

COUNCIL: 30 NOVEMBER 2023

SOCIAL SERVICES STATEMENT

ADULT SERVICES

National Meals on Wheels Week

It was a real pleasure to attend the Fairwater Care Hub (formerly Fairwater Day Centre) to celebrate National Meals on Wheels Week at the end of October and join the team on some deliveries that were made. During the visit, I met with the managers and staff who organise and prepare the meals for this much-needed and appreciated service. I also met the drivers who deliver the meals to people in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan who might not get a hot meal or any meal at lunchtime if this service was not provided. It was wonderful to join a member of the team on their delivery rounds and to see them welcomed warmly by each client. The service does so much more than just provide a nutritious, hot meal and dessert, with team members also checking that all is well with the clients and providing some friendly social interaction with a quick chat. I would like to thank the excellent team for the service and care that they provide.

Understanding Disability Awards

Earlier this month, the Council's Transition Day Service received an award at the Understanding Disability Awards run by the Cardiff & Vale Parents' Federation, which highlighted the service as an example of good practice. I had the pleasure of attending the awards ceremony, which was held at the Marriott Hotel in Cardiff on 16 November, where the awards were presented by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff and the Mayor of the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Transition Day Service works with young people with complex needs in their final year of school, assisting with a smooth transition into adulthood. As part of this support, the team co-produces a support plan with a young person, which captures what is important to them and what a good adult life looks like from their perspective. The service provides an opportunity for the young people to experience new opportunities, to develop independent living skills and to develop friendships. I am extremely proud of the service and delighted that staff have received this recognition.

In addition, the event saw the presentation of an award to two Cardiff taxi drivers who had been nominated by the parents of a schoolboy with complex needs who was refusing to go to school by taxi. The two drivers were given the job of driving him to/from school and went over and above what would be expected of them, visiting his home and getting to know him until he was pleased to see them and happy for them to take him to/from school. His attendance at school has vastly improved and he is now ready and waiting for the taxi to school in the mornings. Well done to them both.

Cardiff Wellbeing Support Service

The pandemic had such a negative impact on people's health and wellbeing and the effects of this can still be seen, particularly amongst older people in Cardiff; many of whom became isolated and disconnected from their communities. There is so much evidence that loneliness and isolation can be harmful to both physical and mental health and wellbeing and, therefore, I was pleased to receive an update on the work of the Cardiff and Wellbeing Support Service – the team that was set up to support people to re-engage with the community.

The team provides a mentoring service, which aims to boost health and wellbeing by working with people on a one-to-one basis and supporting them with advice, activities, events and training opportunities. It was good to see that there has been an increase in referrals to the service from various sources, including internal teams and external organisations, which I'm sure is due to the team's hard work to increase their profile.

I am delighted that the service is currently collaborating with Cardiff MIND and has been able to offer direct access to counselling and further support. Clients have also been signposted to multiple different internal teams and external organisations who are able to support them further, including the Money Advice Service, our Community Hubs, Cardiff Women's Aid, Chatterbox Befriending and Brawd. It's clear that the work of the team is really helping people to re-connect with others and take part in groups and events – some of them have even become community volunteers themselves and are now helping others to create new friendships and networks.

Older People's Commissioner for Wales Conference

I was pleased to attend the Older People's Commissioner for Wales conference, entitled 'Making Wales an Age-friendly Nation: Celebrating progress, Building on Success', which was held in Cardiff earlier this month. The event provided a great opportunity for public services from across Wales to come together, share best practice and celebrate achievements and, in my capacity as a WLGA Spokesperson on Health and Social Services, I was pleased to speak about the importance of a partnership approach to creating age-friendly communities. I also really enjoyed taking part in a discussion panel at the conference and responding to questions from older people across Wales. It was great to see how committed older people are to working together to make Wales a better place for older people to live in.

Cardiff was the first Local Authority to be accepted by the World Health Organisation to membership of their Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and our Age-Friendly Cardiff team was able to showcase at the conference the good work that has been undertaken and the progress that is being made in Cardiff. The team was also joined by Jeanette Edwards and June Bailey who volunteer to deliver activities for older people in our Community Hubs. They spoke eloquently about the positive impact that volunteering has had on their own wellbeing, as well as how it has helped all the people who take part in their wonderful Tai Chi classes. I would like to personally say a big thank you to June and Jeanette – true age-friendly community heroes!

