
SOCIAL SERVICES STATEMENT

ADULT SERVICES

Celebrating Excellence and Dedication in Care Work Recognition Night

Care workers in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan do an incredible job and work tirelessly, often in very challenging circumstances. That's why it's really important to celebrate their work and let them know how much we all appreciate their efforts and achievements. To that end, it was a real honour for me to attend the annual Cardiff and the Vale Regional Workforce Partnership's Celebration of Excellence in Care event that was held in Barry in April 2023, alongside the previous Lord Mayor, Cllr Graham Hinchey, and my Cabinet colleague, Cllr Lister, as well as the Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan MS. Care workers from council teams and partner providers were presented with awards for achieving their Health and Social Care qualification in the past year. I would like to thank our care workers for their continued hard work and dedication.

Improving the Community Resource Team (Homecare)

The Community Resource Team (Homecare) is going through a transformational change programme to improve services to clients. So far this year, a new electronic call monitoring system has been implemented successfully and more efficient carer rotas have been introduced. These changes will provide greater continuity of care to service users and will help to provide a greater focus on reablement. The changes have also resulted in a better work-life balance for care staff. I am pleased to say that, based on the most recent customer satisfaction survey for the last three months, 100% of services users were satisfied with the care provided by the Community Resource Team.

Staying Active

The Community Co-ordinator for our Independent Living Services has played a prominent role in supporting the development of walking football for older men and women in Cardiff as part of the Active Body, Healthy Mind scheme. The Community Coordinator herself got the bug and decided to participate in her local walking football group. They recently travelled to Marseille in France to represent Wales in the International Walking Football Federation European Championships for Women's Over 40's Teams. The team had some great wins, beating France 2-1, Sweden 1-0, and Norway 3-0, and drew 0-0 with England. The team reached the semi-finals and did both Wales and our Independent Living Services proud.

Dementia Action Week

This year, Dementia Action Week took place on 15-21 May 2023. Dementia Action Week is Alzheimer's Society's biggest and longest running awareness campaign. Each year, individuals and organisations across the UK are encouraged to 'act on dementia'.

A Dementia Friendly Cardiff Festival was held at Llanover Hall on 18 May 2023 as part of the city's Dementia Action Week activities. I thoroughly enjoyed attending the event which provided a fantastic opportunity for people with dementia and their carers to find out more about services available to them, as well as a chance to take part in some fun activities. Watercolour, creative writing, sewing taster sessions, and seated yoga were on offer for people to try. A wide range of organisations and services that support people living with dementia and their families attended the event. These included the Council's own Telecare, Meals on Wheels and Independent Living Services who were demonstrating the online support assessment website – Ask Sara. Other organisations such as Care and Repair Cardiff and Vale, South Wales Fire & Rescue Service, Alzheimer's Society, Dementia Carers Count and Age Cymru were also available to share information and advice.

The Dementia Friendly Cardiff Website has continued to provide a wonderful 'one-stop shop' of valuable information about services and support to assist people living with dementia and their families. Throughout May, Dementia Friendly Cardiff Website posters were on display in over 300 bus stops across Cardiff and featured on lamppost flags in the city centre. This marketing strategy intended to increase the number of visits to the Dementia Friendly Cardiff website and raise awareness of help available.

Cardiff Age Friendly Forum

Age Friendly Cardiff is a network of key stakeholders across the city, including representatives from third sector organisations and those organisations that are members of the Cardiff Public Services Board, who are working to drive forward the vision for Cardiff to be a great place to grow older and a place where older people are more empowered, healthy and happy. As the Council's Older Persons Champion, I have become increasingly aware of the large amount of older person's groups, associations and organisations in Cardiff, which is why I wanted to create a new forum that would bring us all together to support networking, communication, collaboration and the development of joint actions.

I was therefore delighted to chair the first meeting of the new Cardiff Age Friendly Forum that was held on 23 May 2023. Consultation and the gathering and sharing of information will be the main purposes of the Forum, with the overall aim of exploring how the lives of older people in Cardiff can be improved. The Forum will meet in-person on a quarterly basis and I was delighted to welcome key stakeholders from across the city to the first meeting, including members of older persons' groups, which took place at Central Library Hub. I was pleased to learn about some of the really great work being undertaken by South Wales Fire & Rescue Service, Age Cymru, and the Patient Experience Team at Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and to take part in a discussion to explore what we should all be doing collectively to progress our Age Friendly Cardiff agenda. If anyone is interested in attending the next meeting of the Forum at Central Library Hub on 1 August 2023 (1pm-4pm), please email agefriendly@cardiff.gov.uk

Public Toilet Strategy

A full review of Cardiff's Public Toilet Strategy took place last month, detailing the progress that has been made over the last twelve months, including the design and production of a new dementia friendly community toilet sticker; the replacement of 160 toilet seats in the Community Hubs, making them more accessible for people living with dementia, and the installation of wash and dry toilets in the Community Hubs.

