

DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

2022/2023



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1) Director of Social Services Summary

The Director's Report for 2021/2022 was submitted late during the year following the senior management restructure. Hence the report for 2022/2023 is presented only six months after the last report. 2022/2023 has been my first full year as the Director of Social Services.

The long shadow of covid still lingers across Social Services and for both citizens and staff the impact of the period of the pandemic is being felt daily be it in the changing patterns for children because of the periods of isolation or the loneliness for older adults or for all the continued health issues and the losses of health, friends and families as well as opportunities and experiences. The challenges of the financial crisis emerged very early in 2022/2023 and much of the year was focused on managing the need to mitigate the impact of the budgetary changes.

Across all Social Services we continue to see emerging trends and challenges. Quantitatively the numbers of referrals continue to rise in both Adults and Children's Services. Daily the front doors see examples of increased complexity and pressure. Within Children's Services our enhanced understanding of exploitation, the drain of social media, the mental health demands on children and young people and our comprehension of the impact of trauma as well as pre-birth care are leading to a need for greater expertise and knowledge. While in adults the enduring legacy of covid on mental well-being, pressure on families experiencing dementia, and physical ill health as well as the implications of staffing challenges in the domiciliary care sector, lead to increased calls on the services. Across all Social Services, Prevention, and Inclusion the deprivations arising from the of the cost-of-living crisis, housing issues, domestic abuse and substance misuse as well as the need to support newly arrived families and individuals against a backdrop of staffing challenges and restrictions in other services are generating increasing evidence of a need for care and support.

Staff within Social Services and Prevention and Inclusion have demonstrated a commitment and enthusiasm despite the at times relentless and all-consuming demands. The willingness to fully embrace innovative changes and focus on doing their very best whatever is thrown at them is humbling. Within social care our staff are the cornerstone of all we deliver and the enduring challenges of recruiting and retaining the workforce has again been both a focus and an area of considerable concern. The national and regional work to grow the social care workforce is of course welcome but there is an urgent need to bring pace and drive to attracting staff and ensuring we can reward and support them to progress and develop.

Included within this report are a detailed breakdown of our staffing resources and our financial position.

Much of the report brings together examples of practice from across Social Services to demonstrate how practically we fulfil the key outcomes. Staff from across the services have contributed examples of work undertaken and have provided case studies to demonstrate the impact of practice. While the data for Social Services provide us with a quantitative foundation the case studies enhance our understanding of lived experience and give us a rich qualitative picture.

Going into 2023/24 we are looking forward to a settled period for our senior management team. There will be exceptional challenges because of the continued cost of living crisis, ongoing health issues and the wider pressures on families. However, staff are enthusiastic and determined to continue to deliver the best possible services across every element of Social Services.

2) Introduction

This report provides a summary of the work which Newport Council's Social Services departments and our partners have delivered over the last year, self-reflecting on what we have achieved, the challenges we have faced, and looking forward with our priorities. The report is produced in compliance with the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) and considers other key legislation critical to the delivery of Social Services in Newport.

As outlined in the Director' summary 2022/23 has been both a challenging and rewarding year as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, tackle the cost-of-living crisis, and support some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens in Newport. More importantly, the staff, volunteers, carers, families, and other key stakeholders have been integral to ensure that Newport can provide the best service possible, sharing our experiences with others when we have delivered well and learning the lessons where we have fallen short of the expectations of those who use our services.

Corporate Plan 2022-27

In November 2022, Newport City Council agreed its new [Corporate Plan 2022-27](#), to deliver an *Ambitious, Fairer, Greener Newport for everyone*. This Plan supports the delivery of the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#). To support the delivery of this plan, the work of Social Services is integrated into and across all of the Council's Well-being Objectives:



Well-being Objective 1 (Economy, Education and Skills) - Newport is a thriving and growing city that offers excellent education and aspires to provide opportunities for all.

Well-being Objective 2 (Environment and Infrastructure) – Newport is a city that seeks to protect and enhance our environment whilst reducing our carbon footprint and preparing for a sustainable and digital future.

Well-being Objective 3 (Quality Social Care and Community Services) - Newport is a supportive city where communities and care are at the heart of what we do.

Well-being Objective 4 (An Inclusive, Fair and Sustainable Council) - Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that places social value, fairness and sustainability at its core.

To support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, Newport Council and Social Services has adopted four principles *Fair and Inclusive; Empowering; A Listening Council; and Citizen Focused* which support our statutory duties within the Socio-economic Duty, Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Social Services Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 as well as developments across our area such as the work towards becoming a Marmot region.

Newport City Council Social Services

To support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and deliver continuous improvement, Social Services has three service areas. None of the service areas work in isolation from each other or the rest of the organisation. Each service area has a service plan which provide an overview of their strategic priorities which support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and contribute towards improving services to the residents of Newport. The service plans are available upon request.

Adult Services

Newport Adult services has seen significant pressure across all service areas throughout the year. There are several factors that continue to present pressure on services. Newport residents emerging from the pandemic without any early intervention or prevention support are presenting with complex issues for their health and social care, which require multi-faceted professional assessments. Workforce pressures and inability to recruit to specifically professional qualified posts to manage referrals in a timely manner, has meant waiting lists for assessment and service provision. Additional management tasks to review the waiting lists and ensure the most vulnerable residents are receiving the correct support and intervention, is a daily pressure. Cost of living pressures for vulnerable households are adding to pre-existing difficulties and for some households are exacerbating needs to the point of crisis.

We started the year with approximately 300 referrals a month into adult services and end it with over 500 a month. We have seen a rise in the number of residential placements from over 512 to 609 that have been required throughout the year, some of which will be because of not enough providers able to broker packages of care in the community. The transformation and redesign agenda across adult services has continued to be a work in progress. Reviewing core processes and how best we can meet statutory requirements are at the centre of all decisions. Completed Adult assessments have increased from 120 to on average 210 per month, including reviews of care.

Domiciliary care provided by commissioned services is now starting to recover but remains vulnerable due to workforce issues of recruitment and retention. Currently we are providing 815 packages of care in peoples own homes which is a return to last year's figures, after a very difficult year for provider services when we have seen up to 1200 hours not commissioned for one week. Currently, we have 23 hours waiting to be commissioned. The voice of the Adults and carers that we work with has been pivotal to the challenges within the budget setting for the Council and how we deliver services going forward for our most vulnerable residents and Carers.

At the end of the year, we have reviewed where we are with the redesign of adult services, and this will continue into 2023/24. Several achievements against a backdrop of pressure have been successful, for example the Carer accreditation for the Council, and securing funding to develop the Older People World Health Organisation accreditation will enable the Council internally and externally to meet the requirements for accreditation. The opening of a SMART hub in the Newport Market to support residents of Newport to see what is on offer and how it could assist in their own homes is a positive tool for staff and citizens. These technologies can ensure people remain independent and do not become overly reliant on formal care arrangements.

Recognition of the importance of people directing and establishing their own care and support needs has enabled adult services to review the Direct Payment offer for Newport residents, and consider the required transformation of the service locally and regionally. This will also remove further reliance on the vulnerable provider services. Our short breaks offer to Newport residents for those with care needs and their carers is a highly valued service. We also offer a short break service with a national provider, 'Bridging the Gap' a newly commissioned service to enable Carers and the cared for to identify their own support needs and how they would like them met.

Additional external pressures from our partners in Health and hospital admissions has required additional pathways of care to be developed. We have played a part in looking at all the Welsh Government agenda's such as the Redesign of Services for Older People, and winter initiatives. Newport led on the Home First service for the Gwent region, placing a trusted assessor model within the front doors of the hospitals to ensure social care is considered prior to admission. Newport have further expanded this model using core services within the Royal Gwent Hospital, where most Newport residents attend for their health needs and work with the wards to ensure there are no delays in discharging Newport residents due to social care factors.

Reablement services continue to work to capacity and have had an excellent Care Inspectorate Wales inspection, the first since pre pandemic. Staff and those that have used their services spoke highly of the support and focus by staff to support and re-able residents in a timely manner.

Children's Services

The key factors for Children Services have not changed. Fundamental to all our work is firstly to support children to remain safely with their families. Our emphasis on preventative services alongside support for families to explore their strengths and meet the needs of their children is crucial in meeting this first outcome. Secondly when children are in our care and leave our care, we must do everything to support them to ensure positive outcomes. Children and families deserve services that are truly holistic and recognise the multifaceted nature of family's lives. To ensure we can work to meet this need partnership underpins our service. We work with families and a broad range of agencies to meet our stated outcomes and to offer the best possible services.

22/23 has certainly brought some challenges for Children's Services. The national recruitment and retention challenge, the immense day to day pressure on front line social workers who are working with children and families who are at considerable risk, societal pressures linked to public perceptions of risk and perceived failings, the volume of need and handling the expectations and fears of the public and other agencies, managing changing expectations from CIW, significantly increasing demands on social workers from the judiciary, finding suitable placements for children with complex needs and challenging behaviour have now been compounded by the not for profit eliminate agenda, managing significant budget pressures particularly those arising from placement costs. Balancing emerging evidence in practice developments and changes in guidance, regulation and requirements runs alongside these pressures.

The aftermath of the pandemic on families continues to emerge and has been reflected in both the increasing numbers and complexity of referrals to Children Services. Despite the increases in referrals the number of children looked after has remained stable and we have not seen a significant rise in the number of children on the child protection register. Social work teams continue to engage with partners to ensure a whole systems approach is taken to ensure that children remain safely at home with their families.

Despite the challenges 22/23 has brought many opportunities for Children Services to evaluate and develop needs led provision to safely meet the needs of children and families. The new Service Manager group have brought a wealth of knowledge and experience and are instrumental in developing our service plan moving forward.

There are a number of projects underway in Children Services which include:

- Maethu Cymru/Foster Wales continues to drive a way forward to increase the number of foster carers in Local Authorities and to ensure the quality of care.
- In residential care Windmill Farm has been completed and Cambridge House is under renovation. Mill Barn annexes are very close to registration by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Forest Lodge and Rosedale annexes are under renovation. A disabled children residential provision is currently being scoped with the assistance of a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).
- A regional team is being developed by Children Services assisted by Welsh Government funding to lead on the eliminate agenda.
- Properties have been identified to progress with a care leaver project and 16–18-year-old supported accommodation provision.
- Newport Children Services continues to lead on developing a regional approach to assist Local Authorities in building an infrastructure to meet the need of the unaccompanied children arriving through the now mandated National Transfer Scheme or by spontaneous arrival.
- Our Disabled Children's Team continues to develop services to promote the independence of some of the most vulnerable children we support.
- The Youth Justice Service (YJS) Turnaround project has been launched to assist Newport in preventing young people entering the criminal justice system.

Looking forward to 23/24 Children Services has a few exciting projects in motion assisted by Welsh Government grant funding for radical reform. These include:

- The redevelopment of the CWTCH (our supervised family contact service).
- The enhanced rapid response and therapeutic offer.
- Enhancing our current portfolio of in house fostering and residential provision.

Prevention & Inclusion

2022/23 saw the new Prevention and Inclusion service area established after a senior management and service area restructure. For the first time, it meant that many of the services providing front line early intervention and preventative support to individuals and families were aligned together and relocated within Social Services. This approach is in direct support of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 Wales, where Section 15 (1) highlights the duty on local authorities to provide or arrange for the provision of a range and level of services which will contribute towards preventing or delaying the development of people's needs for care and support. This legislation identifies several other key areas where preventative approaches can take a key role in both avoiding escalation of care and support needs and supporting families and individuals to remain in their own homes and communities for as long as they wish to and is practicably possible.

The service area has identified clear actions it wishes to prioritise, with its new Service Area Plan directly contributing to the delivery of the Corporate Plan. There is particular emphasis on its Wellbeing objective 3 - Newport is a city where equitable, preventative care and support is available for our citizens and communities and Wellbeing objective 4 - Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that provides equitable access and valued services to its citizens.

The first year of Prevention and Inclusion has seen much activity in moving services and teams, welcoming them all to Social Services. Overall, the team moves have been extremely positive with staff reporting to be happy, adding they feel their services are in the right place, now working more closely alongside Adults and Childrens services. The move has seen a merger of 2 teams, improving seamlessness and efficiencies, whilst reducing duplication and multiple assessments faced by individuals.

Opportunities have arisen for engagement with the Childrens and Young persons' substance misuse consultation work as we work towards recommissioning this area, and support to the Adaptations Team to develop its preventative offer alongside its core adaptations projects. Encouraging teams to reflect and consider how their services can be delivered in different and more creative ways has been very much the theme of discussions in the past year.

We are currently working on the Flying Start Expansion plans which will see a strengthening of the childcare and parental support offer across Newport, and we continue to work towards a city-wide Youth Service provision, offering consistent place-based support to young people, building up trusted relationships in their own communities. These early intervention approaches are identified as positive and effective in several ways including- building parental confidence and skills, engaging children with early social skills and language development, and assisting young people to find their own path that reduces the risks of becoming involved with antisocial behaviour or exploitation (as examples). In our regulated services we have seen positive inspections while in youth work the staff successfully submitted the assessment for the Bronze Quality Mark and are now working towards the silver award.

As we head towards 2023-24, we are excited at the prospect of having the Community Connectors and the Carers team join Prevention and Inclusion, allowing for further synergy across adult and children's provision. We want to build on the great work these teams do and strengthen the preventative opportunities and offer within communities to all residents of Newport.

3) Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.

Across Social Services the drive is always to work with individuals and families towards the outcomes of their choice. Care and support must enhance the independence and individuality for every person in the service. Coproduction in the context of complex family situations is often challenging but the role of our staff is to navigate those complexities with the needs of all in mind but the needs of those requiring care and support to the fore. Below are two individual case studies and a service case study demonstrating very different ways that services have sought to work to co-produce and achieve personal well-being outcomes.

Individual Case Study - AJ (First Contact, Adult Services)

Self-Referral received, Information Advice and Assistance for citizen AJ.

