

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	7 th September 2020
Report Author	Lisa Curtis Jones
Service Area	Social Services
Committee Date	15 th September 2020

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Coronavirus Pandemic - Update on Recovery and Activity

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Coronavirus (COVID 19) has had a devastating impact on many peoples' lives in Wales. The lockdown period and the requirements for self-isolation and shielding have had a serious impact on well-being and quality of life in local communities.
- 1.2 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, along with partners from other public bodies; and third and independent sectors, are continuing to provide a targeted front-line response to the constantly changing situation that the coronavirus pandemic presents. Working within guidance provided by the Welsh Government the Council continues to deliver core services with a shared commitment to work in partnership.
- 1.3 Following announcement of the UK moving into a state of lockdown on 20th March 2020; the Council has worked closely within communities to provide targeted support to those in need; and to sustain services where possible; working in different ways to meet emerging and existing need.
- 1.4 The virus has not altered Social Services duties to vulnerable children, although Children's Services have been required to make a range of adjustments in line with Stay At Home Rules. Managers and staff have worked closely together to look at ways in which we can ensure we discharge our duties to the public, whilst promoting both public and staff safety. However, due to the nature of requirements of delivering direct care to the most vulnerable people we support Adult Services were not in the position to advise staff to remain at home. In order to maintain the safety of the workforce and the people that are supported there was a need to revise working practices in line with guidance issued by Public Health Wales.

1.5 This report will offer Scrutiny Committee Members a holistic overview of the distance travelled from where we were pre-pandemic to where we are now. It will highlight the key changes the Council has gone through. The report will outline how lessons learned has led the organisation to change the way in which it works; and lay out what the next steps will be both in the short and long-term.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 Members are asked to review and note its content and consider future plans to support the Social Services recovery across the County Borough.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 On 23rd March 2020 the Prime Minister and First Minister made announcements outlining the Stay At Home Rules which increased the emphasis on working from home and social distancing in a bid to stop the spread of coronavirus¹. (Please see Appendix A for a brief timeline of the Government announcements.)

3.2 The link between deprivation and people having a significant negative impact from coronavirus has been greatly researched². It has been identified that people in deprived areas are at higher risk of exposure to Covid-19 due to a number of factors such as: people on low incomes are more likely to work in jobs that put them at greater risk of exposure to the coronavirus; people in deprived areas are more likely to have long-term health condition and be at greater risk of suffering severe symptoms from the virus if exposed; and over cramped or poor housing conditions. The impact of coronavirus on communities has been huge; with all areas of local government being affected by the need to meet new and emerging needs exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. Every aspect of Council activity has been impacted by the lockdown.

3.3 This report will outline the actions taken in the various assessment and care settings within Children's Services and Adult Social Care Services. It will demonstrate how the service areas managed by the Chief Officer of Social Services were able to deliver key services over the past several months, whilst also meeting unscheduled need that emerged within communities across Merthyr Tydfil as a result of the lockdown. In addition to this, it will identify lessons learned and future plans currently under development for the recovery and resilience of the services.

3.4 Members are asked to review and note its content and consider future plans to support the Social Services recovery across the County Borough.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>

