formal investigation. Staff are required to observe established procedures, timescales and best practice at all times.

Stage 2 (Formal Investigation) - Investigations at this stage are undertaken by an externally commissioned Investigating Officer and there are statutory time limits for completion of the investigation. The complainant receives a full response from the Corporate Director, Social Services, detailing findings, conclusions and recommendations. The guidance allows for complainants to progress their concerns directly to the formal Stage 2 investigation without Stage 1 consideration if they so wish.

Ombudsman - If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 investigation, they can request that the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) considers their complaint.

ACTIVITY

AWARENESS RAISING

- 5.5 To ensure that all staff are acting in line with legislation, the Complaints and Information Team delivers mandatory annual awareness raising sessions to all Social Services teams, which covers the complaints process and Data Protection, with emphasis on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). During the period 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, 38 online sessions were delivered, reaching 371 members of staff (201 for Adults Services, 170 for Children’s Services). This is a slight decrease from the previous year, where 49 sessions were delivered to 409 members of staff.

During 2022/23 more staff have been returning to the office and we have re-introduced face to face delivery of the awareness raising sessions. During the period 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, 11 face to face sessions were delivered, reaching 94 members of staff (36 for Adults Services, 58 for Children’s Services).

Therefore overall, the training attendance has increased on last year’s figures as this year we have provided 49 sessions, reaching 465 members of staff.

COMPLAINT REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.6 During 2022/23, 35 representations were received, of these, 25 (71%) related to Adult Services and 10 (29%) to Children’s Services. This is a large decrease on the previous year where 98 representations were received, this may be due to the additional guidance that has been produced and a reduction in the queries regarding Day Centres. As in previous years the breakdown between Adults/Children’s Services remains the same.
- 5.7 Whilst the number of representations has decreased many of them were still regarding access

to Day Services and questions around the future of Day Service provision. Other representations were received on behalf of families regarding the need for additional play/holiday schemes for children with disabilities and concerns for families that were involved in the child protection arena.

5.8 The Complaints and Information Team receive representations from a number of sources and these are detailed below for 2022/23:

- Members of the Senedd, Members of Parliament (20)
- Elected Members/Councillors (9)
- Advocates (5)
- Family Member (1)

5.9 Representations have been made through the following routes:

- Email (34)
- Letter (1)

This continues the pattern of previous years whereby email is the predominant form of communication for representations, there have been no representations made via the telephone as there have been in previous years.

