

COUNCIL: 28 MARCH 2024

SOCIAL SERVICES STATEMENT

ADULT SERVICES

Neurodivergent Friendly Cardiff Awareness Day

I was delighted to chair our Neurodivergent Friendly Cardiff Awareness Day at the Cardiff City Stadium on 19 March, which was opened by the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Minister for Social Services. The event was held as part of Neurodiversity Celebration Week and followed the motion, proposed by Councillor Jamie Green and seconded by Councillor Sara Robinson, which was agreed unanimously by Council in September 2023 and has been a catalyst for our work to make Cardiff a more neurodivergent-friendly city, supported by the development of a new city-wide strategy.

I would like to thank everyone who attended our first Neurodivergent Friendly Cardiff event, including my Cabinet colleagues, Councillors Merry and Lister, and so many other stakeholders. It was really pleasing to see so many fellow councillors, senior managers, public service partners, health and social care staff, HR professionals and the most important stakeholders of all, neurodivergent people themselves to enjoy a packed programme.

The programme for the day included contributions from Councillor Sara Robinson, council officers, BBC broadcaster Eleri Morgan, Dr Catherine Jones from the Wales Autism Research Centre, and Professor Amanda Kirby who is an internationally renowned authority in the field of neurodiversity, together with a mix of other excellent speakers who provided us with a full day that was very informative, entertaining and kept most people there until the very end. Focus groups took place throughout the day, which explored what a Neurodivergent Friendly Cardiff should look like. The event also hosted around 30 information stalls from a variety of internal and external service providers who were on hand to provide information and guidance on a range of topics.

This work is vital as we know that 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. Cardiff Council and our Public Services Board partners have committed to working towards the removal of barriers that prevent those with neurodivergent traits and conditions from participating in society and to work across the city to make Cardiff neurodivergent-friendly. If anyone would like more information, please email: neurodivergentfriendly@cardiff.gov.uk

Neurodivergent Employee Network

In spring 2023, a group of council employees who identify as neurodivergent worked with colleagues in HR to establish a Neurodivergent (ND) Steering Group (planning group) as part of the Council's Disability Network. The ND Steering Group went on to set up a Neurodivergent Employee Network meeting (peer support group) on Microsoft Teams for neurodivergent council staff, which was attended by around 30 employees. Many members of staff from the Adults, Housing & Communities Directorate were instrumental in taking this new Neurodivergent Employee Network forward and I am pleased that there was such a strong turnout at their first meeting, signalling a positive interest in and need for such a community within the organisation. The network is a place where neurodivergent staff can feel accepted, valued and understood, and as awareness of the network grows, it is anticipated that attendance will continue to increase.

Social Work Week

Social Work Week was held on 18-22 March 2024 and included World Social Work Day on 19 March. It provides an important opportunity to celebrate social work by bringing together everyone with an interest in social work, including practising social workers and those looking to return to the profession; social work students and educators; people with lived experience of social work; employers of social workers; the wider social care workforce; and officials from national and local governments, government agencies, regulators and other partner organisations.

I was delighted to attend and speak at a Social Work Week celebration event that was held at Whitchurch Rugby Club on 22 March, which paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of social care workers in Cardiff. I have been fortunate enough to have spent time visiting different service areas and attending various events this year, and have been hugely impressed by the commitment, patience and resilience of our social workers and wider teams. It has been a real pleasure for me to be able to spend time with members of staff and service users, and to see first-hand the positive impact that the work of our social care staff has on the whole community and the real difference that they make to improving the lives of the people of Cardiff.

Carer's Leave Act 2023

I am aware of the thousands of people living in Cardiff who are helping others to stay independent within the community. These unpaid carers really do play a vital role in our society. It is estimated that there are currently 10.6 million unpaid carers in the UK. Many older people are supported by unpaid carers and 1 in 5 people aged 65+ are unpaid carers themselves. It's so important that we take every opportunity to support and value unpaid carers who often find it difficult to find time to look after their own needs.