More information about our Age-Friendly Cardiff work is available at:

www.agefriendlycardiff.co.uk

Cardiff's Age-Friendly Forum

Since its inception in May 2023, Cardiff's Age-Friendly Forum has been a great success, with attendees providing positive feedback about the impact of the meetings. The Forum is a way of bringing together key stakeholders within an age-friendly space for networking, consultation and participation. The Forum meets in-person every quarter and has an overall aim of exploring how the lives of older people in Cardiff can be improved.

I was pleased to be able to attend a meeting of the Age-Friendly Forum on 21 November, which focused on digital initiatives. The members of the Forum learnt about technology that is available to support older people, as well as hearing about an innovative inter-generational digital project. The Council's Web Team also carried out some website user testing for the Age-Friendly Cardiff, Dementia-Friendly Cardiff and Telecare websites, to ensure that these websites are easy to use for older people to find the information they want. If any older person or older person's organisation in Cardiff would like to join the Forum, then they should email: agefriendly@cardiff.gov.uk or telephone 029 2087 1055 for further details.

Chai (Tea) Club Update

In partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, Independent Living Services (ILS) have helped set up a Chai Club 50+ Coffee Morning at the India Centre in Splott. The mornings are aimed at providing engagement and support for carers and people with dementia who are part of the city's South Asian Community. The first session took place on 12 October and included a range of activities to support older people by reducing social isolation and providing them with an opportunity to meet similar people to help break down stigma about living with dementia. The group took part in Clock Cricket, a form of low-impact exercise, and enjoyed refreshments and a good catch up. The initial session was so well received that attendees asked whether the club could meet weekly, rather than monthly. As a result, the club will now run every week, with our Community Co-ordinator working with the Cardiff Volunteer Service to locate and train volunteers to support ongoing club sessions.

Chatty Cafés

ILS have also been working in partnership with the Chatty Café non-profit organisation and venues across the city to increase the number of 'Chat and Natter tables' across the city. Chat and Natter tables are a scheme run by the Chatty Café, which is aimed at reducing loneliness by providing spaces in cafés, pubs, libraries or other public venues where people can meet and chat over a drink or lunch if they are happy to do so. ILS have been engaging with venues across localities in Cardiff, providing information on the benefits of hosting Chat and Natter tables and supporting interested venues in signing up to the scheme. The service then helps to get the initial sessions started and provides support until the venue and volunteers are happy to sustain the sessions themselves. In April 2023, Cardiff only had two venues registered with the scheme; however, within the last six months, five new venues have started hosting Chat and Natter tables with support and promotion by ILS. More information about the Chatty Café, including a list of venues in Cardiff, can be found at: www.thechattycafescheme.co.uk

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Residential Update

Council will be pleased to note that Children's Services have received confirmation from Care Inspectorate Wales of the registration of two new children's homes in the city. This demonstrates fantastic progress with the implementation of the Accommodation Strategy and reflects the hard work and dedication of the officers within the Directorate. The homes will provide one registered bed each and will allow opportunities for more children who require residential accommodation to remain closer to home in Cardiff. I look forward to providing you with further updates as the implementation of the Accommodation Strategy progresses.

Visit to Home-Start Cymru

To provide the best possible services and opportunities for children, young people and families, it is important that the Council works together with partners in other organisations, particularly the third sector. A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of meeting families and volunteers involved with Home-Start Cymru and to hear directly from them about how the programmes they are involved in have changed their lives. The families were able to tell me how, in such a short space of time, their volunteers had been able to help them move forward with several aspects of their lives – whether supporting them in the home or helping their family to access new opportunities. In just a few hours, it was clear to me how much of an impact that Home-Start is having on families in our communities, and I would encourage Members to find out more about their work and to encourage others to volunteer their time. More information is available on their website at: <https://www.home-start.org.uk/pages/category/home-start-wales>

Cardiff Parenting

In recognition of the importance of offering apprenticeship and training opportunities in response to ongoing recruitment pressures, I am pleased to advise Members that Cardiff Parenting will be creating some new apprentice posts within their crèche team. The team has struggled to recruit to vacant crèche assistant posts due to a shortage in Level 2/Level 3 qualified applicants, which is a requirement of Care Inspectorate Wales. The Council's crèche assistants are vital to the success of parenting groups within Flying Start and the Cardiff-wide Parenting Service. This proposal will support the Council to 'grow our own' qualified staff, offering successful applicants a quality experience, mentoring and the resources they require to gain the desired qualification. Hopefully, this will enable the apprentices to then apply for permanent posts within the service and support their career progression.