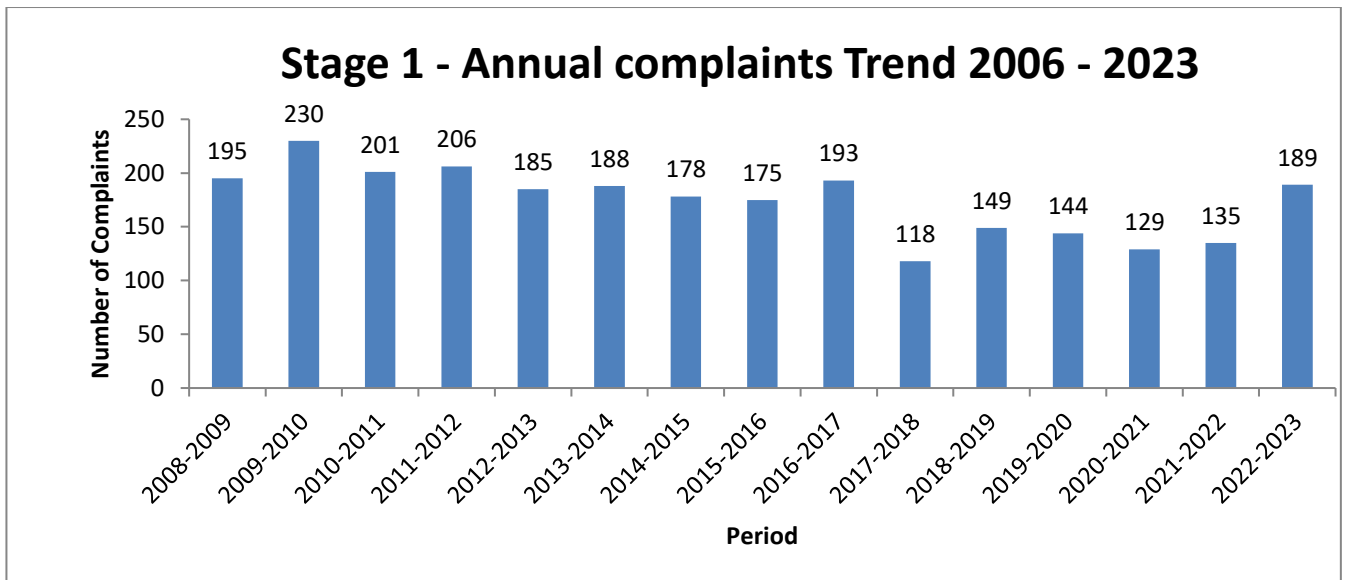
COMPLAINTS – STAGE 1

5.10 During 2022/23 the Directorate received 189 complaints, of these 11 were progressed to a stage 2 complaint investigation. The majority of the complaints continue to be resolved to the customer's satisfaction at Stage 1 and this is due to the efforts that are placed on resolution at Stage 1 of the process.

5.11 Of the 189 complaints received at Stage 1, 49 (26%) related to Adult Services, 78 (41%) to Children's Services and 62 (33%) to Corporate matters. This year's figures are higher than those for 2021/22 when we received 135 Stage 1 complaints. There has been an increase in the number of adult services and corporate complaints and we believe this to be linked to the ongoing pressures facing the Adult Social Care sector.

5.12 During 2022/23 the Complaints and Information Team have recorded the number of potential complaints which were able to be resolved prior to being logged as a formal Stage 1 complaint. Examples of which are, explaining the pressures of a national shortage of carers, asking the person to consider discussing issues directly with the allocated team prior to making a complaint and providing details on how to make a referral. This area of potential complaints has seen a continued rise from 38 in 2020/21 to 131 in 2021/22 and 155 in 2022/23.

5.13 The graph below illustrates the number of Stage 1 complaints received and responded to by the Directorate since the implementation of the statutory Welsh Government complaints guidance in April 2006, with this year showing figures rise significantly, in line with numbers seen in 2016/2017.



5.14 The Complaints and Information Team receives complaints through a number of mediums and these are detailed below for 2022/23:

- Telephone (63)
- Letter (13)
- Email (98)
- Website online form (13)
- In person (2)

5.15 The above information demonstrates the Directorate’s continued commitment to ensuring that customers have access to the complaints process in their chosen format. It also confirms the public’s continued preference for direct contact with an officer with email and telephone contact continuing to be the preferred method of contact.

5.16 The Complaints and Information Team record whether complaints are upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. This enables the Directorate to note themes and trends from the findings of complaints, to improve future practice.

5.17 Of the 189 complaints received at Stage 1 in 2022/23, the following outcomes were recorded:

- 147 complaints were not upheld
- 8 complaints were partially upheld
- 13 complaints were upheld
- 15 complaints were closed due to concurrent investigations
- 3 complaints were closed due to no contact or withdrawn by the complainant
- 2 complaints were signposted to other agencies
- 1 complaint cannot be outcomed as was ongoing at the year end

5.18 Of the 13 complaints that were upheld:

- 5 related to Adult Social Services
- 3 related to Children’s Social Services
- 5 related to the corporate complaint procedure (4 relating to concerns for the care being provided to adult relatives including staffing and care packages and 1 relating to support and training offered to a Foster Carer).

5.19 A breakdown is provided below in relation to the complaints which have been categorised as upheld along with the recommendations made to improve future practice:

- Upheld complaint Adult Services (1) – An assessment for a child with disabilities to attend a holiday playscheme was not offered, this oversight occurred due to staff shortages. The assessment to look at all areas of support was carried out following the complaint and apologies were provided.
- Upheld complaint Adult Services (2) - A service user's carers were providing teatime support and they made the decision to inform night time carers not to attend. The complainant had to call the emergency duty team to instruct the twilight staff to attend. It was acknowledged that this was an error and apologies were given.
- Upheld complaint Adult Services (3) – A service user's wheelchair had been lost at Brooklands day centre. Staff looked for the wheelchair however without success. Apologies were given to the family and a gesture of goodwill payment was made.
- Upheld complaint Adult Services (4) - Concerns were raised about how a carer treated a service user particularly her dignity not being respected. The team stressed these concerns would be treated seriously and investigated under the HR process, reassurances were given that this particular carer would not support the family again.
- Upheld complaint Adult Services (5) -. A service user who was unhappy in a residential placement has via an advocate requested for a joined up approach between Health, CHC and social services. The team agreed to allocate the social worker that the service user requested to offer this support.
- Upheld complaint Children's Services (1) – A complainant was unhappy with the social workers attitude and believed them to be negative and to have lied. Whilst the social worker explained the service user was difficult to work with, they apologised if their manner caused any upset. It was felt best to change the social worker to improve relationships going forward.
- Upheld complaint Children's Services (2) - A complainant was unhappy with the delay in completing the eligibility for care and support assessment. The assessment was not completed within the 42 day timescale, the response stated the assessment was in fact completed in timescale however it was not shared with the complainant. This complaint later progressed to a stage two complaint that was subsequently withdrawn by the complainant.
- Upheld complaint Children's Services (3) - A complainant was unhappy that sensitive documents were left with a colleague at his workplace, also the care and support plan minutes were not factual. A meeting was held with the team manager, the case was reviewed, and apologies were given for the documents being left, the complainant was given reassurances that this was not standard practice.
- Upheld complaint Corporate Services (1) – A complaint was received from a resident that lives near an adult day centre, staff and users of the centre were continually parking outside the resident's home causing her difficulties to park. The centre has since stopped operating as a day centre so should alleviate the problem, however apologies were also given.
- Upheld complaint Corporate Services (2) – Complaint received from a granddaughter who was dissatisfied with the time taken for a package of care to be put in place for her grandmother. The team explained the assessment service process and agreed that the time was unreasonable. Staff vacancies and a full waiting list contributed to the delays however the assessment service commenced shortly after the complaint.
- Upheld complaint Corporate Services (3) - Complaint from a newly registered foster carer who was unhappy with the lack of training offered, not being provided with a lockable storage box or reporting logs and a general lack of information about the role. The team agreed that there was not as much face to face interaction as would have been given previously, due to COVID restrictions. Details were given of upcoming induction sessions, the complainant was provided

with a storage box and was encouraged to discuss these types of issues directly with the social worker.

- Upheld complaint Corporate Services (4) – A family member complained regarding the care provided to her grandfather from a CCBC commissioned service. The case was investigated, and it was acknowledged that bed sheets and clean clothes had not been provided. It was felt this was a one off instance however not an acceptable standard of service, sincere apologies were given to the family.
- Upheld complaint Corporate Services (5) - There were considerable delays in processing invoices and statements for a complainant's late father's care fees. The case was fully reviewed, and a number of errors were identified. It was agreed to offer a discretionary reduction to the amount payable as a gesture of goodwill.

5.20 To ensure the appropriate identification of risk to vulnerable adults, the Complaints and Information Team and Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) Team continue to operate their joint working protocol, which is regularly reviewed.

5.21 During this year, 2 complaints have been referred to POVA, 1 has subsequently been closed with no further investigation from the safeguarding team and the complaint now closed. 1 of these complaints remains ongoing for a safeguarding investigation and is on hold until complete.

COMPLAINTS – STAGE 2

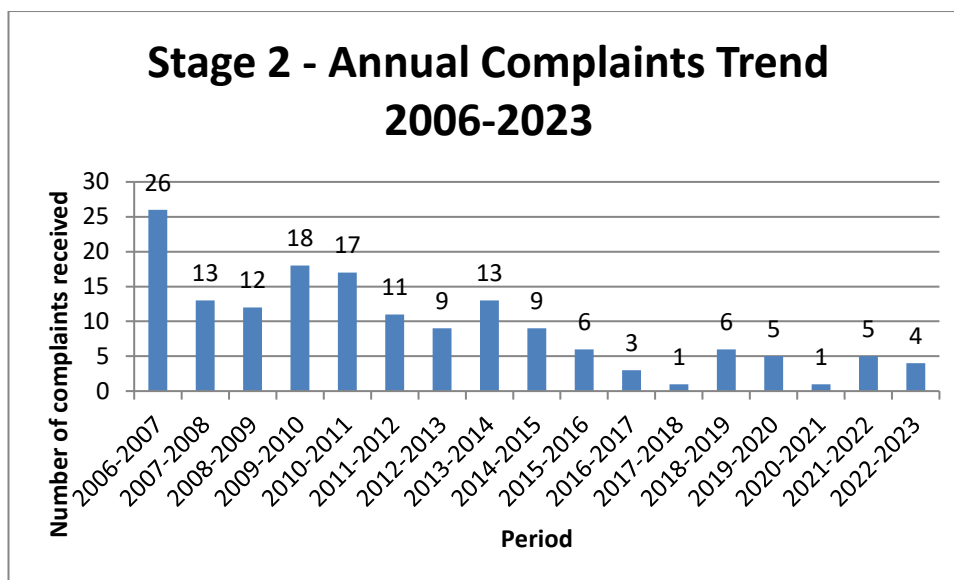
5.22 During 2022/23 the Directorate agreed to progress 11 requests to a Stage 2 investigation. Of these requests 7 have been completed under the corporate Stage 2 complaint procedure and 4 proceeded with an independent formal Stage 2 investigation under the Social Services complaints procedure.

