
SOCIAL SERVICES STATEMENT

Carers Week

To support Carers Week (6-12 June 2022), which was held earlier this month, the Cardiff Cares Academy Team held a number of events across the city, showcasing the job roles available within the care sector. Among other staff, senior officers from Children's Residential Services were on hand to share their experiences of working in such a rewarding area with prospective candidates. Jobseekers attending the events were briefed on the support available from the Cares Academy, including access to job opportunities – both within the Council and with other care providers, training packages and incentives. People attending the events were able to sign up to the Cares Academy there and then, with over 30 people taking part in a First Aid Taster session.

Also during Carers Week, the YMCA – the Council's service provider for young carers – met with young carers to find out what activities they wanted to do. Their ideas ranged from family activities to youth clubs and lots of respite opportunities. During the week, the participants started to create a game for young carers based on the popular card game, Dobble. All the symbols and pictures in the game will represent something to young carers in their caring role. The young people wanted to create a game that was fun for everyone to play, but which could also be used as a learning tool to show people how carers feel and what responsibilities they may have.

Service Challenges

While demand within Adult Services has stabilised as we have moved into summer, the service remains under considerable pressure as it works to clear backlogs of work exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and to meet the needs of service users with increasingly complex needs. Recruitment of both Social Workers and Occupational Therapists is exceptionally difficult at present, with national demand outstripping supply of these essential posts. However, progress is being made and our Managed Agency Team is helping to reduce outstanding social work assessments and our Occupational Therapists have reduced their backlog from 917 in September 2021 to just 400 through overtime working and changes in working practices. More work is needed, however, and the service has commenced an organisational review to address some of the underlying issues and future challenges facing adult social care in Cardiff.

Work to recruit children's social workers continues and good progress has been made with the percentage of vacancies falling from 29% in June 2021 to 24% in June 2022. In addition to this, there are 28 social workers currently in the recruitment process, 16 of whom are students who are due to qualify this year. The recruitment of experienced social workers, however, continues to be an issue and the Council is working hard to find innovative solutions. The work to support prudent social work (that is social

workers only doing what only social workers can do) is a key element of the Cardiff offer to social workers. An example of this is the use of Covid-19 Recovery Funding to pilot initiatives such as the appointment of Social Worker Resource Assistants. Other initiatives being taken forward to attract social workers to come to and remain with Cardiff include developing staff induction and appointing Practice Leads to support newly qualified social workers in their first year in practice to embed good practice and to ensure consistency of practice across the Directorate.

ADULT SERVICES

Age Friendly City

I was delighted to celebrate the city's acceptance to the World Health Organisation's Global Network for Age Friendly Cities and Communities at a launch event that was held at Cardiff Castle on 7 June 2022.

The Lord Mayor of Cardiff opened the event, which was attended in person by the Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan MS, and also by Thiago De Sa Herick of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Helena Herklots, Older People's Commissioner for Wales, via video link.

The school choir from Millbank Primary School attended the event. Millbank Primary School takes part in our 'pen pal' scheme linking up schools with care homes in the city, so it was wonderful to welcome them to sing songs from 'Matilda' – bringing an inter-generational element to the day.

Membership of the network provides Cardiff with many opportunities to access information about age friendly initiatives and best practice from across the world and I am pleased that we will now form part of this forward thinking, global movement. Cardiff is the first Welsh member of the network, but I know that officers are already extending support to neighbouring local authorities to assist them in achieving the Welsh Government's ambition of an Age Friendly Wales.

It is important to point out that our achievement in being accepted by the WHO is only the start of this journey. Officers will be starting work to develop the Age Friendly City website, drive forward the progress of our Cardiff Working Towards an Age Friendly City Action Plan and deliver increased awareness of all the age friendly work taking place in Cardiff so that older people can know what support is available for them.

Ask Sara

A key part of our Ageing Well Strategy is to embrace the use of technology and help support independent living in the city. The Council has launched 'Ask Sara', an online self-assessment tool, which will be available for use by citizens through the Council's website. Through a series of occupational therapy approved questions, Ask Sara will help guide citizens to assistive technology and small aids and equipment that can help older and disabled people to live independently in their own homes. It will provide another channel through which citizens, families and carers can find solutions that they are often happy to self-fund. This service will provide citizens with access to information to support independent living 24/7, 365 days a year, as well as over 10,000 occupational therapy approved solutions. This will assist in reducing the need for low level interventions by our Occupational Therapists or other preventative services.

Breathe Create Courses

Ty Canna Mental Health Day Centre has been working with Breathe Create (www.breathecreative.co.uk), Wallich and Advocacy Matters to continue to provide creative wellbeing courses to people supported within these services. The courses are aimed at people of all ages from all backgrounds and offer activities focussed on creativity and wellbeing, including art, digital animation, singing and creative cooking, as well as introducing participants to relaxation techniques and mindfulness. This work has been supported by the award of £100k in lottery funding by the Arts Council of Wales to fund creative workshops, particularly in relation to the Art of Assertiveness; Art of Resilience and a Listening Project dealing with negative narrative in your head. Feedback from individuals who have attended the courses that have been run previously has been incredibly positive, evidencing the positive impact on their mental health. The new groups will be starting in September 2022 offering access to creative wellbeing for a larger group of people.