²

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19roundup/2020-03-26>

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

Children's Services

- 4.1 The pandemic has not altered our duties to vulnerable children, although Children's Services have been required to make a range of adjustments in line with Stay At Home Rules and changing measures in place. Throughout the pandemic we have always operated a system that has needed to include face to face contact. Managers and staff have worked closely together to look at ways in which we can ensure we discharge our duties to the public, whilst promoting both public and staff safety.
- 4.2 When the Stay At Home Rules were announced, Children's Services Management Team (CSMT) developed the following in response to corporate direction and in pursuit of maintaining essential statutory services:
- CSMT daily dial in to note new information about staff capacity in the service, agree, prioritise, manage risks and share information.
 - Held staff briefings prior to 23.3.20 to support, inform and involve staff.
 - Consultation with foster carers.
 - Develop 1-minute Guides for staff in relation to:
 - Telephone Triage and PPE
 - CP Conferences and Core Group Meetings
 - Keeping in touch with CLA and Contact
 - Working from Home
 - Contribute to Silver and Bronze command to coordinate work with partners in relation to safeguarding children.
 - Develop and distribute resource packs for CLA, foster carers and families with care and support plans.
 - Develop a process for providing urgent support to families where a parent requires in-patient treatment.
 - Maintained Resource Panel on a weekly basis to ensure families and staff can access the resources required to support families.
 - RAG rated cases and dip samples at week 4 to provide independent assurance that children and families are being seen appropriately.
 - CMT agreed the Outline Business Case for additional resources including social worker, support workers and foster care placements for cases where a parent or parents are in hospital.
 - Worked to ensure that staff had the necessary IT equipment to work from home.

Since this time Children's Services Management Team have made the necessary changes in line with advice and guidance from the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales.

- 4.3 Table 1 below provides a summary of our continuing services to the public during the pandemic:

Table 1

Early Help Hub	Business as usual - operating by phone, video call and IT. Staff will be operating a mixed system of working from home and being office based to ensure essential duties are covered.
Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub	Business as usual - staff will be operating a mixed system of working and being home based to ensure essential duties are covered.
Intake	Initially cases were assessed and RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated.

	<p>A duty system was in operation with other staff working from home.</p> <p>The Team have now adapted to a new way of working. A Business as usual model with a mixed model of office working and working from home is in place. Work is being carried out by telephone and video call. Visits in line with Telephone Triage 1 Minute Guide which outlines the assessment process to inform decision about whether PPE should be used.</p>
Supporting Change	<p>Manager and consultant social worker are coordinating essential work with families wherever possible. Work is being carried out by telephone and video call with visits in line with Telephone Triage 1 Minute Guide.</p> <p>Initially a number of the staff group were working across the service to cover business. However, as we have adapted to a new way of working the team have been able to increasingly undertake their core business, operating a mixed model of home and centre based working.</p> <p>Contact is in line with the Interim 1 Minute Guide.</p>
Children With Disabilities Team	<p>Cases have been assessed and RAG rated. The Team have now adapted to a new way of working. A Business as usual model with a mixed model of office working and working from home is in place. Work is being carried out by telephone and video call. Visits in line with Telephone Triage 1 Minute Guide.</p>
Child and Family Support Team	<p>Cases have been assessed and RAG rated. A duty system is in operation with other staff working from home. The Team have now adapted to a new way of working. A Business as usual model with a mixed model of office working and working from home is in place. Work is being carried out by telephone and video call with visits in line with Telephone Triage 1 Minute Guide.</p>
Children Looked After Team	<p>Cases have been assessed and RAG rated. A duty system is in operation with other staff working from home. The Team have now adapted to a new way of working. A Business as usual model with a mixed model of office working and working from home is in place. Work is being carried out by telephone and video call with visits in line with Telephone Triage 1 Minute Guide.</p>
Fostering	<p>A duty system is in operation with other staff working from home. Work is being carried out by telephone and video call. Staff prioritising support to foster carers and placement searches.</p>
Care Leaver's PA Service	<p>Cases have been assessed RAG rated. A duty system is in operation with other staff working from home. Work is being carried out by telephone and video call with visits in line with Telephone Triage 1 Minute Guide.</p>

4.4 The emerging information is revealing the following risks and issues which are summarised in Table 2 alongside the service's response. It will take some considerable time to recover in full from the impact of this period, and whilst it is impossible to full quantify it, we are mindful about the possible long term impact of extremely low take up of early help services.