Flying Start

Members may like to know that there has been a focus on improving levels of attendance within Flying Start childcare this academic year. Officers have supported Flying Start childcare providers to ensure that they are recording attendance accurately. Conversations are taking place with families about the benefits of good attendance for their child. Officers have also supported providers to develop their ability to challenge parents/carers about planned absences that do not seem appropriate. Examples could include children not attending childcare due to non-urgent appointments, such as haircuts.

Officers have implemented a social media project with a focus on the positive impact that good attendance has on child development. As a result, there has been an improvement in attendance. Last term, the team recorded overall attendance as 78%. This was a significant improvement on the same period from the previous year. The work that the team has done has been recognised and praised by Welsh Government officials, who have said that this is one of the highest attendance rates across Wales and they have asked the team to share their good practice with other local authorities.

Staff Engagement Event

Last month, I was able to drop in on one of the Children's Services staff engagement events, where I heard about developments within the Directorate and the progress that is being made to improve the offer for children and families in Cardiff. It's always a pleasure to hear directly from staff across the Directorate and to extend the thanks of Members for the work they do day in, day out in supporting our communities.

Llamau Impact Event

Councillor Mackie and I recently attended an Impact Event held by Llamau, which highlighted the work they do right across Wales to support children, young people and families who are on the verge of, or experiencing, homelessness and/or domestic violence. The event provided a true showcase of the impact that Llamau has and we heard directly from young people who have benefited from their services, as well as survivors of domestic abuse and Llamau staff who shared testimonies from families they have supported. The event focused on the importance of early intervention and prevention, and we would encourage Members to find out more about how they can support the work that Llamau does across the city. More information is available on their website at: <https://www.llamau.org.uk/>

Action For Children's Review into Child Criminal Exploitation

For a number of years, the Council has been working with Action for Children to support young people at risk of criminal exploitation, through a multi-disciplinary approach which focuses on building young people's resilience and avoiding factors which make them vulnerable. Earlier this month, I attended an evidence-giving session that was chaired by Professor Alexis Jay OBE who led the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales. I spoke about the improved partnership and information-sharing arrangements between the Council and other organisations which help to safeguard vulnerable young people. The session also gave me the opportunity to explain how the Council uses the information to support young people and their families, working with partners to offer the right support at the right time.

Fostering Update

Our Fostering team continues to focus on ensuring that children and young people receive the best possible support, through various schemes including Teen Scheme. One young person in a Teen Scheme placement recently won an award in their new school for pupil of the week for 'outstanding effort and learning behaviours'. They have thrown themselves into school life and after school clubs, and are evidently very much enjoying school.

The team also received positive feedback from a provider about the progress one young person has made since being accommodated with them. When they first moved in, they often didn't leave their room, would sleep all day and had little engagement with staff or other residents. They are now regularly preparing their own meals, completing daily household chores and have made friends with other residents. They are a sensible, funny and intelligent young person and they are respectful and mindful of others. In addition, they often help members of the public when they see them struggling, such as assisting elderly people on and off the bus.

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Visits

In the last few weeks, members of the Council's Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee have been attending various Children's Services sites, including the Youth Justice Service and Ty Storrie, the Council's overnight short break provision for children with disabilities and complex needs. The committee members were extremely grateful for the warm welcome they received. They were inspired by the care and support that staff provide to the children and families who are reliant on Ty Storrie and also noted the strong evidence of a committed and enthusiastic Youth Justice staff team working well together.

National Safeguarding Week

This year's National Safeguarding Week was held during the week commencing 13 November. The theme for this year was 'Exploitation' and there was a full programme of events to share information, learning and best practice. These included updates in relation to "Human Trafficking and Safer Travel", "Gangs, County Lines and Serious Youth Violence" and "Welsh Women's Aid and Safer Wales". The week culminated in a Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding Board Conference that was opened by the Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan MS.

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