Very upset on the phone, explaining that she was awaiting an eye operation, lives alone, partially hard of hearing and many other health issues. No local family, only friend is a neighbour whom she would see “now and again”, but not left the house in 18 months as “too scared” due to significant sight loss and no suitable walking aids. Citizen A explained that she was finding day to day activities more difficult due to her mobility and sight loss. Citizen A had received a letter from Housing Benefit within NCC, advising her that they had overpaid her near £3000 over the past 2 years and requesting the money be paid back. Citizen A said she had been trying her hardest to speak with Citizens Advice and Age Cymru for help but “was getting nowhere”. Citizen was very upset and said that she would not be able to afford care at home.

Actions

- 2 x calls daily to support with meals and personal care.

- Referral made to Citizens Advice for benefit check and support with Housing Benefit who are claiming back £3000 in overpayments. Mrs A is very anxious and worried she will not have the finances to continue paying her increasing utility bills. Mrs. A reported she does not get out of bed until late morning as she is saving on using her electric and gas. Citizens Advice have confirmed that they have already made contact with Mrs. A and confirmation that they shall arrange a home visit.
- Referral made to Finance Team to request home visit to complete Financial Assessment - Mrs. A unable to clearly see paperwork.
- Referral made to Ffriend I Mi befriender service - Prevent Social Isolation
- Referral email sent to Rehabilitation Officer for the Visually Impaired
- Referral to Reablement Tech / OT - Bathing assessment and Suitable Mobility Aids – Prevent further falls and to assess for access to use shower.

For A these simple steps completed by First Contact set her on the path to resolving her challenges and retaining her independence at home.

Service Case Study (Reablement, Adult Services)

Newport Reablement Care Team are based within the Newport Integrated Frailty service. The Team provides short term Reablement Care for older people living in Newport. The aim is to support people to be as independent as possible following a stay in hospital or to prevent people being admitted to hospital.

During the past twelve months the Reablement Care team support staff have continued to visit people in their own home after they have been discharged from hospital or become unwell at home and required some support. Initially when someone commences support with the team, they may feel very vulnerable and have experienced a loss of confidence. The team have a close, professional working relationship working with Frailty falls service, rapid nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, mental health nurses, district nurses as well as social workers, NHS staff and GPs.

At the end of the reablement care support some people are assessed as requiring a more long-term care package and a social worker will complete an assessment of needs to put this in place.

During the past six months 60% of people the care team have supported through reablement were discharged from the service as being independent. We regularly receive compliments from people, or their relatives and they often individually name staff. Please see an example below:

Service Case Study (Reablement, Adult Services) Continued...

"My husband had a SAH and x 2 strokes last year and spent almost 10 months in hospital, resulting in care needs when he came home in December. He came under your reablement team from day one.

The reason for my email is to give you feedback on the service as we always hear the bad and often not the good. The initial assessment was carried out in a polite and caring manner, followed up by weekly calls from R to review and come to the decision for longer term social care, which we changed to this week. Whenever I needed to call the office for any reason or asked to speak with R, the response from the team was always friendly and helpful. Thank you, R, and please pass this on to the ladies who answer the phone too.

Your care team across the board have been excellent and outstanding in their care and support for J as the client and me as the NOK.

Even making friends with our doggies and making them part of the visit.

Nothing has been too much trouble for anyone.

They have all been kind, caring, professional and helpful, always demonstrating respect for this being our home. They not only delivered the care but also chatted with J in meaningful ways to help him recover from his acute brain injury as they did the call, listened to him talking about his doggies with pride and never showed they had probably heard it many times before. They gave him laughter to start his day, and safety to end it.

We both cannot thank you all enough for everything.

We had lots of different people calling but some were more regular so whilst we thank them all can I note the following staff and personally thank them for their excellent care.

- *J and T -what a team, never failed to make J Day, and also got our little rescue to love them.*
 - *R and J – always nice to hear them chatting with John and laughing at his awful jokes.*
 - *K – who came regularly to start doing morning calls, then we lost her to other packages. She was just wonderful with our little rescue dog and even made friends with her before she left us, we didn't get chance to thank her.*
 - *L - doing morning calls always respectful of j's slow response on waking and kind in her support of me after many sleepless nights*
 - *L – Fabulous and skilled at engaging J in the real world chatting about rugby football and normal life which he loved.*
 - *Others who came and went but were just as wonderful – L, D, K and some whose names I can't remember sorry.*
- C our large old dog of almost 15 loved them all. So please say a massive thank you from our family and tell them all to be proud of the difference they make in someone's home."*

We recently had a Care Inspectorate Wales inspection. The report we received was very positive and people the inspectors had spoken to all stated they felt very supported by the care they had received, families they'd spoken to had said the care team had given them great "peace of mind". The report also added that support staff who the inspector spoke to all had a "can-do attitude".

In addition to this, all the professional staff that the inspectors spoke with all confirmed that they had a good working relationship with the reablement team. All of our staff are registered with Social Care Wales.

Individual Case Study – TP (First Contact, Adult Services)

First Contact received an urgent concern from a young adult who advised they didn't feel safe to go home because of them being subjected to ongoing physical violence and emotional abuse. The individual was transgender and informed us that their family was not accepting of their decision to identify as a female. Contact made with IDVA and women's aid for urgent refuge – no capacity to accommodate. Duty team planned for the individual to be transported to Ceredigion where they could stay with alternative family with whom they felt safe. Emergency medication and wheelchair provision was organised to prevent the individual from having to return home.

- The individual disclosed later that week that they had taken the decision to permanently relocate.
- Time was taken to support them reinstating control of their benefits, bank accounts, mobile phone contract, blue badge etc and for them to be empowered to live the life that they wanted, identifying as the person they wanted to be.

4) Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being.

Physical and mental health and emotional well-being underpin all the work we do. Care and support are predicated on being able to both protect and promote how people can improve their well-being. Inevitably given the vulnerability of those needing our services there are always physical and mental health and emotional well-being challenges. We strive to seek out all possible ways to enhance well-being but always with the wishes of the individual at the heart of our work. Balancing needs within families to source creative ways to maximise wellbeing is particularly important because of competing demands and at times different interpretations of risk, independence, control, and capacity.

Service Case Study - Oaklands

The time that Oaklands will never forget was when 2 little boys arrived confused and anxious. C was 8 and B was 6. Both young people had a diagnosis of ASD. The two brothers came to stay at Oaklands following the breakdown of a short period in foster care. It soon became apparent how utterly adorable the 2 boys were and how much nurturing, love and affection that they needed. The only food they would eat was chicken nuggets from McDonalds, a pizza from a particular take away and billy bear ham. B was unable to walk up and down the stairs unsupported and was terrified of water. Both boys were unable to communicate verbally, they were both obsessed with their electrical tablets, very little interaction, very emotional and under nourished.

The team soon became family to the boys attending all medical appointments and parents' evenings. Their care was given alongside other children who were staying for short breaks care and friendships and relationships overtime developed, some very comical.

Over the year that they lived in Oaklands they thrived. To change their dependence on take away food Oaklands requested empty happy meal boxes from McDonalds and started cooking the food at home, this progressed to trying different foods, B being more adventurous than C, who although would try new foods still preferred bill bear ham and beige food. They began to gain weight and eventually discharged from children's health services. B no longer needed iron supplements as he was now getting all he needed from his food. B with support and with encouragement was able to climb up and down the stairs unaided. At the beginning bath time for B was a very negative experience, a paddling pool was introduced to the bathroom so that B could spend time splashing around this eventually progressed into B enjoying bath time with lots of bubbles.

B had an interest in books it was arranged for him to join the library and B also enjoyed the bus ride there and back. Both boys loved story time especially at bedtime and C would keep you there if he thought he could get away with it by requesting another book often turning into three.

C's speech came on leaps and bounds where he was able to say sentences. B remained nonverbal for most of the year but towards the end he began to count and sound out letters which was amazing. The most incredible achievement was learning to play, laugh, joke, give and receive affection and be happy.

It was evident that the boys had an attachment to each other and the team caring for them. From two little boys who spent their early years separated, one upstairs and one downstairs spending all their time on devices the transformation was incredible they no longer spent all day on their devices, the time was limited and at certain times of the day the rest of their time was spent positively engaging in activities.

The time came when a forever home was found for them, although this was heart-breaking to see them go, we all knew it was the right thing for them. The home they were moving to was purpose built with a new hand-picked staff team. The team began coming to Oaklands to observe the way the boys were cared for. Gradually they began to take the lead in their care under the watchful eye of the Oaklands team. They began to take over the morning routine, bedtime routine and going out on activities. Oaklands was always on hand to show the team how to support and comfort the children during times of distress. Eventually our work was done and the transition for the boys was complete.

Individual Case Study – Mr Z (Spring Gardens)

Mr Z has several health and medical issues which mean that he now lives the majority of his life in bed, cared for by his partner who gave up her career to look after him. Mr Z has paid for carers who visit to ensure that he is washed and has a change of clothes each day – care that requires the support of two people. His partner walks their dog whilst the paid for carers visit and began to suffer from depression and anxiety, unable to visit her own parents or to undertake prolonged exercise. A carers assessment was undertaken and as a result, a member of the Short Break team visits Mr Z at home each week enabling his partner to get out for a few hours. Mr Z has enjoyed the change of company and his partner has felt able to undertake an exercise class and visit her parents.

Individual Case Study - Carers

The team supported a parent carer who cares for her child who has ADHD and Developmental Trauma, requiring care and support at home and within the community. On top of regular parenting, the caring role involves lots of reassurance during night waking, supporting behavioural 'meltdowns', and support and encouragement with socialising and attending school, which are all challenging for her child. Outside of school, the carer accompanies her child to after school clubs and activities in the holidays to encourage socialisation, though she reports this becomes expensive. As a single parent, the carer is unable to work due to her caring role and has another younger child to care for as well, meaning that finances are tight. The carer reports that she has noticed a significant increase in the cost of living, which has added to her anxiety and stress.

The Carers Support Fund helped the carer with a supermarket voucher and Newport Live Membership, totalling £270.50. She explained that the Newport Live membership will improve her mental and physical wellbeing by enabling her to have time to herself when her children are at school and nursery. The carer stated that the 'pressure is a lot' and the supermarket voucher was 'amazing; a huge help'.

The carer also joined the Newport Carers Network to receive regular information and attended a Newport Carers Network Meeting to hear from organisations who can support carers and the people they care for. Through engagement with the carer, the team were able to improve the carer's knowledge and awareness of where to access support in the future, therefore increasing support for her to continue in her caring role.

Within Newport the growth in population for under 25s and over 65s is accompanied by an increase in the number of people from a very broad range of backgrounds. Supporting a diverse community with a rapidly changing demographic does create the opportunity for learning and a strengthening of the knowledge base for a wide sweep of nationalities and ethnicities. Staff across Social Services are proud of the skills and experience in place to meet the needs of our changing populations.

Individual Case Study – Fostering (Taken from a news report promoting fostering)

Mike Foster has been housing three teenagers in Newport, and is convinced it is the best thing he has ever done. Now that his own children have left home the former businessman spends his time on his allotment.

It's there that the teenagers, from Iraq, Iran and Eritrea, visit to steal his strawberries, he jokes. He has a philosophy he applies to looking after those in his care: "You have to keep it real," the keen motorcyclist said. "You can have all the theories you like but I will really fight for the kids in my care. "I will rock the boat until people back me. I advocate for them because they don't have a voice."

Mike said language was a barrier, but he and the teens use Google Translate, sign language and mime to communicate.

The biggest challenge has been earning their respect. He said that developed once they accepted he was working for them.

"I know I am making a difference with these kids," he said. "You can see them thrive and it is wonderful."

5) Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect, or harm

Throughout 2022/2023 we saw increasing numbers of safeguarding referrals to both Children and Adult Services. Most referrals continue to come from other agencies particularly Gwent police and education. Self-referrals and referrals from the public for safeguarding concerns are uncommon. We manage all referrals using a positive strength-based approach and within a clear framework of understanding risk with a need to balance personal determination and recognising risk is rarely a straightforward binary position. The multi-agency nature of the HUB and First Contact are invaluable in being able to make safe but quick decisions with the right information. As in many areas of Social Services staffing challenges are acute within these teams. However, there is excellent support in both teams and an ethos of managing exceptionally high workloads with robust management oversight.

Service Case Study – Safeguarding Hub

The Safeguarding HUB is the first point of contact for the public and professionals who are making referrals with concerns for children who are at risk of significant harm or have care and support needs. The team processes a variety of enquiries ranging from requests for information and services through to concerns about the welfare or safety of a young person between the ages of 0 – 18 years.

The HUB is responsible for making initial decisions about what should be done in regard to referrals to Social Services. The Hub is extremely busy and processes more than 1000 referrals a month, ranging from care and support needs to high end child protection concerns. The HUB is multi-disciplinary and has close working relationships with partner agencies including, Youth Justice Service, Early intervention and Prevention, Adult Safeguarding, Police, Education, health and IDVA's. Having multi agency partners all sat together in one room is invaluable in ensuring that families get the right support at the right time. As we know safeguarding is everyone's business and not just social services.

There are several positive success stories for the hub, where working together has supported families to feel empowered and included in the assessment process. The Hub staff work tirelessly to ensure that families are supported, and children remain safe. They work in a strengths-based way, whilst considering the families personal outcomes to exact and maintain change.

Individual Case Study – Safeguarding Hub

The Hub received a referral for a family where significant domestic violence was prevalent and the only safe option for mother and the children was to flee the relationship. It was very clear that the family were unsafe so a multi-agency strategy discussion was held to consider how we could best support mother and her children. Working in collaboration with the family and agencies we were able to rapidly support and remove mother and the children from the home that day and put them in a place of safety. This was support by the police and Women's Aid. In the weeks that followed the Family Support Team, Health and Education all supported the family and we were able to offer a robust package of support. This support included:

- Completing all paperwork and supporting evidence for a DDV application allowing Mother to receive a biometric card.
- Changing her email address so that she could receive correspondence without fear that she may be located by her husband or his family.
- Closure of her joint bank account
- Setting up a new bank account in readiness for her to receive state benefit and manage her own finances.
- Assistance with Universal Credit and Child Benefit applications.
- Transporting family to the GP in Newport for medical appointments
- Provision of additional clothing, toys, and toiletries for the family
- Help with setting up the family in the refuge, so they felt at home, which included taking them to supermarket so they plenty of provisions.