Table 2

Number	Risk Description	Action
1.	<p>a) Rate of referral has dropped well below usual levels giving rise to concern about harm to children going unreported.</p> <p>b) Changes to partners' operational business, especially in terms of schools, midwifery and health visiting mean that children at risk are being seen much less often in or out of the home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather data to quantify and analyse. • Raise with partners via safeguarding silver command in the context of the duty to report under s.7 of the Social Services and Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014. • Continue the communications work aimed at ensuring public and partners know that we are business as usual for safeguarding and encouraging families to take up early help and support services. • Continue our work with families, ensuring those most vulnerable children are seen and that we respond to increasing or new concerns. • Develop service resilience and recovery plan to ensure that the service can respond to increased demand and lag impact of business when Stay At Home Rule is altered or terminated.
2.	<p>Numbers of CLA rose to 221 during the COVID 19 period, as of the 01/09/20 there are 218 children looked after. The rate of becoming looked after has remained below the 2018-19 level but there has been a lag impact on exits from the looked after service due to the impact of the Stay At Home Rules on Court work and interventions aimed at safely expediting exits from the children looked after system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain critical quality assurance process in reviewing case by case to ensure there are no missed opportunities to progress exits from the looked after system. • Develop service resilience and recovery plan to ensure that the service can pick up the pace of business to safely expedite exits for the looked after system.

Adults Services

- 4.5 Due to the nature of requirements of delivering direct care to the most vulnerable people we support Adult Services were not in the position to advise staff to remain at home. In order to maintain the safety of the workforce and the people that are supported there was a need to revise working practices in line with guidance issued by Public Health Wales.
- 4.6 When the Stay At Home Rules were announced, Adult Services implemented the following actions to continue to meet essential statutory services and support vulnerable adults:
- Worked with IT to ensure that all care management staff had the ability to work remotely.
 - Revised working practices to incorporate symptom checking as part of the assessment arrangements.

- Developed individual team arrangements within the assessment teams to enable them to socially distance.
- Participated and contributed to regional joint health & social care bronze and silver planning groups to develop a response.
- Worked in partnership with CTMUHB, RCT & Bridgend to increase bed capacity which in Merthyr Tydfil included the re-commissioning of the former Glan-Yr-Afon nursing home as a step-down facility (Marsh House).
- Implemented daily calls to care home providers.
- Worked with Procurement team to obtain a supply of PPE for use across directly delivered and commissioned Adult Social Care Services.
- Discontinued the commissioning panel meeting and implemented alternative mechanisms for the commissioning of services.
- Liaised with RCT to revise arrangements for Deprivation of Liberty responsibilities.
- Worked with our commissioned domiciliary care providers to agree an approach to ensuring that the most vulnerable individuals continued to receive support.
- Developed a contingency plan for assessment services should there be a significant reduction in available staff as a result of the pandemic.
- Requested contingency arrangements from commissioned providers.

4.7 Table 3 below provides a summary of our continuing services to the public and revised operating practices:

Table 3

Adult Duty	Continues to provide phone access to Adult Social care Services for the general public and professionals. The service has seen an increase in calls and has adjusted the number of staff allocated to undertake this work. Wherever possible assessments have been undertaken via telephone, however where this is not possible and staff are required to undertake the assessment in people's homes they have been provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and ensure social distancing. Staff have been split into two teams with half working in the office and half working from home to ensure that they are able to socially distance.
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	Business as usual - staff will be operating a mixed system of working and being home based to ensure essential duties are covered.
Assessment and Care Management	Wherever possible assessments are undertaken by telephone and again where this is not possible and there is a need for Social Workers to visit then they have been provided with the relevant PPE to enable them to do so. The staff team has been divided into two groups with 50% of the team working from home for part of the week to enable social distancing. Social work staff have continued to provide urgent responses to situations such as carer breakdown and have been undertaking reviews via telephone contact.
Community Mental Health Team	The Social Work staff within the Community Mental Health Team have continued to provide support either through telephone contact or face to face where people have been in crisis or require a Mental Health Act Assessment. Where face to face contact has been required staff have been provided with PPE.