Lego Club

There have been some excellent examples of work between our Hubs and the Learning Disabilities Service to reduce social isolation of individuals within the service and to support wider community engagement. A good example of this is the support provided to one individual who has a keen interest in Lego. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the individual was becoming more and more isolated at home and, in discussion with his support planner, he highlighted that he greatly enjoyed creating models from Lego. The support planner researched groups that the individual could join, but there was nothing in Cardiff at the time to support adults with a keen interest in Lego. Despite the challenges faced by Covid, the support planner worked with the local Hub to develop an online Lego group that adults could join and the individual was able to take an active role in the group, attending sessions, talking to people involved and spreading the news of the new Lego club. When Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, the Hub supported the group to move to in-person sessions and the individual has gained a lot from this. He is less isolated and remains a very active and enthusiastic member of the group. He has also gone on to develop new skills with support from the Hub Team in making stop-motion animations, which are posted on the Hub's Facebook page. The work between the support planner and the Hub has greatly improved the individual's confidence and reduced his social isolation, ensuring that he can remain an active participant in his local community, make new friends from all different backgrounds, engage in activities he loves and develop new skills.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Cardiff Family Advice and Support

Cardiff Family Advice and Support (CFAS) has recently achieved the national Families First Quality Award in recognition of it being a service excelling in the provision of information, advice and assistance of the highest quality. Assessed against a range of criteria, including enabling families, supporting vulnerable families, quality of information and collaborative working, the award recognises the scope of support that CFAS provides to children, young people and families across Cardiff on all aspects of family life, including employment, money, housing and childcare. In the last year alone, the service has supported almost 13,000 people with bespoke advice and assistance to receive the right support at the right time, which has been a real achievement when working within the restrictions and challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Building on this success, the service will introduce a new webchat facility this year to enable families to access its support through even more channels. Further information about CFAS and the services provided can be found at: www.cardiffamilies.co.uk or on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Cardiff Parenting

At the end of last month, I was pleased to welcome, along with the staff from the Cardiff Parenting Teams, Lynne Neagle MS, Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, to see the work of our specialised parent-infant relationship team, which is one of only two in Wales. The visit was hosted at Ely & Caerau Children's Centre, where our Psychologists and a Senior Home Liaison Officer explained how we work with families and shared case studies via video clips. I know that the Deputy Minister enjoyed the visit very much and recognised the "genuinely changing work" being undertaken by the Council.

The Childcare Offer

By the beginning of this month, the Childcare Offer had approved applications from a total of 5,902 children. 2,101 children were funded last month, which was the highest number in any month, exceeding the previous maximum of 2,072 in April 2022.

Fostering

Foster Care Fortnight took place between 9 & 22 May this year, during which time Cardiff Castle and City Hall were lit up in purple in recognition. Celebrations included art and crafts, wellness sessions, reiki, a sunshine walk, choirs, and support groups and riding the rapids at Cardiff International White Water Centre. The fortnight celebrated Cardiff's fostering families with the aim of highlighting how rewarding the role is. The hope is that this will result in enquiries from new families wanting to become fostering families; the Council welcomes interest from all families, whether someone is single or a couple, LGBTQ+ or has a disability.

Our in-house Fostering Teams were also pleased to receive a number of tickets to the Platinum Jubilee concert that was held at Cardiff Castle on 4 June. This provided an opportunity for children looked after and our Foster and Kinship Foster families, as well as supported lodgings and 'When I'm Ready' providers to attend the event and take part in the celebrations. Young people were also accompanied to attend from our in-house children's homes across the city. The event was enjoyed by all who attended and we look forward to arranging further positive and memorable experiences for children and young people in our care.

'Get Cooking' Course for Care Leavers

The Council recently ran an eight-week 'Get Cooking' course at Hafan Gobaith in conjunction with Cardiff & Vale University Health Board. The aim of the course was to teach young care leavers the skills to make simple and healthy meals and to educate them on nutrition. Each participant had a workbook to be completed, as well as the cooking itself, and participants were able to take home what they had cooked that day. The skills that they learnt can be transferred to their own homes and will help with their journey to independent living.

North Yorkshire Model

The Council is currently working with North Yorkshire County Council to learn from their best practice in working with young people who are experiencing complex journeys. This is a non-traditional approach, with an innovative residential 'Hub' at the heart of the service, which provides:

- Short-term placements;
- Edge of care support;
- A range of services, support and accommodation options;
- Specialist roles embedded into the Hub; and
- An integrated team that remains with a young person throughout their journey.

The Council has been accepted onto the accredited pilot scheme for the North Yorkshire model and the project is in its very early stages. Cardiff Council's model will be called 'Cardiff – The Right Place'. I look forward to sharing progress updates with members as we make the cultural and systems changes that will be required to ensure that this new approach works well for the children of Cardiff.

Youth Justice Service Allotment

The Youth Justice Service has had a plot at Pontcanna Community Allotments since 2007. Many young people working with the service and the staff themselves benefit from this quiet, confidential and secure space. Those who struggle to engage in an office environment have been able to complete intervention sessions walking around the site with support staff, while others have chosen to complete their community reparation sessions at the allotment. Young people are involved with general maintenance works, such as weeding and laying bark on the paths, painting the shed and constructing a raised bed. As well as the more general planting, watering and harvesting of the crops, the allotment produce is sold to staff and the young people are able to decide which charity they would like the money they have raised to go to at the end of the year. Last time, this was used to buy hats and gloves for the homeless before winter set in.

The project promotes emotional wellbeing by enabling young people to spend time with others, build their confidence, learn about healthy eating and be outside in the fresh air undertaking physical tasks. The allotment project also provides young people with the opportunity to develop a range of skills, including horticultural skills and knowledge, team building, decision-making and cooking skills using the produce grown at the allotment.

Councillors Norma Mackie & Ash Lister
Cabinet Members for Social Services (Job Share)
23 June 2022