It was very rewarding to see the family's confidence develop and the children settle and feel more stable and secure in their new home environment. The family have also been supported through the family court process. Having all the professionals on hand within the safeguarding hub meant that this family were able to get the right support at the right time, which is invaluable.

Individual Case Study – First Contact

Intervention following safeguarding concerns received.

- Citizen Mr. D - 93yr old gentleman from Newport.
- Presented through Police involvement following complaints of possible Domestic Violence at his home with his wife.
- Mr D arrested and held overnight at Newport Police station. Wales Safeguarding procedures instigated and multi-disciplinary strategy discussion help.

Outcome:

- First Contact Adults team to meet with Mr D and support to find alternative accommodation and assess the situation. There were evident needs to clarify the charges given and police recommendations placed on Mr D.
- Mr D informed that the Bail conditions are:
 - Not to return to his home address.
 - Not to return to his home street
 - Not to contact his wife until further notice.
- Social Worker helped place Mr D in an hotel with the view that an assessment would be completed with him the following day. However, Mr D went missing the following day and was not located for 2 weeks.
- It transpired that the customer used his car, which he went to his home to collect, to sleep in and used supermarket car parks to stay and use their services for toileting and basic washing.
- Mr D arrested again as he was found back in his home. Social worker and Housing support workers found a placement at the Travelodge for 2 weeks.
- Another placement was required as the above placement ended with Mr D placed in another Newport Hotel. Mr D has now been provided with a permanent placement at single person accommodation.
- Issues presented indicated Mr D required multi-agency work with emergency needs for accommodation. Personal support and emotional guidance for him given his age, length of marriage and his consistent view that he had not hurt or harmed his wife.
- Weekly visits required to provide support and supported visits to the Housing Department for completion of applications. Financial support required and weekly food shopping essential. Mr D showed signs of low moods, confusion and requested the opportunity to return home on a regular basis. Attempts to hold a family meeting to discuss the possibility of re-integration were denied by the family.
- Awareness of isolation and loneliness played a role throughout this time alongside ensuring Mr D had an Advocate, who will support him in collecting further personal items from his home and other legal responsibilities that Mr D has attached to his home of 52yrs.
- Emotional support to continue with the worker until Mr D has established a safe and caring routine at his new placement. Communication with agencies to continue to maintain this approach.

In addition to operating the front doors for both adults and children's Social Services also support corporate safeguarding. The Head of Safeguarding sits within the Social Services team with a Council wide brief as well as working with the Safeguarding Boards and providing safeguarding advice and support for the whole community. Within the Safeguarding team Newport City Council host the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence team. The Annual Safeguarding Report for 2022/2023 details the work within Safeguarding and in particular highlights the work in respect of training, volunteers, and council wide processes.

6) Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society.

Individual Case Study – Spring Gardens

Mr and Mrs X are in their 70s and have been foster carers most of their married life. In recent years, Mrs X was diagnosed with dementia and has been looked after by her husband at home helping her to wash, dress and eat each day. With support from other family members, they also continued to provide support for one of the children, now an adult who they had fostered. Without any sort of regular break and as his wife was becoming increasingly dependent on him, Mr X was finding day in, day out provision of care for his wife, increasingly difficult. Feeling increasingly isolated and wanting to keep the family together, he approached Social Services, and a carers assessment was undertaken. As a result, Mrs X attends the Short Break service twice a week where she enjoys socialising with other people, playing bingo and quizzes. Mr X has time to get out and about – generally to visit the shops and undertake other tasks.

Many of those we support are distanced from education, employment, leisure activities and their communities. Across our services there are innumerable examples of small steps taken to provide a platform for citizens to engage in ways that work for them. These might be the care leavers who set off for university or the young person who steps into a Youth Club or a disabled person who takes up paid employment. For each of them the sometimes-small steps transform lives.

Across Social Services there are several groups who provide views and feedback about services. These give a voice to some of those who use provision. However, this is an area of work we intend to build upon as we focus on ensuring the lived experience is to the fore in all our delivery.

Service Case Study – Newport Voice and Influence Group

The Newport Partnership now has a well established Youth Forum made up of young people who have had experienced statutory services. This group has provided a range of opportunities for the young people who have had a particular focus on young people's mental health. As such, in collaboration with Literature Wales, they have created a short, animated video outlining their experiences of growing up in Newport their mental health challenges. The young people are planning a formal launch of their video on the 12th June at the Dolman theatre.



Service Case Study – Independent Living Strategy

The Independent Living Strategy 2017-22 continued to achieve fantastic outcomes for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism during 2022. A consultation event with key stakeholders was held in December 2022, which highlighted many of the successes and achievements of people from the learning disability community in Newport. The evidence from the event shows that the accommodation and support models developed in Newport over the last decade have really made a tangible and meaningful difference in people's lives. The event was co-operative in design, enabling feedback from adults with learning disabilities and / or autism, RSL representatives, social workers, housing representatives, and commissioners.

We heard great first-hand accounts from people of how living in services such as TE, TDS, and CPW had led to really positive outcomes for them in their lives. We asked people what it meant to them to live in these places. A selection of the comments below gives a flavour of their response:

"I get to make my own choices."

"I have control."

"I have a private place for conversations."

"It has helped me become more confident."

"We have help when we need it."

"I have learnt new skills."

"I have my own front door and I chose all my own furniture."

Individual Case Study – Independent Living Strategy

Chris is a man in his 40's with complex autism. He was supported by Pobl staff for over 20 years at a single-person service. While the staff team built a very strong rapport with Chris, he now reflects that his behaviour could sometimes be "grumpy." Chris moved to the new service commissioned by NCC in late 2021 at CPW. Pobl continue to support him, which means that their familiarity with Chris and their strong rapport with him has been maintained. Extensive planning took place prior to the move, involving Chris, his Social Worker, his advocate, and the Pobl support staff team who knew him so well. While everyone hoped that Chris would benefit from living in a support service where he would be able to meet other people who lived in the setting, nobody envisaged the huge steps that Chris made in developing his social skills throughout the next year.



CPW also supports 4 women, all in their 20's. The group have formed a strong bond, and Chris now regards them as friends. This has helped him to reduce his dependency on paid staff and opened up a whole new world of social interaction for him. Chris now has a girlfriend who lives at TE. Chris acknowledges that he has changed, and he says that he is very happy that he had the opportunity to make a new life for himself. Here is a photo of Chris at CPW, surrounded by his new friends.

7) Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family, and personal relationships.

Social Services interventions rest on the relationships of the individuals and their families. Strengthening and supporting all positive relationships is key to ensuring formal care and support is appropriate and proportionate. The relationships staff build with those we support set the tone for developing healthy dependencies in all areas of individuals lives.

Service Case Study – Child Protection Teams

There are 4 Child Protection Teams within Newport. Child Protection Team 1 is an Edge of Care/Exploitation Team, who work closely with partner agencies and it strives to adopt a strengths-based model of work, in order to maintain children safely within their home environment. CP1, CP2 and CP3 are more generic teams, which work with families from Care and Support plan through to Adoption. Social workers work with children who need support services under The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) or children at risk of significant harm. The teams are responsible for implementing child support plans. The teams case hold pre-proceedings work and throughout the court process until a final care plan is identified.

The work within these teams is diverse and encompasses working with parents, carers, children, and a range of professionals from varying sectors, in both the capacities of 'care and support' and safeguarding (child protection) roles. The work ranges from supporting families to engage with the agencies in Newport to achieve appropriate standards of care. We endeavour to safeguard children and enable the child to achieve their full potential. We work in a strengths-based way and offer bespoke care plans to best suit the identified needs of the family. This can mean that a social worker's case load within these teams may include care and support cases, child protection cases, cases subject to the Public Law Outline process and cases in proceedings. The social worker will be responsible for the coordination of the child's support plan and assessing the impact of the intervention on the child's wellbeing.

The recommended case load for Social Workers is 15, however all of our social workers are working considerably over that level with the average being approx. 25. Within the CP teams there are currently 25 families within the Court Arena. The amount of work that goes in to supporting families within the Court Arena is substantial. Social Workers also undertake their own Parenting Capacity Assessments to determine if parents are able to safely care for their children throughout their minority. The social workers are very passionate about the children/families they work with and go to extraordinary lengths to ensure that children are safe, protected and have a positive care experience.

Individual Case Study – Child Protection Teams

Family X were working with the authority under a Child Protection Plan due to concerns around Mothers alcohol use. Over a period, concerns escalated, and the children were clearly unsafe in their mother's care. Considering this, an urgent legal meeting was held where it was deemed the children were not safe to remain in the family home. The LA made an application to the Family Court for the children to be placed into foster care. During this time the LA were able to undertake an assessment of the father of one of the children, this was positive and one of the children went to live with their father outside of Wales. The Social worker was really worried about the siblings being separated, one with father in England and the other in foster care in Newport. The social worker set up contact and drove weekly to England after working hours to enable the two siblings saw each other and had meaningful contact. During this family time the father was able to then establish a relationship with the other child also. Throughout the course of care proceedings there are several assessments that are undertaken, and the LA were ordered to undertake assessments of family members within the European Union. We then commissioned a social worker to travel to undertake these assessments. When in court there are several assessments that can be commissioned. Within this case, there were- family assessments, drug and alcohol testing and parenting assessments. All of which required an interpreter and all documents had to be translated into the families first language.

The social worker worked tirelessly to support the children and offer them the best outcome possible. During the proceedings the father of the child in foster care came forward and advised he would like to be assessed. The child had no relationship with this father as all contact had previously been withheld by mother. The assessment then concluded positively following an extensive period of re-establishing the relationship. The results for these children following the care proceedings were that both children whilst separated were placed with their respective fathers. The fathers have established a relationship between each other, the children will be having very regular contact with weekend stays and longer stays at each other's home in the school holidays. To achieve this outcome for the children multi agency working and collaboration with the family was key. Without those in-depth assessments and the social worker going above and beyond (like all social workers do every day) we would not have achieved such a positive outcome for this family.

Service Case Study – The Newport Partnership

The Newport Family Support Service is a Strategic Partnership between Newport City Council and Barnardo's Cymru. The primary focus of the service is to provide support to children on the 'edge of care' and their families by offering trauma informed and evidence-based services. This means where, without receiving specialist and intensive support, that there is a risk that the child or children could be placed into care. Despite the financial challenges of the past 12 months the service has continued to offer a number of specialist services detailed below:

Family Support (FSS)

This element of the service delivers focussed interventions, with plans and goals developed in collaboration with the children, families, and relevant agencies where children are on the 'edge of care' and have specific needs assessed by a case-holding Social Worker. Over the past 12 months **378** referrals were received by FSS and **230 out of 244** children's cases closed during the year either did not escalate or reduced from their initial status. **100%** of families would recommend FSS to other families experiencing similar difficulties.

Baby & Me Pre-birth support and assessment

The Baby & Me service provides tailored group work programme and bespoke, intensive 1:1 support. We work with parents where there is a risk that the baby may be brought into care, creating a safe space for families to explore their identified issues and use a range of therapeutic approaches to empower them to reach their goals of keeping their family together. In a recent service evaluation completed by Research In Practice, it was observed that in the 2 years Baby and Me has been operating Newport has seen a 47% reduction in the number of babies being brought into care at birth.

This picture is from a recent Baby & Me Families Workshop.



Family Group Conferences and Lifelong Links

Family Group Conferences (FGC's) are voluntary decision-making meetings to help families find their own solutions to problems. For cases where the outcome is known, 100% saw their legal status improve or remain the same. In 46% of these cases, a young person was diverted from being looked after. Lifelong Links is a project to ensure a child has a positive support network around them to help them during their time in care and into adulthood. We received 11 referrals this year which has resulted in young people on average increasing their connections by 5 people.

Rapid Response

Working in partnership with the Safeguarding Hub, the aim of the service is to prevent breakdown and support the child to safely remain within the family home by provide rapid intensive support for families. These cases are identified by Social Workers in the Hub who have identified a significant risk of needing to bring the young person into care without immediate intervention. The team have been incredibly busy this year, working with some of our most complex cases. Despite this, **94%** of the young people, we worked with remained at home or were returned home because of our intervention.

Individual Case Study – The Newport Partnership

Family: Mother: Leanne (28), Partner: Darren (30), Children: Robyn (9), Anna (6), Ben (3) (not real names)

Background: There had been extensive social services involvement with the family; Leanne's relationship with the Darren was the third instance of her being a victim of domestic violence. There were also long-standing issues around home conditions, poor school attendance and Leanne's mental health; she had diagnoses of PTSD, anorexia, anxiety and depression. Leanne had experienced significant abuse as a child. Despite the concerns, professionals reported positive relationships and warm interactions between Leanne and her children.

Intervention: Initially, the Intervention Worker spent several sessions with Leanne, getting to know her and establishing safety within their relationship. Practical support to get the children to school was put in place, though it became clear that the issue was not Leanne's inability to organise herself, rather a struggle to remain consistently motivated; it became apparent that this was closely linked to Leanne's mental health. Leanne agreed with her intervention worker to complete work around psychoeducation to address this.

There was an incident where Darren arrived at the school to collect the children whilst intoxicated and though Leanne agreed not to have him in the family home, she was advised to get a solicitor as Children's Services were escalating to PLO. Leanne subsequently breached the PLO agreement by having Darren at the family home.

Individual Case Study – The Newport Partnership

Family: Mother: Leanne (28), Partner: Darren (30), Children: Robyn (9), Anna (6), Ben (3) (not real names)

Leanne's Intervention Worker persisted in offering psychoeducation as well as practical and emotional support. Leanne engaged well in sessions which covered: traumatic memories, relationships, intergenerational trauma, avoidance, grounding techniques, smell (triggers), radical acceptance and self-formulation. Leanne was very open about her trauma and with support was able to establish links between her past experiences, her mental health and the difficulties she had meeting some of the children's needs.

Eventually Leanne accepted the concerns put to her by her Intervention Worker and Social Worker and ended the relationship with Darren, taking the children to a refuge. Leanne said she had learnt how Darren's presence in her life was impacting the children and her mental health. Leanne reported that because of the support she had received she was confident in her ability to recover from her traumatic experiences, to avoid risky relationships and to meet the needs of the children.