Initial Response Team	The initial response team have continued to provide packages of care with staff wearing PPE for each visit they undertake. To limit staff contact with others sited at the Health Park, staff are going to visits directly from home.
Community Occupational Therapy Service	<p>The service has been triaging referrals and wherever possible have been undertaking a limited assessment over the telephone. There have been emergency situations where they have needed to visit home and PPE has been provided. All staff have been working a mixture of office based and home working to enable social distancing within the office. The provision of equipment has been affected as a number of staff within the Joint Equipment store has been significantly reduced and they are only able to continue to deliver emergency equipment.</p> <p>Low level assessments for adaptations under the Disabled Facilities Grant arrangements have been placed on hold as these cannot be completed at this time as it would require builders to access properties to complete the adaptation work.</p>
Care Homes	<p>There has been a joint Social Care & Health approach to the support provided to the care home sector both directly delivered and commissioned. In March all care homes were advised to restrict visitors to the care home to limit possible infection. Unfortunately, whilst a number of homes have not had any instances of COVID-19, others have not fared as well with some having significant outbreaks quite early on in the pandemic.</p> <p>The support has consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of advice to the whole sector based on PHW guidance. • Daily contact with commissioned providers within Merthyr Tydfil via the contract monitoring team, which has now reduced to twice weekly. • Increasing distribution of PPE provided via WG from the pandemic stock. • Working with CTMUHB to implement access to staff and resident testing, initially for individual cases and now through the proactive mass testing of care homes on a 2-weekly basis. • Establishing a mechanism to facilitate financial support through access to WG funding.
Domiciliary Care	This is commissioned from the independent sector and has continued to operate, though there have been fluctuations in capacity due to staff needing to self-isolate. People using these services have been RAG rated to identify those most at risk to ensure that the most vulnerable continue to be supported.
Day Service	In line with the guidance in respect of social distancing and shielding a decision was made to close Day Services as the facilities were not suitable to support this. Prior to this decision being made a number of people who attend the day service had already made the decision to withdraw as they were self-isolating. Where possible alternative arrangements have been made to support those most at risk.

Supported Living	The Supported Living service is commissioned in the main from Drive and this has continued to operate with increased commissioned hours to support people living there to remain at home.
------------------	---

4.8 **Staffing Implications**

It was expected that there would be a reduction in the availability of staff throughout this period and plans were put in place to manage high levels of staff absence and initially there were a considerable number of staff self-isolating due to other family members presenting with symptoms. The data available shows there were 19 Social Services staff members not able to work week commencing 16th June, however, this has improved and only 1 member of staff is recorded as not able to work as of week commencing 17th August.

4.9 There was also a number of staff self-isolating due to other family members presenting with symptoms. However, these have diminished and the length of time absent has also decreased due to the improved access to staff testing which has enabled people to return earlier as a result of a negative test result. There were a cohort of staff who have needed to shield themselves in line with guidance and wherever possible these staff have been provided with the necessary IT equipment to enable them to continue to work from home. The shielding period is now over.

4.10 Staff have been recognised for working well together, being also available during the evenings and at weekends and prioritising their response to those who are most at risk, using PPE if necessary. Some staff have been naturally anxious about the implications of the virus and information and support has been provided on a case by case basis. Although the longer-term impact on staff is yet to be determined, many staff have continued to work throughout this period providing essential services to vulnerable people

4.11 **Financial Implications**

Children's Services have worked with the Service Accountant and have quantified the projected financial impact of this period as being £185k. However, £11,922 has been reclaimed from the general Social Services Hardship fund for Covid19 to date.

4.12 Initially it was anticipated that lower levels of staffing would have implications on delivery and the meeting the needs of our service users. Numbers of referrals have declined which is believed to be linked to a number of key referring agencies practice changing in their frequency and nature of contact with families. The referrals received by Children's Services have proportionately been at an increased safeguarding level meaning that a lower level of referral has not decreased the demands in allocations to Children's Services. It is anticipated that following schools returning and a number of key partners business continuity plans resulting in more contact with families that between September 2020 and December 2020 there will be a surge in demand. Ensuring we have the resources to meet a rise in demand will have potential future financial implications.