During 2021/22 there was 5 independent Stage 2 investigations carried out under the Social Services complaints procedure.

5.23 Of the 11 requests for a Stage 2 investigation:

- 4 were relating to the corporate process for Adult's Services
- 3 were relating to the corporate process for Children's Services
- 1 relating to Adult Services was completed under the Social Services Stage 2 process following the Ombudsman directions in 2021/22.
- 3 Social Services Stage 2 investigations relating to Children's Services are ongoing at the time of this report.

5.24 The following graph shows the number of complaints progressing to the formal Social Services Stage 2 process for independent investigation since the implementation of the statutory complaint's guidance in April 2006.



OMBUDSMAN'S INVESTIGATIONS

- 5.25 There were 9 contacts by our customers during this year to The Ombudsman, this is less than the previous year of 14 contacts.
The outcomes of the 9 contacts as follows:
- In 5 cases, initial enquiries undertaken by The Ombudsman confirmed that CCBC had followed due processes and their investigations were therefore closed down.
 - 1 case was withdrawn after day services were re-instated and the complainant was satisfied with CCBC's response.
 - 2 cases were referred back to CCBC as no stage 1 had been conducted.
 - In 1 case, the Ombudsman stated that CCBC should conduct a Stage 2 investigation. This was completed and included in the Stage 2 figures in point 5.23 of this report.
- 5.26 The Complaints and Information Team continue to have a positive relationship with the Ombudsman and attends regular training events. The team have an open and transparent dialogue with the Ombudsman and continues to discuss persistent complainants and provide consistent advice.
- 5.27 The high standard of evidence available to the Complaints and Information Team in the form of case recordings, copies of correspondence and assessments has supported the quality of the responses to The Ombudsman Office, and this has resulted in positive outcomes.
- 5.28 The Directorate appreciates the importance of learning from complaints and it is recognised that equal emphasis needs to be placed on learning from positive outcomes.

Compliments

- 5.29 Praise is received by teams in the form of thank you cards, letters and emails and these are sent to the Complaints and Information Team for them to record. During the year 233 compliments have been logged during the year, 166 (71%) relate to Adult's Services and 67 (29%) relate to Children's Services. This has increased on the number of compliments received compared to the previous year (126) and we have improved the process for acknowledging and recording these.
- 5.30 Many of the letters and cards received from service users and their families include examples of the positive impact that staff can have on a person's life. Some of these comments are included in Appendix 1, attached to the report.

5.31 During the year, 10 surveys were sent out, 1 of these were for Adult Services (10%) and 9 (90%) for Children's Services. At the time of this report all 10 surveys are ongoing.

5.32 In relation to Children's Services, a survey was completed in 2022 with prospective Foster Carers which sought their feedback on their experience of the Caerphilly Foster Panel. A total of 10 questionnaires were completed. Some comments included:

- Was very comfortable, was listened to by everyone involved.
- Completed via teams.
- Meeting was held on time, everyone introduced themselves and explained what they do. I did not feel uncomfortable with any part of the procedure.
- It was a professional and safe environment. I felt we were asked relevant questions with regards to becoming foster carers and we were given supportive feedback.
- Would have preferred to meet face to face.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions have been made in this report.

7. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report is for information, so the completion of an Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 All responses from consultees have been incorporated within the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- Welsh Assembly Government's "A Guide to Handling Complaints 2014"
- Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014
- Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018

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Consultees: Social Services Senior Management Team
Councillor Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Services
Councillor Donna Cushing, Chair of Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Marina Chacon-Dawson, Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committee
Carl Evans, Corporate Information Governance Manager

Appendices:
Appendix 1

Comments from service users and their families

Adults:

- **Feedback from a Social Worker supporting a resident move into Brodawel Care Home**

“I visited X last week and was overcome with how calm, settled, happy and well adjusted she presented. She had settled into her own surroundings, was not displaying any of the behaviours previously and I was able to observe her interacting with the other residents and staff. She was having a laugh, making jokes and generally looked so well in herself. This is such a transformation from how she presented in her flat. It is lovely to see X like this and I know the family are so grateful to Brodawel for their help and support. They have also helped X to sleep in her bed which she hadn’t done for years when in her flat. So, in conclusion, I just want to say what an amazing team you have working in Brodawel”.