I would like to raise awareness of the Carer's Leave Act 2023, which will come in to force as UK law on 6 April 2024. This legislation will provide the right for all unpaid carers in employment to take up to one week's unpaid leave per year. The Act will provide employees with a statutory right to this unpaid leave to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. Importantly, employees taking Carer's Leave will have the same employment protections as associated with other forms of

family related leave (i.e. Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Parental Bereavement, Shared Parental and Parental Leave). This includes protection from dismissal or detriment as a result of having taken the leave.

We want to make sure that unpaid carers in Cardiff find out about the new Carer's Leave Act and what it means to them. The information will be shared out widely through our Age Friendly and Ageing Well partners and via digital channels. Further information can be obtained by emailing: CareDiff@cardiff.gov.uk

Lasting Power of Attorney

The Council has been working to support the Office of the Public Guardian to raise awareness of the importance of entering into a lasting power of attorney.

The Office of the Public Guardian is responsible for registering lasting powers of attorney and, once in place, the people you trust can quickly and easily step in when needed. This is such an important matter because a lasting power of attorney gives people a voice and protects their wishes into the future. Many people think that their partner or close family member can make decisions for them if they are not able to, but this is not the case. This legal document makes it easier for trusted individuals to provide support when it is needed most. This could be temporary help to manage finances during a short hospital stay, or for longer-term decisions about health and care.

Work has taken place to share the information as widely as possible using the Age Friendly Cardiff and Care'Diff newsletters, social media and digital screens within the Community Hubs. More information about lasting powers of attorney can be found at: <https://powerofattorney.campaign.gov.uk>

Ageism Action Day

As Cardiff's Older Person's champion, I am always hearing examples of ageism. Older people are often thought of as less capable or interesting and I want to ensure that we change the way we think we think about ageing. I'm so pleased that we were able to get involved in the Centre for Ageing Better's annual Ageism Action Day on 20 March 2024. The day provided a chance for everyone to do something to change the narrative about age and ageism. It's an annual day for individuals and communities, workplaces, friends and families to learn, take action and improve lives.

Our Independent Living Services hosted a celebration of Ageism Action Day at the Reflect Community Church at Grand Avenue in Ely. The inter-generational day of physical activities, music, singing and a quiz brought together older members of the community with pupils from Windsor Clive Primary School. Events also took place throughout the city, including 'Vintage not Vanished', which was organised by Splott Community Volunteers. Volunteers hosted a photography exhibition in their facility at the rear of the former STAR Centre in Splott.

Age Friendly Cardiff has worked with the Centre for Ageing Better to produce Welsh language versions of the workplace activity pack which was designed to help organisations spread the message that we can all Age Without Limits. This includes the age-positive image library, which showcases the huge diversity that exists in ageing and is available for anyone to use free of charge if they are producing work with images of older people. It also includes information on the harms that ageism causes, quizzes and activity ideas. The pack was distributed to the Age Friendly Leads across the 22 Welsh Local Authorities and partners within Cardiff's Age Friendly Network.

Community Resource Team (Homecare)

As part of the Council's commitment to supporting avoidable admissions to hospital and increasing patient flow, processes have been developed for the Emergency Unit at the University Hospital of Wales to refer citizens directly to the Council's Community Resource Team (Homecare). This partnership working has enabled hospital-based therapists to refer directly into the Community Resource Team (CRT). The Home Care Manager on duty will then triage the referral within 1 hour and carry out an assessment of the citizens care needs in their own home the same or next day, ensuring that the right support is available at home so hospital admission can be avoided. Since January 2024, the CRT has been able to support 27 patients who meet the criteria through this process, which has meant that citizens who attend A&E are either able to have reduced stays in hospital, as CRT homecare assessments can be completed sooner, or have avoided being admitted to wards all together. This process has a positive impact in supporting better patient flow in hospitals and ensures citizens avoid unnecessary stays in hospital and receive all the support they require in their own home.