Leanne received eight months of support from her Intervention Worker. Following her move to the refuge, the PLO was ended, the children's names were removed from the child protection register at the next Review Conference (following two years of registration) and the family are no longer open to social services.

Leanne's Feedback: "Family support help people with a background of trauma, they address the root causes of problems and do therapeutic work with you. I know if I hadn't had my worker- someone who understood- I wouldn't have changed. I wouldn't be here in this position now. Things could have gone so drastically bad, I could have still been with my abusive ex thinking it was me and him against the world, my kids would have been removed, my mental health would have declined."

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

Service Case Study – Carers Support Fund

The Carers Support Fund primarily focussed on offering financial support. The Connector team spoke to 236 unpaid carers in March 2022 who were experiencing real financial hardship due to low income and the cost-of-living crisis. The unpaid carers who received a shopping voucher were so grateful, which is evidenced in some of the comments below.

Many people spoke about being able to stock up on food, relieving a bit of pressure for them and some told us that they would be able to treat themselves to food they could not usually afford. Some of the direct grants allowed unpaid carers to purchase items that they may not usually be able to afford. For example, Newport Live membership and X Box Live vouchers.

By supporting unpaid carers financially, it was possible to improve their mental wellbeing and quality of life by being able to afford to treat themselves or take short breaks for themselves. The open grants also allowed unpaid carers to think outside of the box to receive items that were important to them. For example, it was possible to fund a residential school trip and clothing for a young carer, who otherwise would not have been able to attend the trip with his peers due to a low family income. In total 423 vouchers were issued valuing £74,000 GBP.

Individual Case Study – Carers Support Fund

An unpaid carer caring for her Mum, who is recovering from open-heart surgery, was supported through the Carers Support Fund. The carer is a single mother of two, who is unemployed due to her full-time caring role. She helps her Mum, who lives at a different address, with cleaning, laundry, cooking, shopping, medical appointments, emotional support, and physical activities such as walking in nature and gentle bike rides to aid her recovery.

The carer is struggling financially due to the Covid19 pandemic impact and the cost-of-living crisis. The carer received a supermarket, Love2shop, Just Eat and Xbox vouchers through the Carers Support Fund, totalling £300.

Through engagement, the Community Connector for Ethnic Minorities was also able to support with longer-term solutions. The carer was signposted to the Citizens Advice Bureau for a benefits check and support to complete a Carers Allowance application. In addition, she was also referred to the NCC East hub food bank and Feed Newport to access a multicultural food bank. Furthermore, the Community Connector signposted her to Newport Credit Union, a not-for-profit financial co-operative, for financial savings.

The Carers Support Fund and the support offered by the Community Connector has reduced financial hardship for the carer, improved her mental wellbeing and provided a connection for further support in the future, thus supporting the sustainability of her caring role.

The carer emotionally thanked the Community Connector, 'Christmas has come early and I never expected this help which will change our financial situation'

Individual Case Study – Carers Feedback received by email (Carers Support Fund)

This is an unbelievable gift for me and my partner, especially in these difficult times, not only would ease some financial burden, but it also, helps mentally, knowing we can fill our cupboards and fridge freezer up, for the next couple of weeks. Thank you very much.

Thank you all so much for the Aldi voucher. It has helped our family so much. Since Christmas we have been bombarded with bills going up, car failing its mot and costing a small fortune. Just being able to stock up the food cupboards has been a massive, massive help.

Thank you so much for all your efforts. I am so pleased that a very deserving boy gets to have such a fabulous boost. Much gratitude.

As an unpaid carer this voucher will help me be able to provide food that I would normally not be able to buy. Food that most people take for granted as the money I receive off the powers that be is absolutely disgraceful. You can just about exist I feel undervalued and forgotten for what I provide. so this voucher is a godsend and I really do want to thank whomever who was involved with the voucher. Thank you so very much.

Individual Case Study – Carers Feedback received by email (Carers Support Fund)

Thank you so much for the steam cleaner. It has been a godsend and we think it is marvellous and has helped us no end.

This will be so helpful. I am decorating my son's bedroom, and this is fantastic. Keep up the good work, you're making a difference. This is amazing, thank you so much.

I just want to say a massive thank you for my £100 cost of living voucher it helped us no end and we even had a little treat I bought us both a little steak to celebrate I also managed to buy more tinned food to keep. So once again thank you.

I have dropped the Love2Shop voucher and bus passes to (clients). They are extremely grateful for the vouchers and passes. I know that the bus passes for (client names) have also been hugely appreciated.

Thank you so much for providing this fantastic grant funding!

Individual Case Study – Commissioning

- Citizens Ms B and Ms C have been self-funding at BI Nursing homes on a self-funding basis for two years and approached the Local Authority as their funds dropped below the threshold and they were no longer able to pay for the care.
- After considerable work from our commissioning team, and social work team they were successful in negotiating a fee with BI to accept the NCC rates. Had this piece of work not had a successful outcome, both residents B and C would have been faced with a move to another care homes, or families having to pay expensive top up fees, which neither could afford. Resident Ms C is 90 years of age and Ms. B is in her later 80's. The process caused a degree of distress to both residents and families. However, much relief when the personal outcomes were achieved.

9) Mwy na Geriau - More than Words

We are developing an action plan to support the implementation of Mwy na Geriau, which as Executive Lead, I will oversee. I will be undertaking the Leading in a bilingual country training programme when available.

Newport is starting from a good base line position where we have systems in place to monitor that the Welsh Active Offer is made and recorded on WCCIS and in Personal Plans in our regulated services. Corporately we monitor the Welsh language skills of our workforce and offer training for learners, improvers and people who want to develop confidence with their language in the workplace. We encourage staff to take part in these courses and include in their Continuing Professional Development for Social Care Wales registration as we see it is an important means of developing our services.

We provide data on our own employees' Welsh language skills and those of commissioned services to Social Care Wales annually. We promote the use of occasional, courtesy Welsh and have a policy for correspondence and other communications and how to use on-line platforms.

Whilst recruitment in social care has been challenging, we ensure that job our vacancies are advertised bi-lingually, and that Welsh language is desirable for all posts.

10) The Way we Work: Leadership and Governance

During the past year the management team in Social Services has coalesced after a significant period of change. There has been a rollout of extensive engagement across all three areas of service with a strong emphasis on communication and transparency. The four senior managers have prioritised direct contact with staff and visits to service delivery teams. This has included engaging staff in external consultations and ensuring staff have been involved in a variety of fora. There is a well-established policy of “open door” management, and this is welcomed by staff.

The governance within Social Services is sited within the corporate structures and pathways. During the year a regular meeting schedule has been put in place with corporate colleagues with consistent agendas.

As well as the changes in management arrangements we have also seen a change in political leadership with new Cabinet Members leading for Social Services. Again, there is a regular meeting schedule with the three Heads of Service and a separate regular briefing with the Director.

Social Services have extensive working relationships with a range of statutory partner agencies and third sector colleagues. Many of these relationships sit across regional and national boundaries. Newport Social Services have a high profile in regional and national discussions and meetings with strong evidence of effective partnerships.

Service Case Study – Strategic Leadership and Partnership

Overall, strategic partners are expected to work together to improve their service delivery outcomes / meet the needs of their local population. We have been able to work exceptionally well together, due to our shared strategic aims and objective of supporting our teams in addressing the challenges faced by the health and social care system in Gwent with a particular focus on preventative care; working together to find new ways of meeting people’s needs and identifying ways of doing things more effectively and efficiently has led us to develop new ways of working.

Our service is our local approach to delivering the national plan and steps that we must take to get everyone to work together as a cojoined system to improve health and social care outcomes.

Partnership working with Newport - Our relationship / strategic partnership has been a critical success, primarily due to our shared core purpose of ensuring that our local population can continue to have safe access to good quality and sustainable services to meet their needs. We’ve worked on how our services can remain fit to meet the complexity and respond successfully to growing demands that are being placed on it and remain fit for the future through engagement with our staff, stakeholders, and service users.

Colleagues in Newport provide excellent role models as they help all the strategic partners in Gwent to plan/provide excellent health and social care. They provide remarkable strategic leadership not just by taking charge but by leading the partnership with support, with an emphasis on driving continual service improvement and ensuring all our workforce are fully supported/developed. In all my dealings they have always displayed excellent leadership and people management skills and always brings attention to detail to whatever they are leading on. We all love working with Newport 😊

11) The Way we Work: Resources (Finance & Workforce)

A. Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future

The revenue outturn across the authority underspent against budget by £3.1m, after core budget contributions to and from reserves. Across Social Services, the overall outturn for 22/23 was £565k overspend on an £88m budget, split as follows:

Service Area	22-23 Budget (£)	Outturn (£)	Variance to Budget (£)
Children Services	28,206,827	30,481,539	2,274,712
Adult Services	59,263,696	57,896,129	-1,367,567
Prevention & Inclusion	924,841	583,043	-341,798
Total	88,395,365	88,960,711	565,346

The significant variances across each of the service areas can be found in the tables below.

Children Services Area of Spend	Outturn Variance to Budget (£000)	Final Variance against budget
Emergency Placements	1,733	Placements exceeded budget allocation. Some costs of up to £50k per week throughout the year. Gross cost of £3,478k offset by Eliminate and Radical reform grant income of £1,544.
Out of Area Residential	1,089	The budget was set to afford 15 placements. Placements have been higher than the budget throughout the year with final numbers of 22 at the end of March.
Legal Fees	316	Overspend largely due to 24-hour supervision of a family which has now ended.
CP Teams Care & Support Budgets	230	Taxi costs for Out of County placements currently in care proceedings and legal requirement to provide translation services.
In-House Residential Establishments	229	£27k new sewerage system, £51k property repairs due to damage caused. £120k staffing overspend at Forest Lodge due to 100% occupancy and complex cases (2 to 1 needed)
Pathways Children Looked After additional support	124	Increased costs of fuel/taxi fees and translation costs. Linked to the fuel and cost of living crisis. MTFP pressure accepted for 23/24
Disabled Childrens Team Care and support budget	122	Overspend is due to one placement which is costing c£17000 per week.
Oaklands Respite Service	96	£96k overspend due to 2 children living at the establishment as no suitable placements could be found. Therefore, exceeded staffing budgets.
Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's)	83	Despite the placements being under what the budget could afford (budgeted 218 placements but final numbers 202), the monthly package costs are increasing.
Leaving Care	-77	Total of 37 placements in 22-23 with weekly costs between £1355 and £1691. This was within the budget and resulted in a £77k saving.
Independent Fostering Agencies	-91	Numbers have been lower than what the budget can afford. Intention of the elimination of profit agenda is to decrease numbers placed with external agencies.

Children Services Area of Spend	Outturn Variance to Budget (£000)	Final Variance against budget
When I'm Ready	-141	Lower numbers than the budget can afford (12 against a budget of 33). Fewer young people accessed WIR arrangements and had needs met by adult services.
Youth Offending Team	-157	Staff secondment and high level of vacancies. Recruitment and retention issues.
Inter-agency Adoption Fees	-177	Placement meetings due in March were delayed until May resulting in an underspend in 22-23
In-House Foster Carers Fees	-184	Lower numbers than the budget can afford (204 in March, budget can afford 209). Difficulty recruiting and retaining foster carers, yet this is improving.
Child Protection and Family Support Teams	-325	savings from vacant posts (social workers/team manager), reduced hours, maternity leave not being covered, funding from the regional integrated fund and staff secondment income.
Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Grant	-344	There is a standard fee paid for each UASC and income exceeds the costs incurred. The Home Office do not request repayment.
Children & Families Management a/c	-362	Head of Service and Service manager post charged to grants
Other variances but not significant	110	
TOTAL CHILDREN SERVICES OVERSPEND	2,274	

Adult Services Area of Spend	Outturn Variance to Budget (£000)	Explanation of main variances against outturn and budget
Community Care Packages	1,677	Budget realignment has been done for 23-24 but main reason for overspend is the number and cost of residential packages in 22-23. The budget was uplifted by 11% however providers demanded uplifts of 15% and over linked to the Cost of Living crisis.
Community Care Income	-2,028	Budget realignment has been done for 23-24. Linked to the comment above about overspends on the cost of packages, service users who are able to pay for their package in full were also paying higher fees than budgeted so the overspends on packages were offset by surplus income.
In-House Residential Establishments (net of income)	74	Covering staff sickness across the homes resulted in overspends however the income exceeded target as more residents are full payers.
Training Budget	-69	Underspend on core due to transferring eligible training costs to the SCWWDP (Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme) grant.
Centrica Lodge Respite Service	-112	£63k surplus income than budgeted due to other authorities occupying beds for a full year plus a £51k saving on the contract due to occupancy levels.