4.13 The full financial impact is not yet determinable at this stage for Adults Services. Whilst some areas have seen an increase in costs to support staff replacements due to cyclic self-isolation such as our own care homes, other areas such as care management have remained relatively stable. However, it is recognised that there

have been additional cost pressures on the commissioned care home sector and support is being facilitated through the allocation of £40 million across Wales. The financial position will continue to be monitored and separate cost codes have been established to support this. The following table is the latest Covid19 details for Adult Social care.

Adult Social Care Summary		
		No of Providers Supported
Void Funding Support - Ind Sector	£269,494.40	7
Void Funding Support - Own Homes	£1,287.00	2
Additional Funding Support - Care Homes	£135,172.73	41
Additional Funding Support - Supported Living	£8,684.58	7
Additional Funding Support - Dom Care	£92,617.80	11
Additional Funding Support - Other Services	£62,079.66	5
Additional Funding Support - Own Homes	£35,723.01	3
TOTAL	£605,059.18	

4.14 Each of the seven health boards are working closely with local authorities and other partners to put in place and deliver **local COVID-19 prevention and response plans** for their areas. They describe how health boards, local authorities and other partners, such as the Test Trace Protect regional teams, businesses and other organisations in the area will work together. The plans set out the measures taken locally to prevent the spread of the virus, drawing on evidence of areas of high transmission risk. They describe how any rise in local cases and clusters will be identified and what the local response will be.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

General

5.1 During the period of the pandemic to ensure that communities are supported and statutory duties are undertaken there has been extensive joint working between public services. Throughout the period Social Care has been working in partnership with Public Health Wales, Cwm Taf UHB, Welsh Government and neighbouring Local Authorities. For social care the priority areas have been those receiving support at home and care homes as these are high risk areas with staff supporting people who are at high risk should they contact Covid 19. Across Children and Adult's Services we have ensured our adherence to the guidance provided by Public Health Wales.

5.2 A system of silver and bronze command meetings have taken place to promote a joined up response by services. There has been clear learning from the development and implementation of these groups. Regionally there is currently a task and finish

group in process to explore the learning from these groups to embed in a new way of working.

- 5.3 Initially the provision of PPE was a significant concern for practitioner both within the Local Authority and social care service providers. Whilst social care providers that support with personal care were accustomed to using PPE as part of their normal work pattern there were additional requirements that were not normal practice such as wearing of masks. Other staff such as Social Workers across Children and Adult services would not normally use PPE when coming in contact with the people they support and this was an areas that required new ways of working and clear guidance for staff.
- 5.4 Welsh Government over the period have significantly increased the level of PPE that has been provided to Local Authorities to distribute to all social care providers and staff. This has significant logistical implications due to the amount of PPE that requires storage and distribution. This has been covered by staff within the Local Authority, however these staff are returning to their substantive posts and the development of a regional approach and service is currently being developed.
- 5.5 Staff testing was originally organised via Human Resources with the results reported to them, however the UHB identified that overall this was slowing down the process for health and social care staff. The process was refined where people who were symptomatic could directly arrange their own test and the results provided to them rather than going through several administrative processes. Whilst this revised process ensures that people are tested sooner and receive their results quicker it does mean that we do not have a central record of staff tested and their results, however staff absences for Covid reasons are collated weekly.
- 5.6 In line with the advice of PHW people residing in care homes and staff working there have been tested proactively on a weekly basis and this has now moved to 2 weekly testing.
- 5.7 Whilst testing return rates have improved and we have seen a significant reduction in both Adult and Children's Services, it is important to be mindful that an increase in the R rate resulting in more restrictive measures or a further stay at home period being imposed, would have consequences for staffing. The winter period will result in a number of staff and service users reporting flu and cold like symptoms. Many of these symptoms can be indicators of COVID 19 and therefore will have consequences for service delivery whilst testing is undertaken.

