

**COUNCIL: 25 JANUARY 2024**

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## **SOCIAL SERVICES STATEMENT**

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### **ADULT SERVICES**

#### **Hospital Discharges**

Over the Christmas period, the Hospital Discharge Teams worked tirelessly in collaboration with Health colleagues to ensure that a large number of discharges could be achieved to minimise pressures on the hospital. As a result, an unprecedented 106 discharges with care were facilitated over the festive period. This was achieved by the hard work and dedication of a number of teams, including the Integrated Discharge Team, Social Work Team, Community Resource Team, Community Occupational Therapists, and the First Point of Contact Team (Pink Army). I would like to thank all the teams involved for their continued hard work and effort during the winter months in enabling citizens to continue their support in the comfort of their own homes.

#### **Supporting Vulnerable Citizens in Winter**

In collaboration with the Money Advice Team, the Independent Living Service applied for a grant from the National Grid's Community Matters Fund to assist vulnerable residents in staying warm this winter through the provision of winter warm packs. A grant award of £9,975 has been secured and over 600 winter warm packs, including draft excluders, electric blankets, fleeced jumpers, and children's thermal clothing, have been received. The packs will be distributed to those in need at local Community Hubs or by Independent Living Services during home visits. All recipients will also be provided with information and guidance on tackling fuel poverty. To qualify for one of these packs, individuals or families simply need to let the service know that they are facing challenges with fuel poverty by emailing: [ILSgateway@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:ILSgateway@cardiff.gov.uk).

#### **Working Towards a Neurodiverse Friendly City**

Around 1-in-7 people in the UK are neurodivergent, meaning that they experience the world more uniquely than others. In Cardiff, there are 1,370 autistic children and young people aged 0-17. There are also 3,201 autistic people aged 18+ in Cardiff, but it's important to note that not all autistic people will have been diagnosed. I am very aware that the number of people aged 18-64 with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is expected to increase by 13% between 2017-35. Furthermore, autism is just one condition within the wide umbrella of neurodiversity, which also includes Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia, for example. People with neurodivergent traits and conditions face a range of challenges across society, including finding employment, increased likelihood of mental health diagnoses, and experience trouble in accessing public services.

Members will be aware that the Council agreed a motion in September 2023, which committed to removing the barriers that prevent those with neurodivergent traits and conditions from participating in society and to working across the city to make Cardiff more neurodiversity friendly. I was therefore pleased to join the Leader of the Council in attending a meeting of the Cardiff Public Services Board on 10 January, which received a presentation on a proposal for Cardiff to develop a city-wide approach and commitment to becoming a Neurodiverse Friendly City. The PSB agreed that public service and third sector partners will join the Council in working towards becoming a Neurodiverse Friendly City and increasing awareness and empathy towards people with neurodiversity across the city. This will include the development of a city-wide Neurodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. As an initial step, a mapping exercise will be undertaken over coming months to compile details of the existing action plans, strategies and initiatives of key stakeholders and partners within Cardiff.

### **Unpaid Carers Assembly**

I was very happy to be asked to participate in the first Cardiff and Vale Unpaid Carers Assembly which took place at the end of last year in Sophia Gardens. Unpaid carers play a critical role in the community, providing essential care to adults or disabled children who are unable to manage without assistance. I am very aware that caring can come with significant challenges, many carers find that their friendships and relationships are impacted, with less time to spend with family and friends. This can lead to loneliness and isolation, with carers feeling unsupported and undervalued so it's very important that every opportunity is taken to work together to make their voices heard. It was so inspiring to be part of the Assembly event which had been organised by the unpaid carer representatives who attend the Regional Partnership Board's Unpaid Carer Board. It was moving to hear about some of the caring journeys of the people who attended the event which reinforced my commitment to working towards improving services and making Cardiff a place where unpaid carers are supported and valued. It was wonderful event and I was glad to be a part of it.

### **Carers Card UK**

Unpaid carers in Cardiff can obtain a Carers Card, which can provide them with access to a range of support tools. Carers Card UK wants every unpaid carer in the UK to be recognised, supported and rewarded for the work they do and role they play. In line with this aim, they have developed a Carers Card that provides access to tools, support services, and discounts on goods and services. The Carers Card also includes emergency contact details for carers and gives access to a Carer Circle tool, an app that helps organise care by adding notes, tasks, appointments, and medication lists. There is normally a cost to unpaid carers for securing this card but, in a fantastic development, the unpaid carer representatives of the Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board have negotiated two years free membership to the Carers Card UK digital ID card for unpaid carers in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. Unpaid carers can download the Carers Card at: <https://www.carerscarduk.co.uk/digital-only-card/promocode/CVFREE> by clicking on the "Buy your card" link and then completing the form to download the free Carers Card UK app from the appropriate app store. Anyone who needs help to get set up can contact the Council's Digital Inclusion Team by phoning 029 2087 1071 or emailing: [digitalsupport@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:digitalsupport@cardiff.gov.uk) Alternatively, people can drop in to one of the team's digital support sessions, details of which can be found at: [www.adultlearningcardiff.gov.uk/digital-support](http://www.adultlearningcardiff.gov.uk/digital-support)

