

Director of Social Services



Annual Report 2025 – 2026

Contents

<u>1.</u>	Director's Summary	3
<u>2.</u>	Context section	5
	a. Leadership	6
	b. Workforce	7
	c. Financial Resources	11
<u>3.</u>	Performance Assessment	13
	a. People	13
	b. Prevention	23
	c. Partnership and Integration	44
	d. Well-being	49
<u>4.</u>	Other Information Section	53
	a. Inspections and Reviews	53
	b. Complaints and Representations	55
	c. Other sources of information	57

1. Directors Summary

Denbighshire County Council's Director of Social Services Annual Report demonstrates how we have promoted well-being and accounted for the delivery of well-being standards under the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 and Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 during the last 12 months.

This is my thirteenth Annual Report and is an honest look back at the challenges and achievements of the past year, coupled with a genuine drive and commitment to achieve our aspirations for the coming year.

Denbighshire like other Local Authorities in Wales is continuing to face significant financial challenges with the cost of delivering Social Care increasing year on year. The demand and complexity of need continues to increase and throughout this year we have continued with our transformation agenda in both our Adults and Children's Social Care services. With limited capacity, the need to transform services to ensure we have sustainable services that can meet future needs, has been balanced with meeting our statutory obligations.

Children's Services have continued to focus on increasing the number of internal foster placement providers and I am delighted with the support and collaboration that has gone on across the council which has seen us introduce a corporate Foster Friendly Policy to support any staff who are Foster Carers. We have also made progress with the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act (Wales), removing profit from the care of children looked after in Wales.

Our Adult Services have had a small amount of grant funding that has allowed them to expedite implementing a reablement approach at the front door. As well as freeing up the capacity of our frontline practitioners, this has allowed us to invest in support staff to remove administrative burdens to allow the wider team to focus on their assessments and provide direct support to their citizens. In the meanwhile, waiting lists for assessments in adult services continue to increase but we monitor and reprioritise these regularly.

Both Adult's and Children's Services have ongoing recruitment and retention issues, but this is in specific 'stubborn' areas and actions have been taken to try and improve the situation. We have seen larger than ever investment in our 'grown your own'

social worker training and this will see higher numbers of existing staff in social care practitioner roles become qualified social workers over a 2 – 3-year period.

I am pleased to report that working in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) has seen Denbighshire consistently deliver good performance in minimising package of care delays from hospital enabling citizens to return home or into an appropriate community provision. Our attention moving forward is to increase our focus on preventing unnecessary hospital admission and delivering community care closer to home.

Having worked with BCUHB colleagues since my arrival at Denbighshire on the redevelopment of the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Rhyl, I was delighted when £33m investment by Welsh Government was announced in February. The new purpose-built facility will include a minor injuries unit and a 14-bed reablement unit bringing together social Care, NHS and Third Sector to provide care for people returning home after medical and surgical treatment in hospital.

The ongoing challenges facing social care both in Denbighshire and across the whole of Wales continue and whilst we continue to transform our services, this still does not feel it is the pace we require. Further capital investment is required to allow us to increase our supported living accommodation to prevent people going into residential care and remain part of their local community. Plans to develop small residential care homes for our children looked after are in development but again these need to progress at pace.

Financial resources continue to be challenging not only for Denbighshire, but all Local Authorities across Wales and the UK. This is compounded by the uncertainty of annual grant funding which is primarily used to deliver statutory early intervention and prevention services.

My senior leadership team and I continue to work collaboratively with our corporate colleagues here in Denbighshire, and with our counterparts across the North Wales region. Denbighshire continue to host the Regional Collaboration Team. We also work nationally in Wales, particularly through the National Care Office, to address the challenges in social care. Our focus has been on identifying digital technology solutions that will support social care delivery, reduce the reliance on traditional care

packages and have robust customer management software that will reduce duplication of work and streamline processes.

Looking forward into 2026 / 2027 we await detail on the future direction of social care and the continued integration of health and social care from the newly formed Welsh Senedd. We will, however, continue to lobby for investment in social care and community health services to reduce avoidable admissions into hospital and develop provision to allow the step up and step down of care in the community and enhance the provision to keep people independent at home for as long as possible.