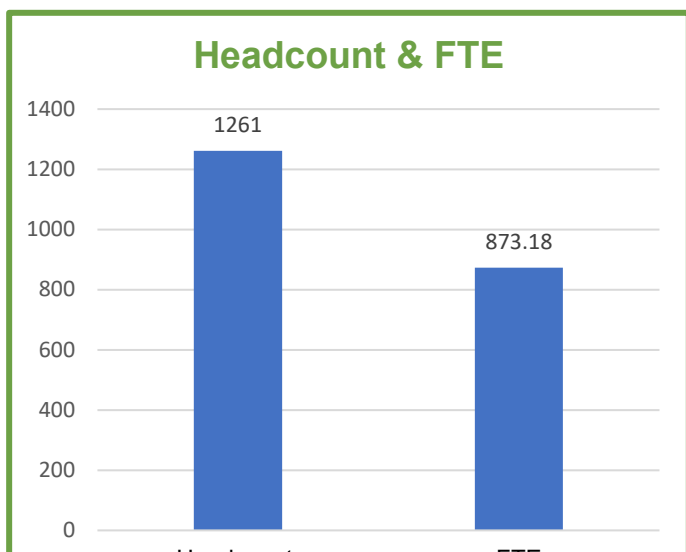
Adult Services Area of Spend	Outturn Variance to Budget (£000)	Explanation of main variances against outturn and budget
Frailty Pooled Budget	-125	Lower contribution to regional pool needed in 22/23
Adult Management A/c	-217	£164k FNC Grant from WG relating to 17-18 is not being repaid. £92k worth of grant income has also been used against management posts
Short Breaks	-285	Large underspend due to staff vacancies in advance of MTFP saving in 23-24.
Social Work Teams	-287	Winter pressures funding notified in March towards staffing costs. Also, additional vacancies which were not covered.
Other insignificant variances	-347	
TOTAL ADULT SERVICES UNDERSPEND	-1,368	

Prevention & Inclusion Area of Spend	Outturn Variance to Budget (£000)	Explanation of main variances against outturn and budget
Youth Service Core	-129	Youth Core - Base budget included approx. £110k of additional budget, only part of which was committed in 22/23. Delivery Manager post vacant most of year (£44k)/ transfer causals to Youth Support Grant (£15k)/Misc. £14k (fees, training and equipment)
P & I Management A/c	-86	Service Manager post was charged to the CCG grant
Private Sector Housing	-24	Additional capital contribution
Early Years	-71	Transfer of salaries (£19k) and other expenditure (£30k) to CCG grant also additional income for management of SHEP contract (£10k)
Other - no significant variance	-32	
TOTAL P & I UNDERSPEND	-342	

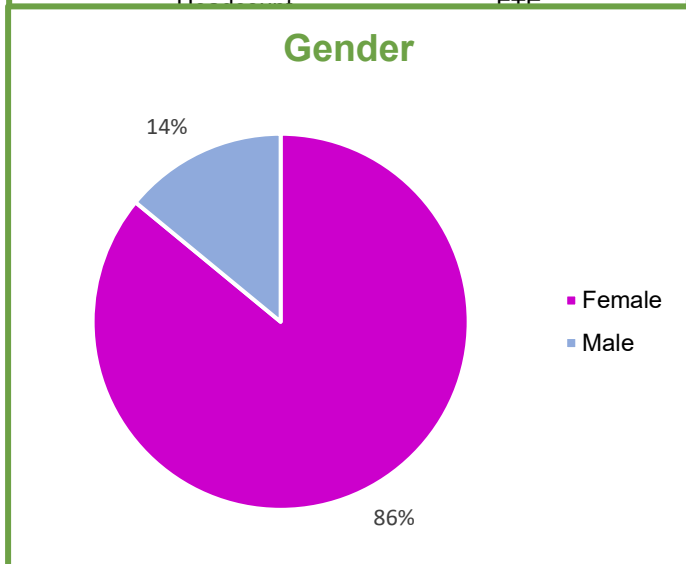
The council continues to work collaboratively with regional partners to maximise the use of regional resources to develop services within Newport. The annual budget in 2022/23 for social services was £88.4m. There is a well-developed financial management process in place across service areas that supports the medium-term financial plan and enables the identification and management of budget risks.

B. Our Workforce (Social Services Directorate)

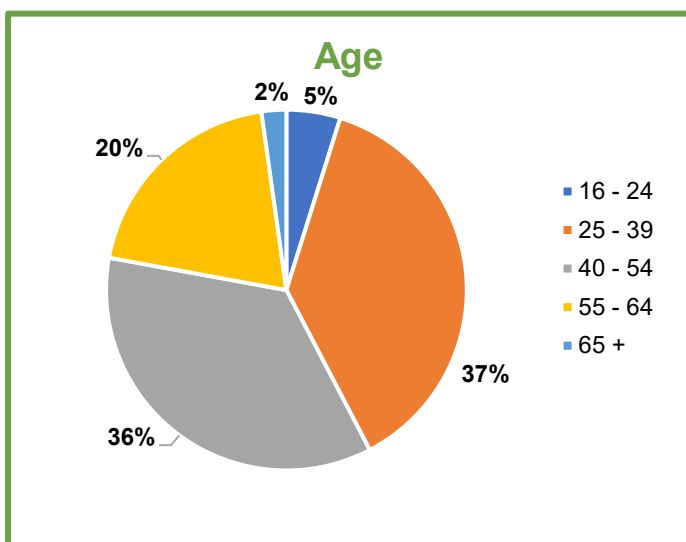
All data is accurate as of 31st March 2023.



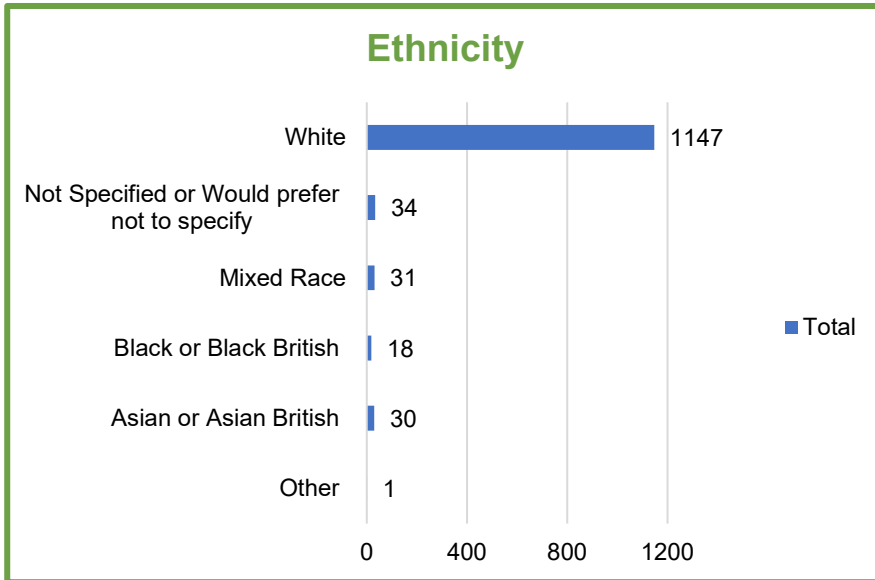
The current headcount of the three service areas (Adult Services, Children Services and Prevention and Inclusion) is 1,261. This headcount is equivalent to 873.18 full time equivalent (FTE) employees, linked to flexible working practices such as part time working and job-share arrangements.



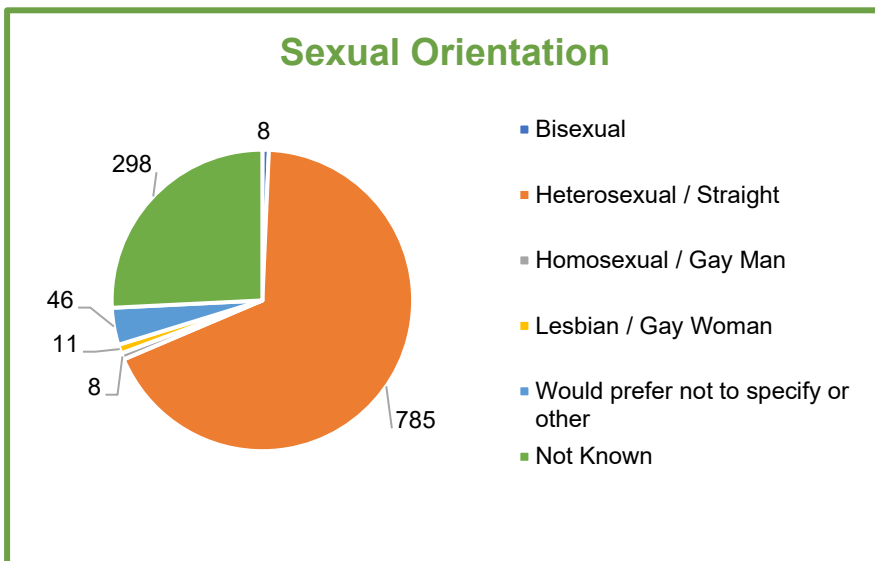
The gender make-up of Social Services is 86% female and 14% male.



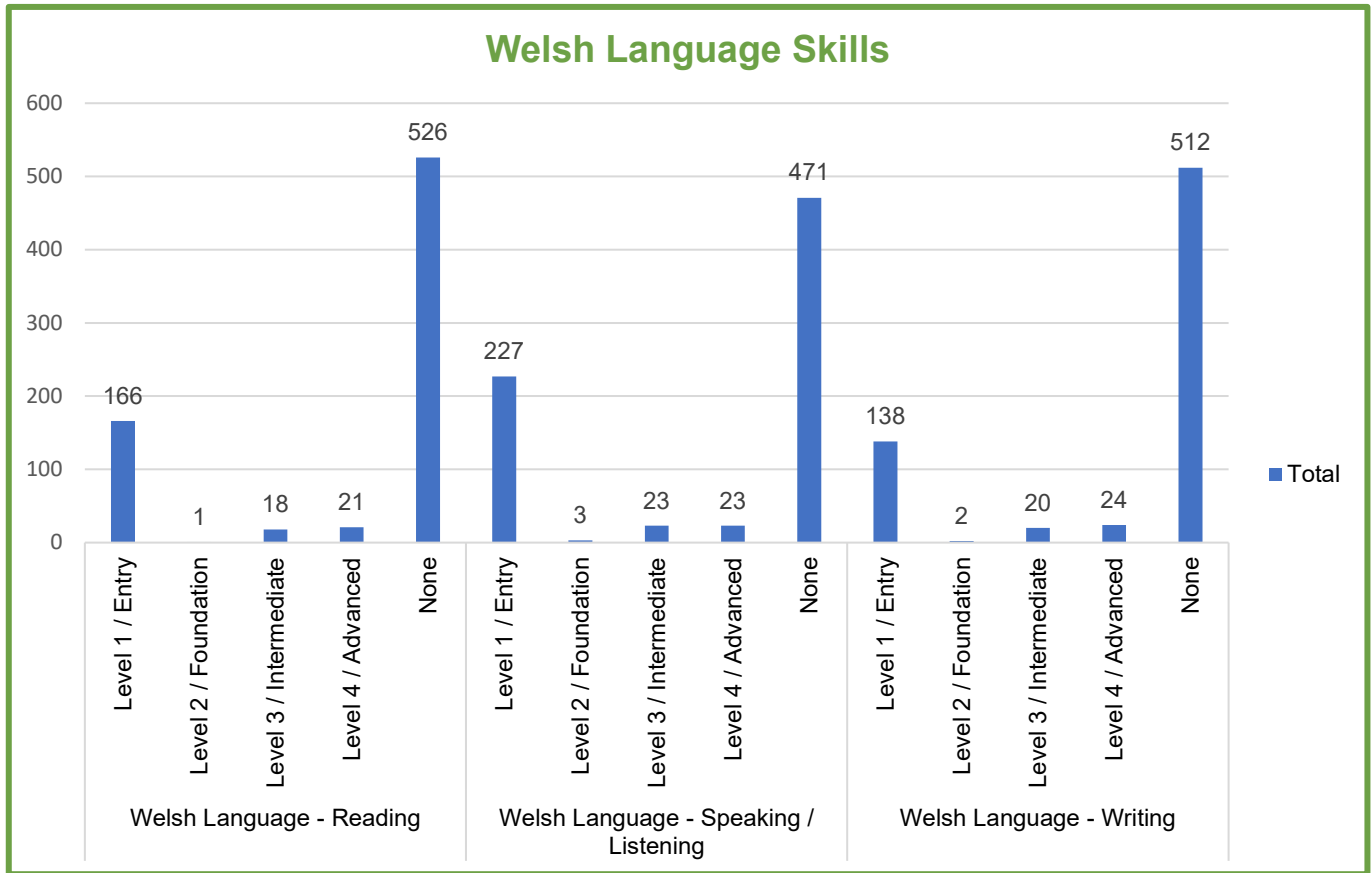
The chart demonstrates that 5% of the workforce within Social Services falls in the 16-24 age bracket, 37% within the 25-39 age bracket, 36% in the 40-54 age bracket, 20% in the 55-64 age bracket and 2% of staff are aged over 65.



The graph demonstrates that the majority of the Council’s workforce within Social Services is of White ethnicity (1147 headcount), but there are staff that are of Black (18 headcount), Asian (30 headcount) and mixed race (31 headcount) ethnicities. A total of 34 employees did not specify their ethnicity during onboarding, or would prefer not to disclose this information. This data has been presented at directorate level only, to be compliant with GDPR legislation.

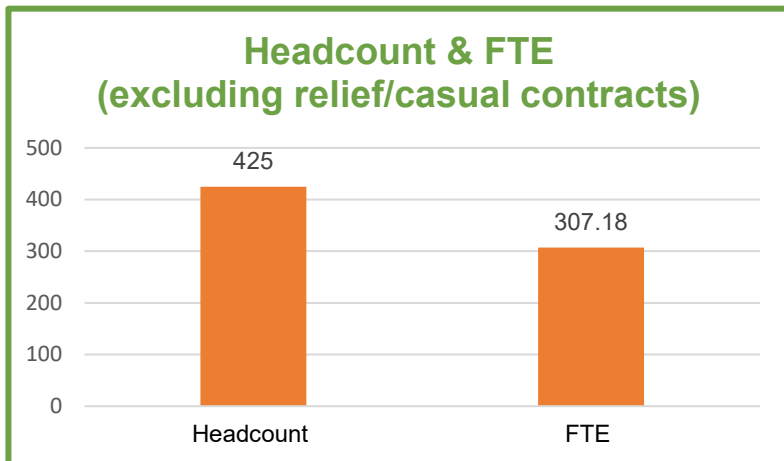


The graph demonstrates that for 298 members of staff employed within Social Services their sexual orientation is not known, 785 staff members identify to be heterosexual male or female and 46 members of staff preferred not to disclose their sexuality. 8 members of staff identified as a gay man, 11 members of staff as a lesbian/gay woman and 8 members of staff as bisexual. This data has been presented at directorate level only, to be compliant with GDPR legislation.