Children's Services

- 5.8 Whilst Children's Services have continued to operate, the manner in which we have undertaken our functions has required adaptation throughout the pandemic, and will need to continue to do so. These changes in our ways of working initially focused on immediate safeguarding and risk management, whilst we are in a position to have an increasingly new way of working with more day to day business taking place, there were a number of activities that were suspended. This included interventions for families being placed on hold, Courts dealing with urgent matter with hearings being delayed and adoption introductions being delayed. Partner agencies have also worked in a different way, with less face to face contact with families due to the

associated risks of COVID 19. Naturally this has impacted the level of support families have received.

- 5.9 Whilst Court work is now adapting to a new way of working and intervention work has increased significantly, there remains a back log of work that Children's Services needs to address. It is also anticipated that when partner agencies increase their level of contact with families we will see an increase in referral rates into the service. We are also mindful that early help services have functioned in a different way resulting in families potentially not receiving support in a means that reduces their likelihood of escalation.
- 5.10 On 31st March 2020 there were 208 children looked after by the Local Authority, to date during the pandemic period this has been as high as 221. On 31st August 2020 there were 218 children looked after. Contributing factors have included reduced opportunities to expedite revocations and placement orders, work in this area is starting to move forward however the time lost during COVID 19 will have longer term repercussions as services now have to manage new work in addition to the back log.
- 5.11 On 31st March 2020 there were 135 children on Merthyr Tydfil's Child Protection Register. During June 2020 this increased to 150, as of the 31st August 2020 there were 145 children included on the child protection register. In light of the increase, an internal review has been undertaken which links the increase with a reduced rate of deregistration based upon a reduction in intervention work being undertaken designed to reduce the likelihood of harm. It is anticipated that an increase in the direct support for families would, within the next three month period, support a safe reduction in children on the child protection register. However this reduction would be vulnerable if a consequence second wave arises resulting in more restrictive measures being imposed.

Adults Services

- 5.12 Where services have continued these have needed to be revised for some as staff capacity has fluctuated and providers have needed to focus resources on those most at risk. Services continue to operate differently and there has been some re-introduction of services that had closed. The key areas are:
- Local Authority day services have re-opened at a significantly reduced level to ensure that social distancing can be adhered to and will remain operating at this level until social distancing guidance changes. Commissioned day services have not yet restarted.
 - Assessments have continued throughout however these have been undertaken via phone unless it was identified that a face to face visit was required. Since June the numbers of face to face visits and visits to hospital have been increased ensuring that pre-visit checks have been undertaken to ensure that the staff are not visiting anyone who is symptomatic unless essential and wear appropriate PPE or social distancing during the visit.
 - Domiciliary care services reduced initially due to people cancelling service as they were shielding and due to staff absences. This position has changed as staff are now able to access testing and are nearing their previous levels of service.
 - The position regarding Care homes is one that has seen significant changes to how they operate. Where Care homes have had an outbreak of Covid they

cannot accept admissions until such time that they have been Covid free for a 28 day period. In addition the admission process now requires all individuals that are moving into a care home to have been tested and have a negative result prior to moving into the care home. There is also a requirement that they are self-isolated for a 14 day period. This later requirement has had a significant impact on care homes ability to isolate people with dementia who are wandersome.

- Respite services are not fully available due to the restrictions above and have been limited to emergency arrangements.

- 5.13 We are now identifying that Carers are experiencing significant increased pressures that have resulted in them no longer being able to continue in this role and alternative support is being sought. There continues to be an impact on carers as services such as day services and respite services cannot operate to the level that they were prior to the pandemic. A carers officer has recently been appointed and one of their priority areas is to liaise with carers to establish the impact of Covid and their future needs
- 5.14 Social Isolation within the older population was an issue prior to the outbreak of the pandemic however this position has increased as people within this age group need to socially isolate. Whilst the advice on shielding changed in August many of the social groups have not yet returned and people remain social isolated.
- 5.15 Mental Health services initially saw a reduction in people accessing services, however we are now seeing people presenting in crisis. The pressure on mental health services has continued with increasing requests for assessments under the mental health act and we are seeking to recruit an agency Social Worker through the hardship fund to support the position.