In children's services the focus will remain on implementing the requirements under the new Health and Social Care Act (Wales) such as exploring opportunities to stop our young people having to be accommodated out of county or even out of country, as well as progressing our ambition to have fewer children entering the care system and exiting care where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

I am also pleased to report that across our social services we have embraced the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan; we have a proactive cultural ambassador who is liaising with and learning from peers across Wales and over the next year we will continue to drive forward the council's zero tolerance of racism.

During this year we had a number of inspections and reviews from Care Inspectorate Wales with our Adult Services internal care provision all receiving ratings of good and our domiciliary care service achieving an excellent rating for well-being. Our Adult Social Care Service had a performance evaluation inspection in September 2025, with excellent feedback, recognising a number of strengths across the service.

As always I would like to thank all of my team, who continue to work tirelessly and professionally, for all that they do – this is as much their report as it is mine.



Nicola Stubbins

Corporate Director for Social Services and Education

2. Context section

- AD/001 – [Number of adult contacts](#) - the number of contacts during 2025 / 2026 were 20216 this is a 4.35% increase from 2024 / 2025
- AD/002 – [Adult provision of advice or assistance](#) - of the 20216, 44.6% (9026) were provided advice and assistance, this was predominantly from our Single Point of Access Advisors or Community Navigators within our Talking Points. This is an 5.11% reduction from 2024 / 2025
- AD/004 – [Adult assessments completed](#) there were 9770 assessments completed during the year, which is 48 less than 2024 / 2025.
- AD/005 – [Adult eligible needs](#) Of the 9770 assessments completed 95% (9307) of people had eligible needs, this is 137 less people than in 2024 / 2025
- AD/012 – [Adult care and support plans](#) 3945 people's needs could only be met by a care and support plan which is 40% of the number of people who had eligible needs and this is a decrease of 3.2% compared to 2024/2025
- CH/001 – [Number of children's contacts](#) during 2025 / 2026 were 6596 this is an increase of 15% compared to 2024 /2025 (5743)
- CH/006 – [Children's assessments completed](#) – during 2025 / 2026, 438 children's assessments were completed against 275 in 2024 / 2025 which is a 37% increase

In our Adult Services, whilst there has been a slight increase in the number of contacts with our Single Point of Access, we have subsequently seen a small reduction in our other key performance indicators. Whilst the number of people have their needs met by a care and support plan is showing a slight increase against 2024 / 2025, we are generally able to meet people's needs through providing information, advice and assistance and signposting to early intervention and prevention services.