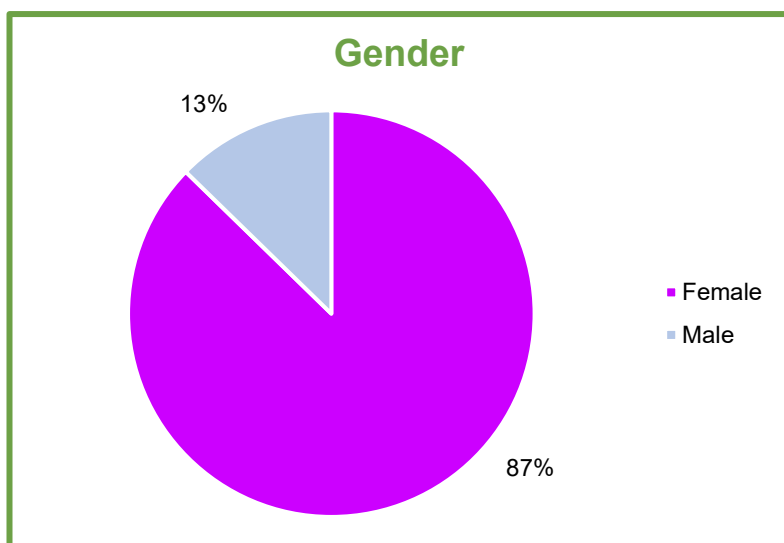


The graph demonstrates that majority of staff within Social Services do not have any Welsh language skills. 21 employees have advanced Welsh language reading ability, 23 employees having advanced Welsh language speaking/listing ability and 24 employees having advanced Welsh language writing ability.

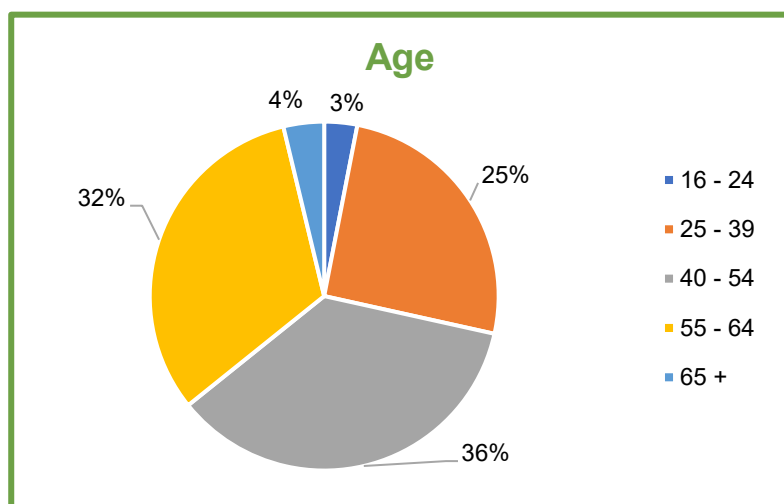
ADULTS SERVICES



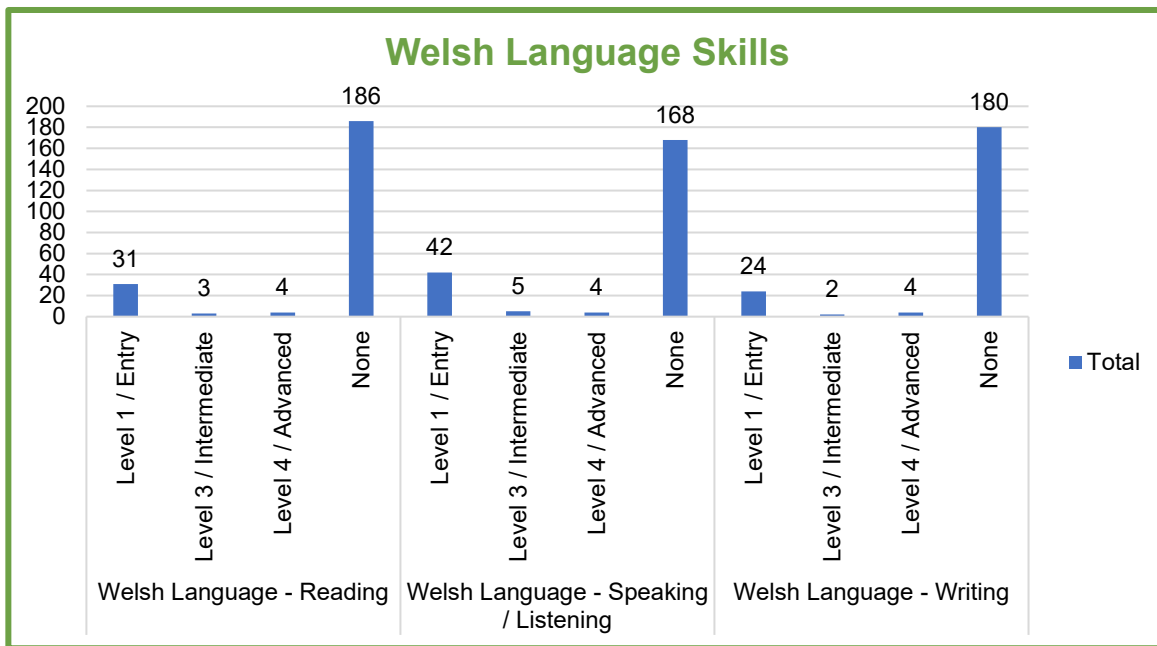
The current headcount of Adult Services is 425 employees. This headcount is equivalent to 307.18 full time equivalent employees, linked to flexible working practices such as part time working and job-share arrangements.



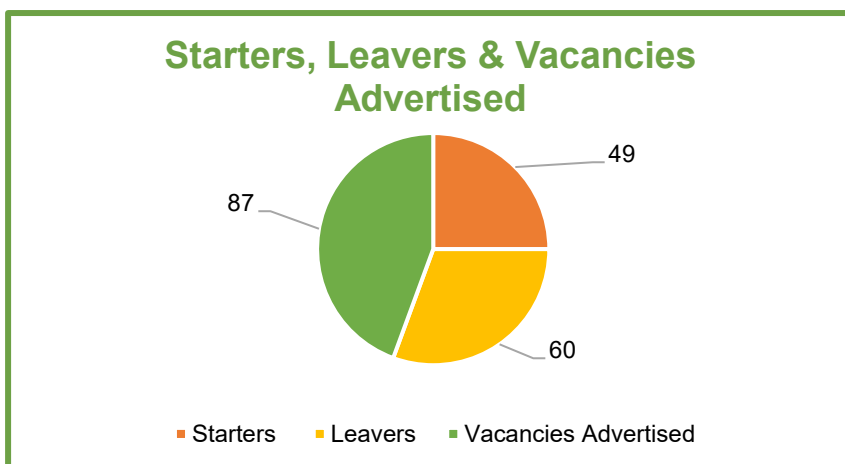
The gender make-up of Adult Services is 87% female and 13% male.



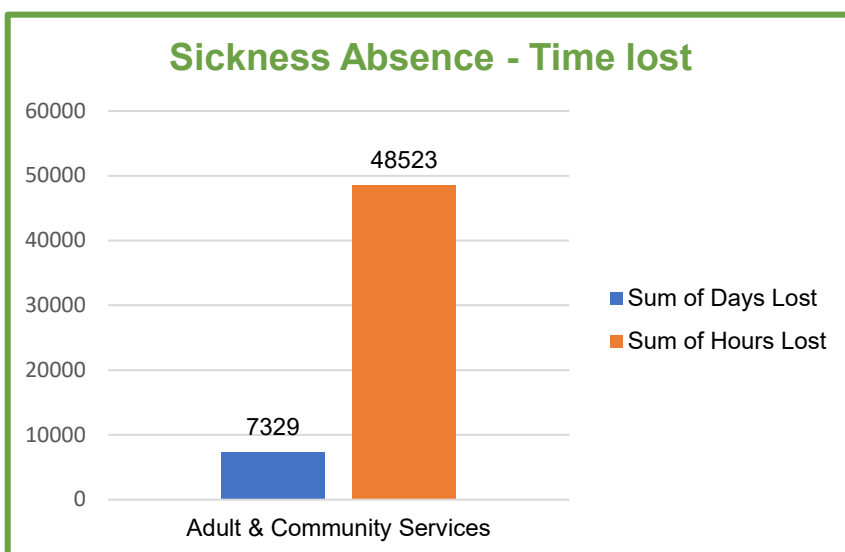
The pie-chart demonstrates that 3% of the workforce within Adult Services falls in the 16-24 age bracket, 25% within the 25-39 age bracket, 36% in the 40-54 age bracket, 32% in the 55-64 age bracket and 4% of staff are aged over 65.



The graph demonstrates that majority of staff within Adult Services do not have any Welsh language skills. 4 employees have advanced Welsh language reading, speaking/listening ability and writing ability.

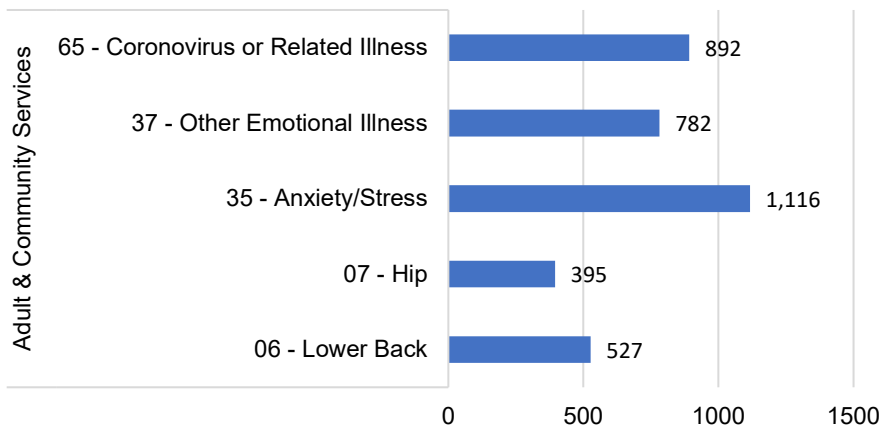


Within Adult Services, between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, there were 87 vacancies advertised via Newport City Council’s website. There were 60 employees that left their role within Adult Services during the same period, and 49 employees that started a new role.



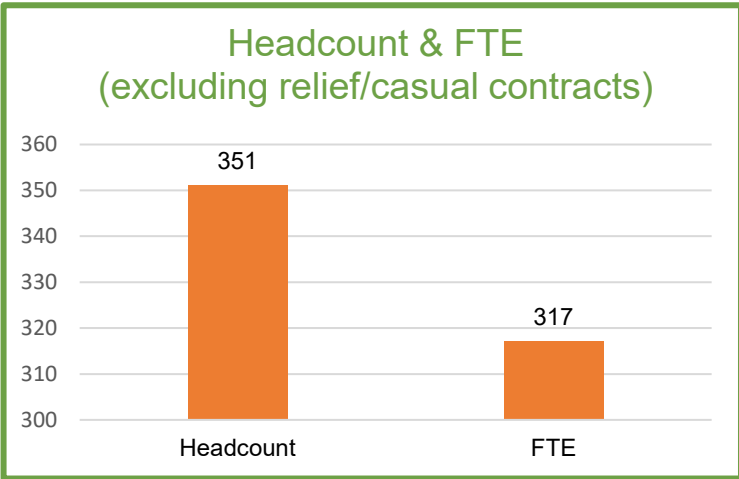
Within Adult Services, between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, a total of 7329 days were lost via sickness absence, which equates to 48,523 hours lost.

Days Lost per Absence Reason - Main Absence Reasons

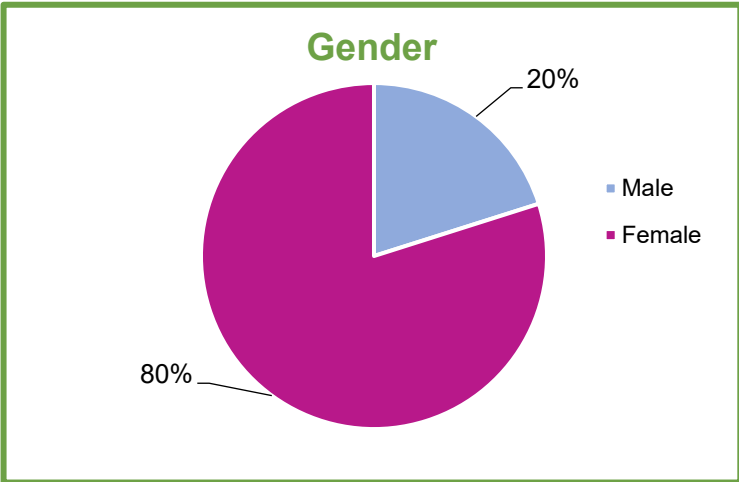


The graph identifies the main reasons for sickness absence within Adult Services, between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023. The main cause of sickness absence is linked to anxiety and stress which totalled 1,116 days lost. The other main causes of sickness absence were coronavirus or related illness (892 days lost), other emotional illnesses (782 days lost), lower back (527 days lost) and hip (395 days lost).