Social Isolation and Loneliness

Social isolation and loneliness have been linked to an increased risk of heart disease and stroke; Type 2 diabetes; depression and anxiety; and Dementia. Engaging in mental wellbeing or social activities can help to build up the brain's ability to cope with disease and relieve stress. Interacting with other people and taking part in activities within the community can have such a positive effect on people's health. This could be an adult education class, a sports group, a lunch club or even a peer support group such as a Men's Mental Health Group.

Dewis Cymru is the health and wellbeing directory and information website which provides a single point of access to local and national services. Dewis supports people to be safe, social, and live well by signposting to services such as financial advice, care services, housing support, children's activities, health and third sector organisations. I am pleased to say that a Cardiff-specific post has also been recruited recently to focus on improving the information available on DEWIS Cymru and expanding its reach by making more people aware of this vital resource. Further details of activities, groups or services that can help people to connect with others and improve their own wellbeing can be found on the DEWIS Cymru website at: www.dewis.wales or by emailing: DewisCymru@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Section 16 Forum

Section 16(1) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 imposes a duty on local authorities to promote how social enterprises, co-operative organisations, co-operative arrangements and the third sector provide care, support and preventative services in their area.

To support this duty, planning and engagement work has been undertaken by officers from the Council's Adult, Housing & Communities Directorate, in conjunction with colleagues from Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and Cardiff Third Sector Council (C3SC), to develop a new forum to encourage a wider range of providers, including social enterprises, co-operatives, user led services and the third sector, into the adult social care market. The new 'Section 16 Forum' will support social enterprises, co-operatives, user-led services or other third sector organisations to offer care, support and preventative services. The Forum will also provide an opportunity for service providers, service users and unpaid carers to engage in conversations around the design and delivery of social care services in Cardiff, supporting co-production in the development of these important services. The Forum will help both the service and potential providers to understand the challenges and opportunities for the care sector in Cardiff, with the aim of providing more diverse and person centred services. I am excited to see the work that the Forum will deliver as it grows.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements

Members will be aware that the Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements took place in January 2024; I want to once again thank all those staff involved in the preparation and duration of the inspection. The Council has now received the draft report and will be responding with any comments in the coming weeks. The informal feedback from the Inspection team identified areas of good practice, as well as some areas for further development. I am pleased that the inspection recognised the robust leadership and governance arrangements in place in both Children's Services and corporately across the Council, with no further areas for development being identified. Across the partnership, an action plan is being developed in response to the draft recommendations and I will share further information with Members once we receive the final report.

Fostering Update

Foster Wales Cardiff has joined the new campaign, 'Bring something to the table,' utilising their greatest asset – current foster carers – to share realistic experiences of foster care and explore the small but significant human qualities that people possess, which can make the world of difference to a young person in care. Foster Wales has spoken to more than 100 people to develop the campaign, including foster carers, social workers, teachers, members of the public, and care leavers. With this knowledge, Foster Wales has drawn on real stories of carers in Wales to show that fostering with your local council is flexible, inclusive, and comes with extensive training, professional development opportunities, and generous fees and allowances.

I am grateful for the support Members give to our fostering campaigns and would urge them to spread the word so that more amazing people come forward who are interested in making a difference to a child or young person's life, knowing that they can bring their skills and experience to the table.

Accommodation Strategy Update

Following on from the update I provided in January 2024, I am pleased to share further progress with the implementation of our Accommodation Strategy. Another one of our new provisions has been registered and is now operating as an in-house residential home with one bed for children with disabilities. Applications have been submitted to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) for the registration of 5 further homes, with the first visit by CIW scheduled to take place this month. Once again, a huge thank you to all those officers in Children's Services and other Council directorates for the tremendous amount of effort they continue to invest in our strategy.

Cardiff Youth Justice Service

The Youth Justice Service has recently provided a series of weapons awareness sessions for young people aged 10-17 who have been identified as either being involved in, or at risk of, involvement in weapon related incidents. The staff who facilitated the sessions did a great job of engaging effectively with the young people who attended.