6.0 WHAT HAS CHANGED

Children's Services

- 6.1 Whilst Children's Services have continued to adhere to its duties there has been a significant change in ways of working. These changes in working have required a balance of undertaking our duties in the most effective ways for families, whilst maintaining staff and our community's safety. In line with guidance that has resulted in increased digital communication, there are benefits to this way of working, however, it is important to be clear that there are negative consequences to a reduction in face to face contacts also.
- 6.2 Staff are increasingly working in an agile way; it is important that we utilise our learning on both the benefits and consequences of this way of working to ensure an appropriate balance is gained. Having an appropriate balance will be imperative to ensuring that staff are well supported in managing the complexities of their role to support our most vulnerable families.
- 6.3 Moving forward Children's Services, while adhering to current guidance, will endeavour to increase the level of intervention work being undertaken with our vulnerable families. The success of this work will also be reliant on the effectiveness of partnership agencies and the ways they will be working.

Adults Services

- 6.4 Due to the vulnerability of majority of the people who are supported by Adult social care, a number have chosen to cancel services to limit the number of people who have access to their home.
- 6.5 Services have needed to adjust in line with changing guidance. This continues to be the case moving forward and any planned re-introduction or increases in service provision needs to be considered in the context of managing the risk to staff and people who use the service and ensuring that services can be returned safely.
- 6.6 A number of the adjustments that were introduced early such as splitting staff groups to manage social distancing and maintaining the work force remain in place with office based staff working part of their week at home and part in the office. Whilst this was initially implemented at short notice we are now establishing the longer term implications of working in this way in line with the agile working element of the recovery and improvement plan.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO MOVING FORWARD

Short-term

- 7.1 The impact of Covid and how we work are still very much at the forefront of what we do, much of which is subject to clear guidance by WG and PHW an example of which is the admission to Care Homes. Timescales for any further amendments are difficult to establish as they will be dependant of changes to guidance and we will continue to review as soon as guidance is issued.
- 7.2 We need to establish how effective agile working has been and which elements require amended working processes which will be part of the agile working element of the recovery and improvement plan.
- 7.3 Whilst the extreme pressure associated with the pandemic have alleviated services are not yet fully operational in addition we are approaching the winter period which under "normal" circumstances increases the pressures on health and social care services. Each year the Local authority works with the health Board to establish how some of these pressures can be alleviated through the provision of additional resources in key areas. This work has now commenced and a winter plan is being produced that will also consider the impact of further Covid spikes. Work is also underway in planning the mass vaccination of the population should a vaccine become available and this is being aligned to the flu vaccination program.
- 7.4 We will need to ensure that adjustments are made to our way of working in line with any changes in guidance or policy directed by Public Health Wales and/or Welsh Government. We will also need to ensure there is clear communication with partner agencies to promote robust planning for our community to reduce the likelihood of escalation in need.

Long-term

- 7.5 Longer term plans will be dependent on the outcome of the short term analysis and any revised guidance on social distancing.

- 7.6 In the medium to longer term we will need to monitor the impact of the seasonal flu virus as many of the symptoms are similar to Covid 19. This could potentially result in an increase in short term staff absences as they need to self-isolate if they become symptomatic. Though this will be mitigated in some way through access to testing it could still mean an increase in short term unplanned absences which will be difficult to plan for. We also need to assess the efficacy of the agile working arrangements on delivery of service and staff wellbeing and strengthen some of our processes to ensure that agile working meets the requirements of revised working models.
- 7.7 The care home sector has been affected with several care homes having a significant number of deaths which has had an impact on the financial viability. At this time and until the end of March 21 financial support provided by Welsh Government through the “Hardship Fund” is covering some of the financial risk however the longer term impact will need to be monitored.
- 7.8 The longer term impact of the pandemic on the people we support will need to be monitored there are already emerging examples of chronic symptoms associated with the disease and examples of delays in accessing health services both of which will have an effect on a person’s ability to manage their own care.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 This report specifically links to the Living Well objective within the Council’s Corporate Wellbeing Plan: People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.