The availability of toilets is key to ensuring that older people feel confident in accessing the community. I am pleased to say that the relaunching of the Community Toilet Scheme includes the development of both digital and hard copy marketing materials to raise awareness of available community toilet options. This information is now available through the Visit Cardiff website, the Great British Toilet Map and a printed Hubs and Libraries z-card detailing the array of available facilities.

Carers Week

Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges unpaid carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK. The Care'Diff team were out and about in the city during Carers Week, providing information and advice to unpaid carers. In addition to monthly support groups held within Community Hubs across Cardiff, the team attended events at Barclays Bank in the city centre and County Hall letting unpaid carers know of support available to help them with their caring role.

I'm delighted to announce that the second edition of the Care'Diff News, a quarterly newsletter containing news, events and useful information for unpaid carers in Cardiff, was published during Carers Week on 5-11 June 2023. Digital copies have been distributed widely. Printed copies will be available in GP surgeries, Hubs and libraries, day centres and other community locations across Cardiff. Additionally, copies will be sent to Council teams to distribute to customers.

Work is taking place to deliver an improved unpaid carers assessment process. An assessment is a conversation with the local authority to record the impact caring has on an unpaid carer's life and look at what support or services they may need. Work is taking place with Carers Wales to run focus groups of unpaid carers to understand the current customer experience and find out how this service can be improved. An in-person event was held on 22 June 2023 at Central Library Hub, with a digital group taking place on 27 June 2023. If any Members would like to feed into this project, the team can be contacted by email at info@carerswales.org.

Ty Canna – Mental Health Day Services

A group of service users from Ty Canna Mental Health Outreach Services have worked with Breathe Creative, a local Creativity for Wellbeing organisation, to create a series of honest, funny and sometimes irreverent animated films documenting their experience of living with mental health problems. Breathe Creative brought together a group of mental health service users with a diverse mix of talents but no previous experience in animation to embark on the ambitious project of creating a series of films to be shown on the big screen, funded by the National Lottery and The Arts Council of Wales. The project was facilitated by therapeutic arts facilitator Katja Stiller, animator Jane Hubbard and composer Jacob Meadowcroft, with support from Ty Canna.

The films explore the reality of living with mental health problems and aim to raise awareness, dispel myths and challenge the discomfort many people feel around talking about such an important issue, which will directly affect 1 in 4 people during their lifetime. The group met weekly over ten months to write their scripts, learn animation techniques and create the final films – a selection of insightful and emotive individual stories, and 'Mental Elf', a playful group piece about a misbehaving elf which challenges the audience to think about their own mental health.

I was delighted to attend the launch of the films at Chapter Arts Centre on 15 May 2023 during Mental Health Awareness Week, with around 90 other people. The films can be found on Breathe Creative's website at: <http://www.breathecreative.co.uk> Projects such as this can be life changing for people living with mental health problems by offering opportunities to engage in arts, develop new skills and express creativity – all of which are known to have a positive impact on mental health – boosting confidence, self-esteem and resilience, and reducing social isolation.

Brawd Partnership

During the launch event of the Ty Canna films, I was approached by a representative of the non-profit organisation Brawd (Welsh for brother). Brawd aims to help and support men's mental wellbeing through powerful communication and dynamic engagement. Following this initial conversation, I had the pleasure of meeting with Brawd, which led to Ty Canna and Brawd securing a new partnership. The organisation wants to tackle the stigma surrounding men's mental health and wellbeing by increasing awareness and developing a deeper understanding of the condition and I am so pleased that the Council is able to work with this organisation to help tackle such an important issue.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Fostering Update

In late April 2023, the previous Lord Mayor, Cllr Hinchey, and his consort hosted lunch at the Mansion House, which provided the opportunity for us to meet with some of our fantastic in-house foster carers who are clearly so dedicated to supporting the needs of our children who need to be looked after. The lunch gave us the chance to hear about their experiences of caring for our children and to thank them for the amazing work that they do.