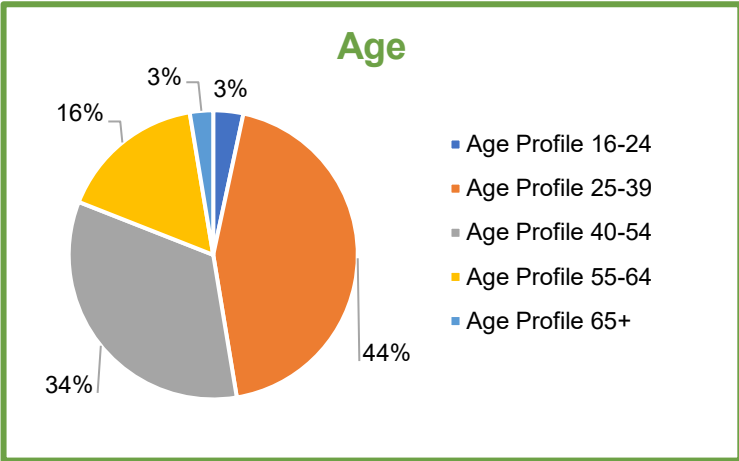
CHILDREN'S SERVICES



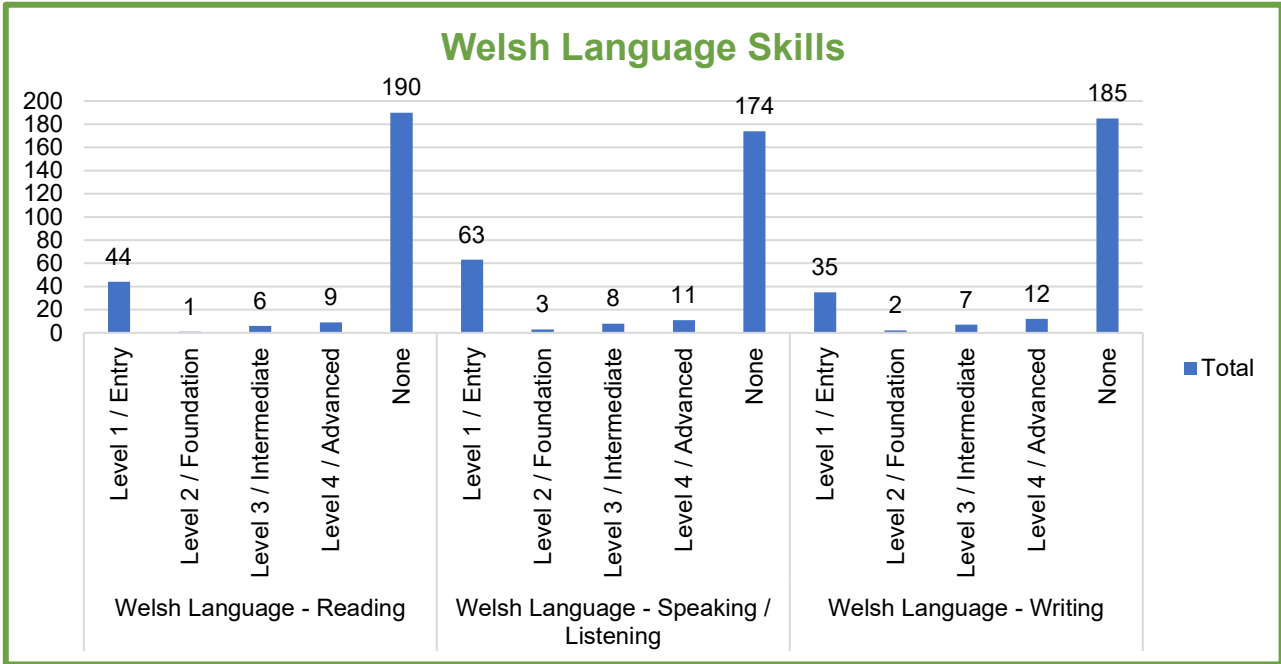
The current headcount of Childrens Services is 351 employees. This headcount is equivalent to 317 full time equivalent employees, linked to flexible working practices such as part time working and job-share arrangements.



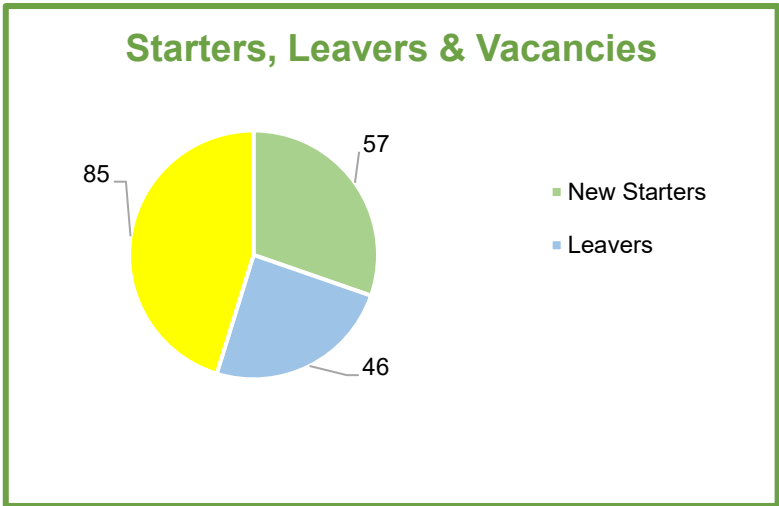
The gender make-up of Childrens Services is 80% female and 20% male.



The pie-chart demonstrates that 3% of the workforce within Childrens Services falls in the 16-24 age bracket, 44% within the 25-39 age bracket, 34% in the 40-54 age bracket, 16% in the 55-64 age bracket and 3% of staff are aged over 65.

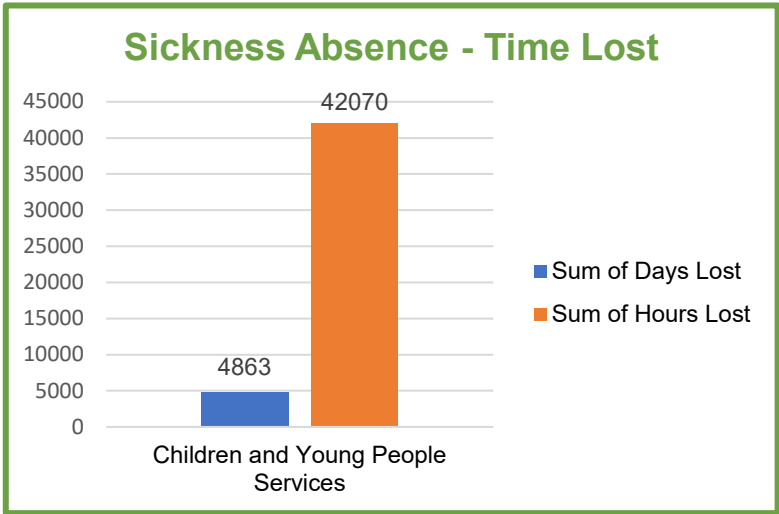


The graph demonstrates that majority of staff within Childrens Services do not have any Welsh language skills. A small number of employees have advanced Welsh language reading (9 employees), speaking/listing ability (11 employees) and writing ability (12 employees).



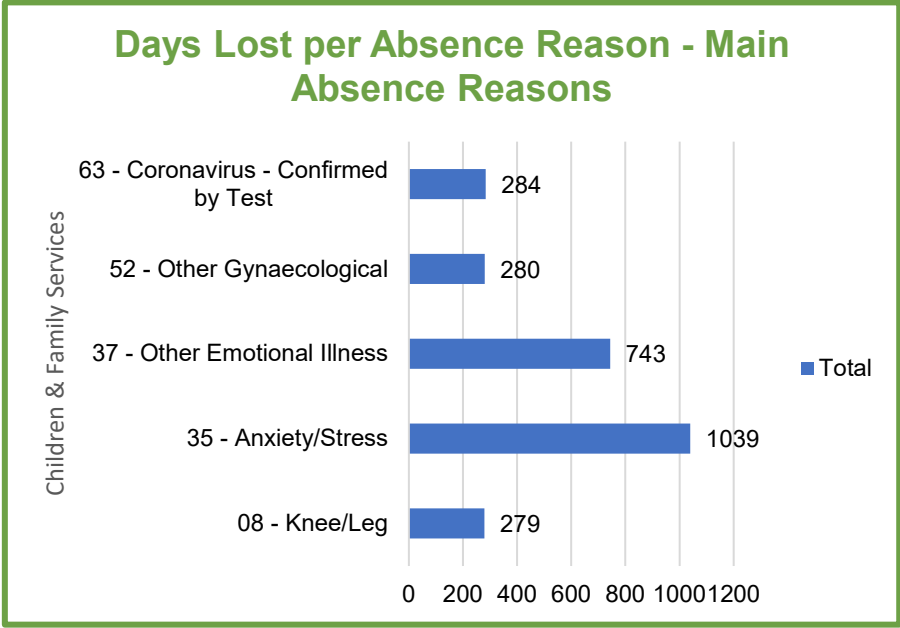
Within Childrens Services, between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, there were 85 vacancies advertised via Newport City Council’s website.

There were 46 employees that left their role within Childrens Services during the same period, and 57 employees that started a new role.



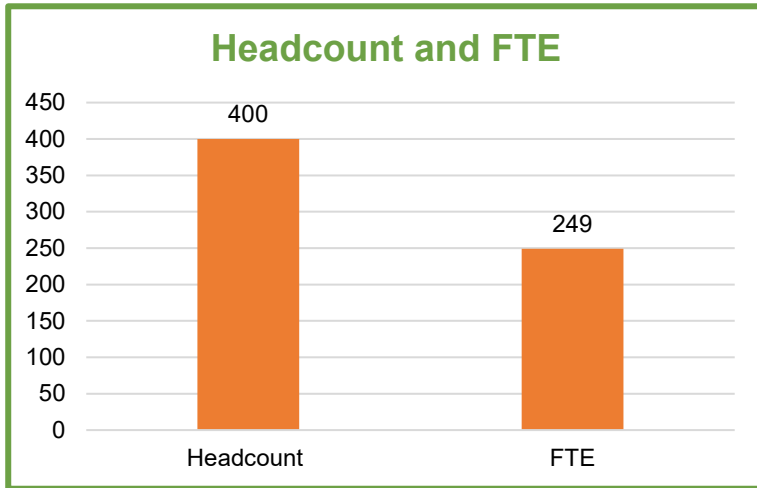
Within Childrens Services, between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, a total of 4863 days were lost via sickness absence, which equates to 42,070 hours lost.

Days Lost per Absence Reason - Main Absence Reasons

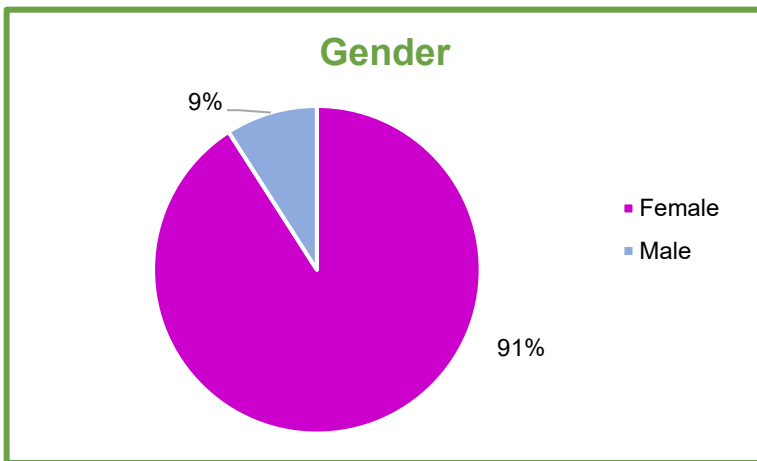


The graph identifies the main reasons for sickness absence within Childrens Services between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023. The main cause of sickness absence is linked to anxiety and stress which totalled 1039 days lost. The other main causes of sickness absence were other emotional illnesses (743 days lost), Coronavirus (284 days lost), gynaecological illnesses (280 days lost) and knee/leg (279 days lost).

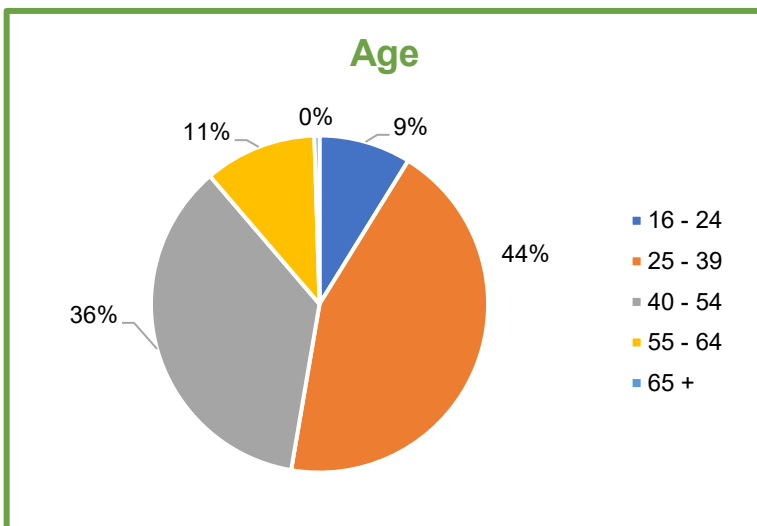
PREVENTION AND INCLUSION



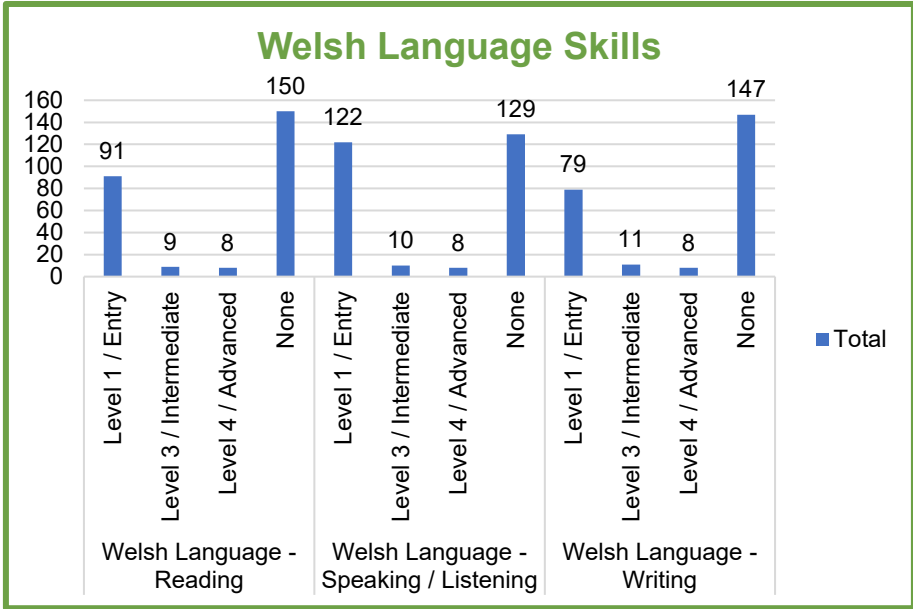
The current headcount of Prevention and Inclusion is 400 employees. This headcount is equivalent to 249 full time equivalent employees, linked to flexible working practices such as part time working and job-share arrangements. Casual and relief members of staff have been included in this summary, as large parts of the team are reliant on seasonal and casual staff, due to the nature of the work.