## **Website User Testing**

The most recent Age-Friendly Cardiff Forum meeting welcomed the Council's Web Team to carry out website user testing on a number of council websites, including the Telecare and Meals on Wheels, Dementia Friendly Cardiff, and Age-Friendly Cardiff websites. The session took place at Central Library Hub and was attended by a range of older people and partner organisations. The aim was for the Web Team to liaise with the attendees to compile a list of issues, suggestions and feedback relating to content, design and user experience. One of the highlights of the event was the brilliant feedback received regarding the usability of the Dementia Friendly Cardiff website, with attendees commenting that the website was "easy to navigate", had "simple language" and a "friendly feel". There were also some very positive responses to the Age-Friendly Cardiff website, including comments that the language is "user-friendly" and the "look of the website is bright and inviting", as well as some really valuable and constructive suggestions for improvements. The Web Team will be starting to action the identified improvements suggested by the group in the coming months and the changes will be fed back to the Age-Friendly Forum. I'm very much looking forward to seeing the results of this work.

## **Fairwater Care Hub Christmas Party**

I was pleased to attend the Christmas Party at Fairwater Care Hub and it was lovely to be part of such a festive and joyful occasion. The staff had put on a fantastic Christmas Dinner for the service users, and I have to say I really enjoyed it too. It's so clear what a difference the team is having on the wellbeing of people who visit the Care Hub, and it was heartwarming to see service users taking part in carol singing and a snowball fight and really enjoying themselves!

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

### **Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements**

I would like to place on record my thanks to all the staff who have played a part in the recent joint inspection of child protection arrangements, alongside our colleagues in education, health and South Wales Police. A huge amount of effort went into preparing for the inspection, which provided the team with the opportunity to showcase the work that takes place. It was a pleasure to join the Directors of Social Services and Children's Services in thanking staff at the end of the inspection, and I hope Members across the Chamber will join me in paying tribute to the fantastic work of our teams once again. Once we receive the final report, which will acknowledge areas of good practice, alongside informing learning and development, I will ensure that Members are able to access the findings.

### **Bright Sparks Awards**

In December 2023, the annual Bright Sparks Awards were celebrated at a wonderful event held at County Hall. The ceremony recognised the achievements of more than 150 care-experienced children and young people. The event has now been running for 18 years and recognises carers, parents, staff, agencies, organisations, and services that have shown support for Children Looked After or care leavers throughout the past year.

I had the honour of attending the awards alongside the Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Education. Awards were presented for sporting achievement, musical achievement, kindness and care, volunteering, as well as Carer of the Year and School of the Year. It was a fantastic evening, organised in conjunction with the Bright Sparks group themselves, who were heavily involved in the planning of the event. Former Wales rugby captain, Sam Warburton, and Welsh international rugby players, Taulupe Faletau and Louis Rees-Zammit, sent special video messages congratulating the group on their achievements, which were shown during the evening.

### **Cooking and Nutrition for Young People**

A member of staff has qualified to teach an NHS nutrition course called 'Get Cooking' that teaches basic cooking and nutrition to young people. Two young people have also recently passed the course and achieved the qualification. This is a particularly impressive achievement as the young people did not speak English as their first language, so interpreters were used to help them to complete the written work.

### **Christmas Campaigns**

Once again last year, a small number of staff from Children's Services worked tirelessly in their own time to run the annual Christmas present campaign. Thanks to our regular partner, the Mr X Organisation, a huge number of gifts were collected for children of all ages. Though not able to fully participate in last year's campaign, it was a pleasure for me to catch up with the team and offer my thanks for all their hard work, as they both packed the gifts and handed them out to Social Workers. The generosity is heartwarming and I hope that this helped the families involved to have a very special Christmas.

It was also a pleasure to visit the St Mellon's Family Centre to help unpack some of the collected gifts, but also to meet staff from across the East Locality, hearing about the fantastic work they do with children and families. Whilst there, I was also able to judge the Christmas decoration competition – a truly difficult challenge after all the effort put in by staff and some of the children they work with.

Every year, staff and young people from the Youth Justice Service come together to create Christmas wreaths to sell and make money for charitable causes. This has been an ongoing tradition for 15 years. Over the years, the money raised has gone to many different causes, but for the last three years the money has been put towards Christmas gifts for Children Looked After. After a week of hard work, the wreaths were all made and sold very well raising £735, which is a new record. This money meant more than 200 presents could be bought, so lots of children had presents to open on Christmas morning.

Finally, I would like to thank staff in our Intake and Assessment Team who delivered frozen Christmas dinners to families in the build up to Christmas to ensure that they were able to have a Christmas lunch on Christmas Day.

## **Accommodation Strategy Update**

It has been a year since the Children's Services Accommodation Strategy was presented to Cabinet and I am pleased to update Members on the excellent progress that has been made to date:

- Three properties (two one-bed properties and one two-bed) have been registered by Care Inspectorate Wales.
- A further one-bed property is in the final stages of registration.
- A property has been identified on the open market which is being rented while the purchase progresses. The property comprises five individual residences and is being used to alleviate the issue of the numbers of children in placements which are operating without registration.
- Arrangements have been made for work to commence on two new three-bed properties which have been purchased – one is due to start shortly, and the other is working towards completion of works in the coming months.
- A further two four-bed properties have been acquired and works are due to commence shortly.

I look forward to providing you with further updates as the implementation of the Accommodation Strategy progresses.

**Councillors Norma Mackie & Ash Lister**  
**Cabinet Members for Social Services (Job Share)**  
**19 January 2024**