- **Compliments to a Social Worker in the North Older People’s Team**

“You’re a diamond, on behalf of me and the family you have been invaluable and I’m sure if my dad could understand he would thank you also, you have not only looked after my dad but us as a family”.

- **Compliments to a Social Worker in the South Older People’s Team**

“From my first introduction to X, over the phone, he has been really easy to deal with. I have found him to be very approachable, very clear about the processes to follow and has been exceptionally professional in his dealings with our family. In our meeting the current challenges within the social care sector were explained to us and how this has an impact on what options we had and continue to have for mum. The immediate support required was respite care and X has been really helpful in supporting mums needs and ensuring that the transition for her into the care home environment was very smooth and stress free for mum and the family”.

- **Compliments to a Social Worker in the East Older People’s Team**

“My mother is 94 and it became increasingly obvious that she could no longer live independently, it was then that X was assigned to her. I had no idea where to go for help nor what to do. X talked us gently through our options and was an incredible support and an absolute mine of useful information. She was always compassionate when talking to my mother and put her welfare at the heart of everything she did. We both felt we had a friend on our side who could help us find our way through a complex system. Always polite and friendly she was a true professional and we would both like to thank her for making a very difficult time so much easier”.

- **Compliments to a Worker in the Drug & Alcohol Team**

An email was received from a Social Worker in a Children’s locality team to “recognise X’s outstanding work with one of the most difficult cases worked to date. X has been supporting a mother of the children open to me with her substance issue and mental health, however she has done much more than this in reality. X has kept in constant communication with me, particularly as we have navigated managing risk for not only the children, but their mother as well as their grandmother. I have to say that I have been lucky to have been working alongside X, despite our roles being different, her professionalism, compassion and communication has been second to none”.

- **A Facebook post from an entertainer at Ty Clyd Residential Care Home**

“What an incredible hour, up there with the best gigs I have ever, laughs, tears, a biscuit machine, a staff dance, singing and dancing. The staff are truly a credit”.

Childrens:

- **Email received from a Foster Carer**

"We'd like them to know how thankful we are for all the help and support we get off you day in day out...but especially this past year. I would like to take this opportunity to let you know how amazing X has been whilst we have gone through the adoption process with our Son. Her professionalism and knowledge emanates, she constantly put us at ease which wasn't an easy task, as I had lots of questions at times. She kept us informed and updated and supported us through everything, she always replies in a very timely and efficient manner. She is a credit to her profession and an asset to your department. We would also like to say a massive thank you to the Family Placement Team...you have supported us throughout the whole process and have been so understanding and patient with our needs. It's a privilege to work with you all. A heartfelt thanks to her, FPT and Ccbc you have made our dreams come true and our family complete...he was the missing piece we didn't know was missing".

- **Risca Childrens Services Team**

Chocolates, flowers and a thank you card received from a young person who's case was about to close "Its mad to see that I'm 18, It feels weird but without everyone's help I dunno if I could've made it this far. Thank you isn't enough for what you've done".

- **Feedback to Caerphilly East Childrens Services Team**

Feedback from a judge who wanted to "compliment the Local Authority on making the application to the Court" and "felt reassured by the child-focussed approach taken".

- **Bargoed Childrens Services Team**

A thank you card received "Cant believe we're saying goodbye! Thank you for everything you've done for us. You'll never know how much you've restored my faith in Social Services. You're a real person and the service really does need more like you in it".

- **Feedback from Childrens Guardian regarding Social Worker in Rhymney Childrens Services Team**

"I would like to take this opportunity to commend the social worker, who has worked this case tirelessly. It is my opinion that she has gone above and beyond of what is expected to ensure that the children have been appropriately supported and safeguarded despite the challenges she has encountered".

- **Youth Offending Service**

Text received from a parent "Thank you so much, we are so grateful for all the help we have received from you. We're all getting along so much better now and X is back in school and is like a new person. We truly are so grateful for all the help we have received and for getting to know you both."

- **Feedback to Intensive Support Team**

Text received from a parent, "just wanna say a Massive thank you for when you worked with me throughout my pregnancy. The work we done helped me so much to become a new mum again."

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