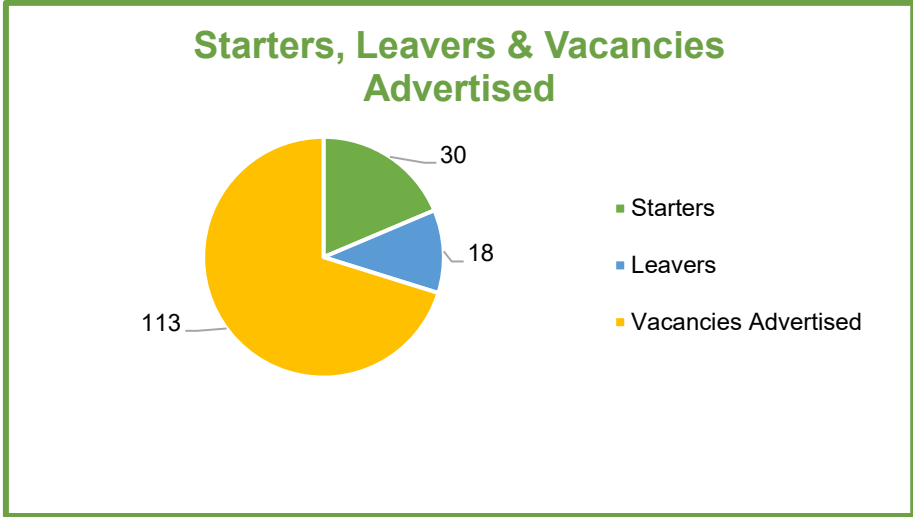
The gender make-up of Prevention and Inclusion is 91% female and 9% male.



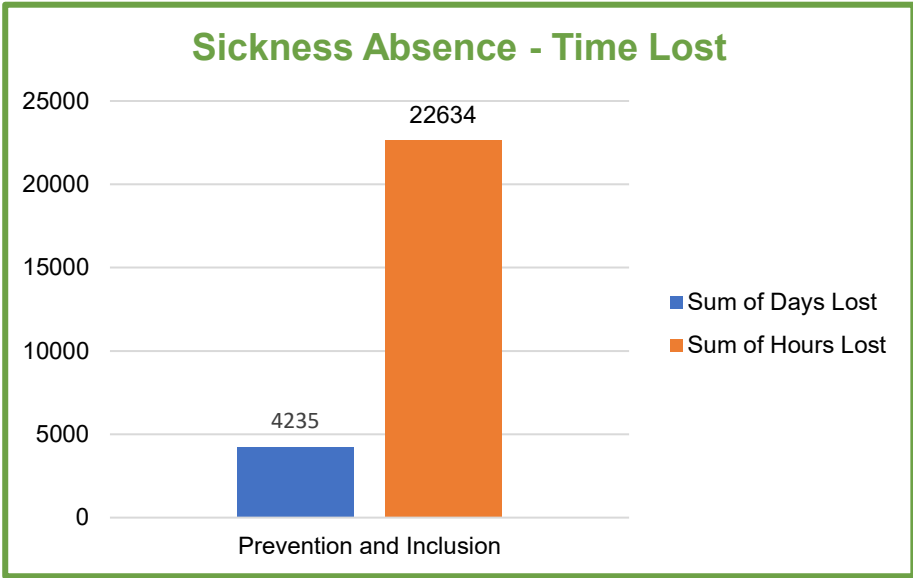
The pie-chart demonstrates that 9% of the workforce within Prevention and Inclusion falls in the 16-24 age bracket, 44% within the 25-39 age bracket, 36% in the 40-54 age bracket, 11% in the 55-64 age bracket and 0% of staff are aged over 65.



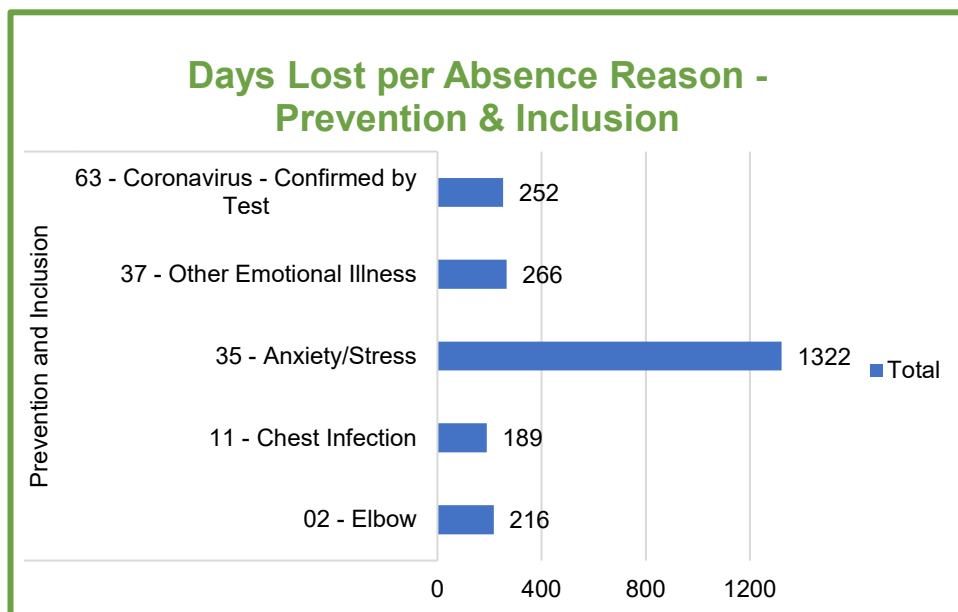
The graph demonstrates that majority of staff within Prevention and Inclusion do not have any Welsh language skills or have entry level Welsh language skills. 8 employees have advanced Welsh language reading, speaking/listing ability and writing ability.



Within Prevention and Inclusion, between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, there were 113 vacancies advertised via Newport City Council’s website. There were 30 employees that left their role within Prevention and Inclusion during the same period, and 18 employees that started a new role.



Within Prevention and Inclusion, between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, a total of 4235 days were lost via sickness absence, which equates to 22,634 hours lost.



The graph identifies the main reasons for sickness absence within Prevention and Inclusion, between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023. The main cause of sickness absence is linked to anxiety and stress, which totalled 1322 days lost. The other main causes of sickness absence were other emotional illnesses (266 days lost), Coronavirus (252 days lost), elbow (216 days lost) and chest infections (189 days lost).

i. Performance Management

Within Newport City Council, there is an established performance management system, which is undertaken via iTrent. This system supports performance management through check ins, setting performance and personal objectives and focussing on employee wellbeing, in line with the Council's Wellness at Work Policy. The check in function allows managers to select conversation types, based on traditional check-ins, probation conversations, performance improvement reviews, wellbeing needs or Social Services Supervision processes.

The Social Services Supervision process is outlined in the Social Services Supervision Policy and should be used by those staff in Social Services that are covered by the agreed supervision policy only. The use of the iTrent system for recording is a shift from previous custom and practice, and there have been challenges across the services in embedding the use of iTrent as a tool. This has resulted in the current data available not being an accurate reflection of the performance management being undertaken across the service areas, but this should improve in the future.

ii. Development

Each year, there is an opportunity for staff working within Social Services to apply for sponsorship, to undertake a Social Work Degree, via the Open University, alongside their role within Newport City Council. Currently, there are three employees being sponsored in their first year of qualification, five employees in their second year of qualification and three employees in their third year of qualification.

Consideration is being given to additional development streams, to encourage more staff to enter Social Work roles in future years, such as the Social Care Wales accredited Social Services Practitioner qualification, which is one year in length, but on completion gives students the equivalent qualification and experience of the first year of the Social Work Degree.

There are currently 15 employees in Childrens Services undertaking the All Wales Induction Framework and currently 16 employees in Adults Services undertaking the Qualifications and Credit Framework, Level 3 in Health and Social Care.

Within Prevention and Inclusion, four members of staff have been supported through a Level 2 Qualification, twenty members of staff Level 3 Qualification, four members of staff through a Level 4 Qualification and six members of staff through a Level 5 Qualification, between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

iii. Workforce Planning

The Corporate HR Team supports Heads of Service and Service Managers in embedding workforce planning activities, as part of the day-to-day business. A formal analysis of workforce planning data takes place annually, to support in guiding these activities and enabling decision making.

In addition, each service is supported by the Social Services Workforce Development Team, to complete a Training Needs Analysis (TNA), prior to the start of the financial year. The TNA is informed by the monitoring matrix, which tracks the training that employees have undertaken, whether required for qualification and registration, to meet the specific needs of the service identified in the Statement of Purpose, or as required by Newport Council for its managers and employees.

Each member of the team has regular supervisions and an annual appraisal, at which their individual development and training requirements are identified. The TNAs are considered by our Social Care Workforce Development Team who deliver or commission any specialist training required. Training is booked and takes place in work time. Certificates received following training/qualification are saved on file.

iv. Workforce Challenges

- Local Authority Budgets in relation to staffing.
- National Skills shortage of Social Worker positions.
- Sickness/burnout of employees.
- Retention (agency jobs have higher rates of pay).

12) The Way we Work: Involvement and Engagement

As described on page 17 Social Services has several mechanisms for involvement and engagement. Our work with citizens directly drives innovation and development. Many of the initiatives of the past year have started with national statutory changes and shifts in policy direction. The Programme for Government, the work of the Regional Partnership Board, the changes in family justice and our engagement with research heavily influence developments. Those developments are then in turn given vigour and momentum with the engagement of some of those we support, our staff and our partners.

Daily social care staff support individuals to bring about positive change and to over time move away from involvement with statutory agencies. Throughout this report there are examples of this type of involvement and while many of these changes will be small they amount to life changing shifts for the individuals and their families.

Service Case Study – Support for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Childrens Services has maximised the effectiveness of the grant funding available for UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Minors) by creating a specialist UASC team within Newport. An experienced team manager is building a team dedicated to this specialist area and she is providing a confident approach to the combination of care planning and immigration law that this area of work requires.

In addition, a Project Manager post has been created to support the team's development and to promote regional working across Gwent.

These new posts have driven a step change in the work that is undertaken locally and regionally with UASC. We are working in a more collaborative way with other agencies, and we hope this is reflected in more effective working and better outcomes for our young people. A more confident approach to working with the Home Office has ensured that age challenges are managed, asylum claims are submitted in a timely manner and funding is claimed. We are supporting workers across Wales, and Gwent is now seen as leading the way in terms of a regional approach to UASC work.

However, the outcome that we are most pleased about is that our partners have fed back that the young people who have recently arrived have developed enough trust and sense of safety to start to engage with other activities months ahead of previous arrivals. Whilst plenty of challenges remain, we are proud of that!

Individual Case Study – Support for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Child A (age 16)

This young person fled his home country after religious extremists seeking his father in connection with work he had done for the western military, said they would take him instead. He travelled to the UK over a period of months and describes two severe beatings from police along the way. One of these beatings has left his feet scarred. He entered the UK via the port at Kent and was part of the Home Office's compulsory National Transfer Scheme.

He has settled in semi-independent accommodation and is focused on learning English so he can continue to study and get into tertiary education. He is frustrated that opportunities to attend college are limited and the childcare team is working to create more ESOL time so he can learn English at a rate that suits him. Joining a local sports club has provided friendships with young people from his home country, as well as the opportunity to integrate into a wider group of young people.

He has made his claim for asylum and is awaiting the outcome. (98% of claims from his home country are successful).

Individual Case Study – Support for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Children B (are 15) and C (age 15)

These two young people have both been accepted by Newport in order that they might live with or near close family members. This enables them to benefit from family support which is rare for unaccompanied minors. Child B has been placed with a family member following a successful assessment. Child C is living with foster carers as he is unable to live with his family member but contact between the two is being encouraged.

Child D (age 16)

Child D arrived in Newport having travelled here from his home country in the backs of lorries. He arrived with no possessions, wearing only a T shirt, tracksuit bottoms and flip flops. He was dazed and unclear where he was, having not eaten or drunk for some time. He described receiving beatings from the traffickers on the way. After a shower, some warm clothes and a meal he started to adjust to his new surroundings.

A few months on he is trying to learn English as fast as he can so he can access tertiary education. He has developed good relationships with staff but is struggling with his mental health and experiencing anxiety when away from home. His asylum claim is logged, and he is awaiting an interview with the Home Office.

13) The Way we Work: Adult Services Priorities 23/24

Objective 1 - Supporting individuals and carers to maintain their independence and support them when they need help by providing equitable access to early intervention and prevention support.

Objective 2 - Ensure safeguarding arrangements for adults and their carers remain robust and NCC remains compliant with the Social Services and Well-being Act.

Objective 3 - Continue developing and improving the sustainability of adult services through a co-production model with providers, service users and carers to meet our statutory duties, and future demands based upon Population Needs Assessment.

14) The Way we Work: Children Services Priorities 23/24

Objective 1 – Deliver effective services to support children to safely remain with their families.

Objective 2 – Improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers including a focus on safe reunification.

Objective 3 – Ensure a range of placements are available for children looked after.

Objective 4 – Prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people.

15) The Way we Work: Prevention & Inclusion Priorities 23/24

Objective 1 - Deliver effective early intervention and preventative services for children, young people and families to remain in their own communities.

Objective 2 - Deliver an appropriate range of inclusive early intervention and preventative services to meet the needs of children, young people and families.

Objective 3 - Support families to lead emotionally healthy and happy lives in their communities.

Objective 4 - Improve outcomes for children, young people and families building self-worth. Working with strengths based and trauma informed approaches.

16) How to Contact us

We welcome your views on this report, Social Services plans for the future and how it did last year. We would also like to know how you; your family and your community have been affected by our work to improve the services that we deliver. More specific information on Newport's Social Services can be found via <https://www.newport.gov.uk/en/Care-Support/Care-and-Support.aspx>

Also, if you are concerned about a member of your family, friends and neighbours (including children), you can email us on info@newport.gov.uk or telephone (01633) 656656. Emergencies outside of normal office hours are:

Freephone: 0800 328 4432

Minicom: 0800 587 9963

Fax: 01495 767057

Ways to get in touch:

Newport City Council Website: www.newport.gov.uk



Download the My Newport App to your Smartphone device.
Available on Apple and Android devices.



Twitter - [@NewportCouncil](https://twitter.com/NewportCouncil)



Facebook – www.facebook.com/NewportCityCouncil



Email: info@newportcouncil.gov.uk



Telephone – (01633) 656 656 between 8.00am and 6.00pm Monday to Friday



Text – NCC followed by your message to 60777

Minicom – (01633) 656 657



Write to Newport City Council, Civic Centre, Godfrey Road, Newport NP20 4U.