Cardiff Parenting

I am really pleased to announce that as part of Welsh Government's Parenting Give it Time Campaign, officers from the Cardiff Parenting Team have written "The Little Book of Feelings". This book is for parents to read to children and introduces a way to talk with young children about emotions, how to identify and respond to them. A bilingual copy has been distributed to every Cardiff library and plans are in place to distribute a copy to every Flying Start childcare setting and local authority nursery class in Cardiff.

Birth Registration Folder

Cardiff Early Help have designed a birth certificate folder that celebrates Cardiff as the UK's first UNICEF Child Friendly City and CEDAW (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination) city. From next month, the folders will be gifted by birth registrars to parents when registering their child's birth for them to take home and protect the baby's birth certificate. The folder contains information and contact details for services in Cardiff, including Cardiff Parenting, Cardiff Family Advice and Support, Childcare, School Admissions, Money Advice Team, Into Work Advice Service and many other services that support a happy and healthy family life.

Early Years Integration & Transformation Pathfinder

At the end of January, professionals from a range of services across the region came to together to complete The Early Integration Foundation (EIF) Maternity and Early Years Maturity Matrix, which was developed to support local areas to take a system-wide approach to improving outcomes for children and families.

The original baseline Matrix review took place in 2021 and the event provided an opportunity for professionals to revisit the Matrix to determine the current position for families with children from pre-birth to age 7 years. A total of 123 professionals from Health, Childrens Services, Education, Schools, Childcare providers, Workforce Development, Early Help, Childrens Library Services and Flying Start practitioners enjoyed a stimulating day of reflection and learning whilst revisiting the Matrix. Attendees rated the regions current systems for Early Years from Basic to Mature. The information from the day will be used to determine the progress made since 2021 and to identify priorities to ensure that a collaborative approach across the region is undertaken to improve outcomes for children and families.

I joined the Cabinet Member for Social Care & Health from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Councillor Eddie Williams, in supporting the event where we heard from practitioners on the ground and those in more strategic roles. We also heard from Millie Boswell Nest/Nyth Implementation Advisor/Lead, with NEST updates and Liz Gregory regarding her lead role in the Parent Infant Foundation and the critical importance of the first 1000 days. It was a pleasure to hear a wide range of knowledge from professionals from a range of different services, once again seeing the level of passion that exists in this sector.

Workforce Development & Accredited Centre

Following the award of the Training and Support Grant in November 2022, I am pleased that the Council's Early Help Workforce Development & Accredited Centre Team has been able to provide additional support to the childcare sector by:

- Funding childminder pre-registration qualifications through Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) Cymru for the next 12 months for Cardiff residents.
- Funding Level 2 Playwork Practice and Level 3 Transition to Playwork courses for Cardiff residents through Clybiau Plant Cymru.
- Ensuring all courses running between January to April 2024 are offered on a fully funded basis for all Cardiff settings. To date, 728 bookings have been received for these courses, and 228 attendees have attended the courses to date.
- Launching a grants programme, which allows childcare settings to claim up to £400 for any training that they have procured privately during the 2023/24 financial year. Applications have now closed and the team has processed a total of £17,700 in grants to the childcare sector.

The team's hard work has had a really positive impact on the childcare sector in Cardiff, which is great to see.

Health Visiting

It was a pleasure to meet once again with a range of health visitors who work alongside our Early Help and Flying Start teams to support babies, children, and families in a child's development. Throughout the afternoon I had the opportunity to hear first-hand from health visitors about the work they do – from supporting infant feeding and promoting nutrition, to working through housing issues and the complex challenges of domestic abuse. The team shared stories with me about the positive impact their work

has on babies, children, and families, but also the continuing challenges across the city and those faced by the health visiting profession.

I am keen to ensure that across all services that engage with babies, children, young people, and families, continue to work together as regularly and efficiently as possible, to collectively achieve the best possible outcomes for our future generations.

Councillors Norma Mackie & Ash Lister
Cabinet Members for Social Services (Job Share)
22 March 2024