Fostering Fortnight took place last month and it was great to see a calendar of events put on to cover the whole two weeks. This year's campaign focused on four workstreams – carer events, recruitment events, community adverts and social media activity. I am grateful to all those Members who took the time to meet some of the team at the Annual Meeting of Council, as well as those who popped into events in their local communities to help us promote fostering. I also had the chance to join one of the many events put on for foster carers at Forest Farm, where I spoke directly with carers about their time fostering with us and got to meet some of the children who enjoyed the sunshine exploring nature.

Visits

Members will be aware of the real efforts being put in to creating safe, welcoming homes for our children looked after and I have recently had the opportunity to visit some of our new properties. Visiting the new coach houses in Penylan and the redeveloped property in Splott, it is clear that a Council-wide effort is being put into creating homely environments as quickly as possible.

It was a pleasure to meet Keith Fraser, Chair of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB), and Keith Towler, the YJB member representing Wales, during a visit to Cardiff Youth Justice Service. The service continues on its improvement journey and continues to make incredible progress in terms of prevention and supporting children who are in the Youth Justice system.

Earlier this month I spent time with Social Workers and Social Work Assistants in the North locality during a duty session, gaining a better understanding of the work being done on a daily basis to support children, young people and their families. It was great to listen to the current challenges facing our communities and the work being done to support them to keep our children safe and at home, wherever possible. The passion, dedication and commitment of all our staff – those on the frontline and those supporting in the background – to support and protect the most vulnerable in our city.

Recognising that everyone has a part to play in improving the lives of our children and young people, it was great to visit Barnardo's, Save the Children, and the Health Board's Children's Community Services to further develop my understanding of the crucial role our Third Sector partners play.

Appointment of New Independent Chair of Cardiff Youth Justice Board

Sue Thomas has been appointed as the new Independent Chair of the Cardiff Youth Justice Board following a public appointment process was led by the Chief Executive and involved councillors, senior officers and strategic partners including the Police & Crime Commissioner and a senior representative from Cardiff & Vale University Health Board. Sue Thomas has significant experience of working in the youth justice sector over 25 years, both in Wales and nationally. She has also been lead author on national YJB guidance on governance and is very familiar with all the relevant inspection and regulatory requirements. Her depth of knowledge and personal style will suit the key leadership role of Independent Chair perfectly over the next two years, and I very much look forward to working with her.

Cardiff Family Advice & Support

Demand for the Family Gateway continues to be high with a 37% increase in the number of e-mail enquiries that have been received compared to this time last year. A number of enquiries have also been received via the webchat function, despite this not having been officially launched as yet. The launch of webchat and the new online referral form will take place early next month, with a social media publicity campaign planned to raise awareness of the new methods of contact. A separate campaign is also planned in relation to the launch of the new Disability Index registration process. The process has been simplified and digitalised and takes account of changes following the implementation of ALNet.

The Family Help Teams have seen a 43% increase in referrals received from the Family Gateway. This has led to increased waiting times for intervention which have peaked at 6 weeks for the generic teams and 12 weeks for the Disability Team.

Cardiff Parenting

Waiting times for Parents First and Parents Plus psychology-led services have now reduced to 10-13 weeks. For Parents First, this is the lowest they have been since the service started in 2018. The service is continuing to recruit to vacant posts; however, it is facing challenges with recruiting qualified staff.

Flying Start Parenting and Connecting Families has been working jointly with the Play Service to hold joint play sessions and they plan to hold more events during the summer holidays. The Flying Start Team is also offering a range of weekday and Saturday morning activities for early years families across Cardiff.

Referrals from Children's Services Pre-Birth Team have increased in recent months, possibly as part of the work to join up services through the Early Years Integration Transformation Pathfinder. As part of this regional work, funding has also been secured to provide consultations to the Vale Parenting Team.

Early Help Service

I was recently fortunate enough to pay a visit to the Early Help Service to see for myself the excellent services that the teams are delivering across the city. It was wonderful to meet the staff and it was clear to see that the staff have a strong level of knowledge and understanding of what is needed across Cardiff to support and engage with children, young people, and families. Conversations with staff gave me a real insight into the different ways they adapt to work with, support, and benefit families across the city. I ended the visit by speaking with some members of the Health Visiting Team, which was helpful in understanding more about the work that they do to ensure that families in our Flying Start areas receive the additional benefits of the programme, as well as the increasing challenges which they are facing. The work that staff undertake on a daily basis is truly appreciated, not just by me, but most importantly by the families whose lives they impact on and improve so much.

Councillors Norma Mackie & Ash Lister
Cabinet Members for Social Services (Job Share)
23 June 2023