Through the continued provision of services through the pandemic we will also be able to demonstrate our team’s contribution to support progress against other wellbeing objectives set down by the Council in focus in the Corporate Wellbeing Plan. These objectives are:

- Best Start to Life - Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals; and
- Working Life - People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination.

In addition to this, the report has also identified focus areas and ongoing projects/tasks that directly contribute to corporate Recovery, Transformation, and Improvement Plan, which is currently being overseen by the Assurance Board.

**LISA CURTIS JONES CHIEF OFFICER
SOCIAL SERVICES**

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL
SERVICES**

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		

March-April 2020

During the emergency period, no person may leave the place where they are living without a reasonable excuse (e.g.)

- To get food or medical supplies;
- To get money;
- For essential work; to exercise – once a day (except for those shielding)

Essential businesses remain open; however; retailers have a duty to ensure social distancing measures are observed and adhered to.

Police have the power to stop and request information from people out in public; people can be arrested for refusing to provide personal details and, as a last resort, can be fined (Initial fine in Wales - £60 – rising)

May 2020

08/05/2020

First Minister extends lockdown for a further 3 weeks - adjustment to restrictions:
 - Outdoor exercise more than once a day;
 - Councils can plan to reopen tips and libraries

15/05/2020

First Minister outlines a 'traffic light' route out of lockdown for Wales; which is currently in the red zone.

29/05/2020

First Minister announces the members of 2 households to meet up outdoors.

31/05/2020

Health Secretary announces those shielding can now exercise outdoors

June 2020

02/06/2020

All schools to reopen on 29/06/2020.

05/06/2020

UK government ban on tenant evictions is extended to 23/08/2020

08/06/2020

Welsh Government rolls out the 'Track and Trace' system to enable contact mapping that will support the reopening of facilities

19/06/2020

Change to restrictions:

- Retailers to reopen from 22/06/2020;
- Restrictions lifted on outdoor sports

22/06/2020

Changes to restrictions:

- Weddings/civil partnerships resume (ban on social gatherings);
- Shielding will be lifted for those affected

29/06/2020

Two households in Wales can form an extended household enabling them to meet indoors

July 2020

02/07/2020

Pubs, restaurants cafes and bars can open outdoors from 13/07/2020

03/07/2020

The 'stay local' 5-mile travel restrictions are lifted removing limited travel from 06/07/2020

06/07/2020

£21 million scheme to help firms provide trainee places announced

09/07/2020

All state schools in Wales to reopen in September; schools will have limited social distancing for groups of pupils; but adults will have to maintain social distancing

10/07/2020

Pubs, restaurants cafes and bars can open indoors from 03/08/2020

11/07/2020

Some holidays homes re-open in Wales

13/07/2020

- Hairdressers and barbers re-open in Wales

13/07/2020

- Face coverings to become mandatory on public transport from 27/07/2020

15/07/2020

First Minister confirms driving lessons can resume in Wales from 27/07/2020

16/07/2020

People who have been shielding will not need to do so from 16/08/2020

20/07/2020

Playgrounds, outdoor gyms and funfairs can re-open in Wales

23/07/2020

Pregnant women can take partner to antenatal appointments

24/07/2020

Beauty salons, tattooists, nails, spas, tanning shops, art galleries and museums re-open

27/07/2020

Welsh Government scraps law requiring people to work from home; but people are still advised to work from home if this option exists

31/07/2020

Swimming pools; gyms; leisure centres and indoor play areas can reopen from 03/08/2020