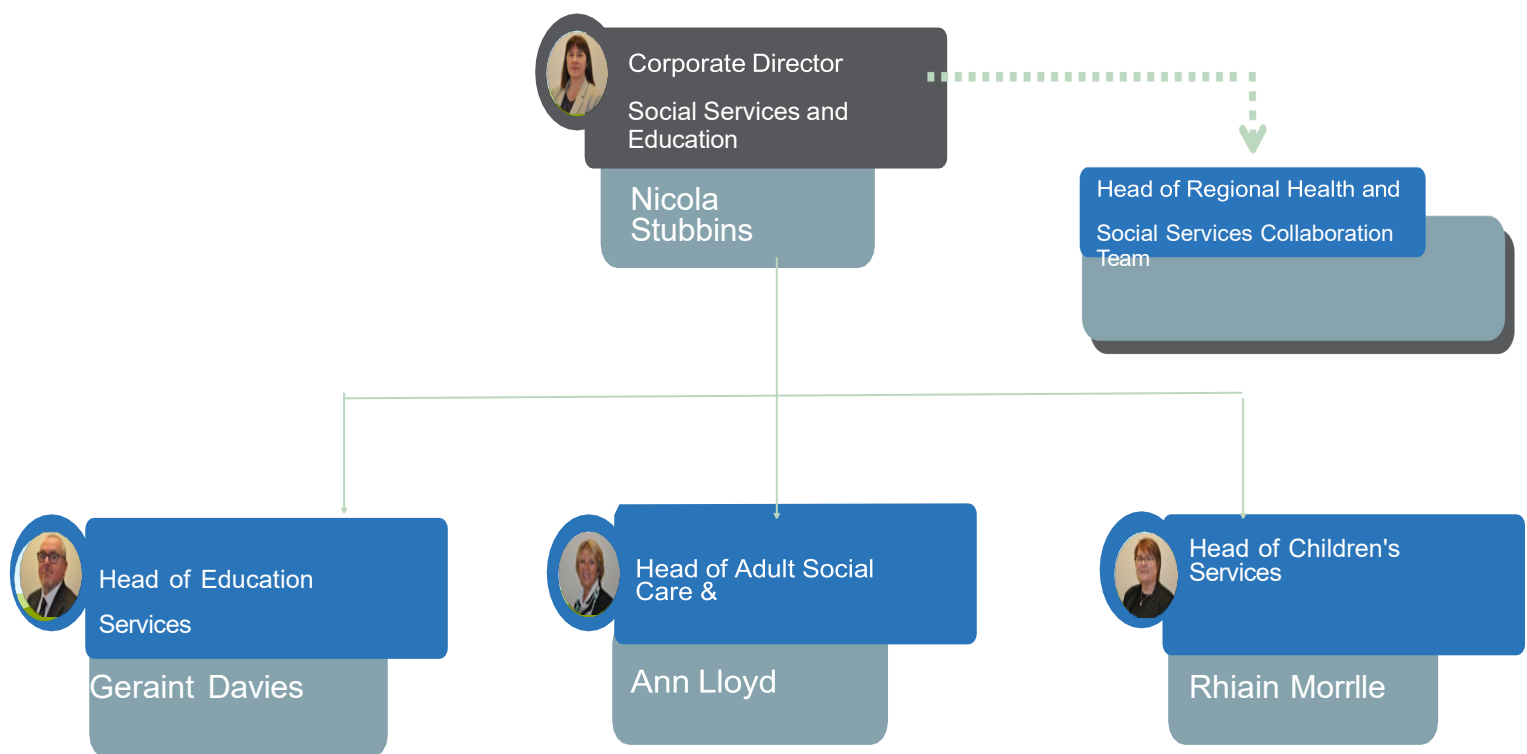
In our Children's Services we have seen a 15% increase in the number of contacts which has resulted in an increase in the number of children's assessments being completed in year. Alongside this, there has been an increased focus on more timely

assessments and recording of data which has contributed to the significant increase of 37% compared to 2024 2025.

Leadership

The Director for Social Services and Education forms part of the Corporate Executive Team in Denbighshire along with the Chief Executive Officer and 2 other Corporate Directors.

Denbighshire's Social Services sit within the Director or Social Services and Education directorate. Adult social services forms part of the Adult Social Care and Homelessness Service and Children's social services are within Children's and Education Services.



Within the political structure in Denbighshire, we have a lead member for Adult Social Care and a lead member for Children's Services and Education, who both take an active part in the leadership of our social services.

The council has very robust internal governance arrangements in place to support the effective management of Adult Social Care and Homelessness and Children's and Education Services.

Reports are taken to various Scrutiny Committees during the year to enable Elected Members to scrutinise policy and performance relating to social services, and to monitor the progress of any actions required in response to the Director's annual report or CIW's annual report.

We also have a very well-established service performance challenge process, where each Head of Service is challenged annually on areas such as service performance and leadership. The panel for each service challenge meeting includes the Chief Executive; Corporate Directors; Lead Members; Scrutiny Members and our external regulators (the Wales Audit Office and Care Inspectorate Wales).

In addition to the service challenge process, the council also has a very robust performance management framework, which includes regular performance reports being presented to the Corporate Executive Team (CET); Senior Leadership Team (SLT); Scrutiny; and Cabinet, and various reports being presented to scrutiny periodically on service specific issues such as Homelessness, Contracts and Commissioning and Compliments and Complaints.

For 2024 / 2025 the council implemented a Budget and Transformation Board to monitor and manage the council's budget but also to make decisions and monitor the transformation of the council to reduce financial pressures and develop sustainable services for the future. The Board is made up of Cabinet Members and officers from the Corporate Executive Team. Both adult and children's services have presented business cases and reports to the Budget and Transformation Board during the year.

Workforce

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the directorate has employed **739** members of staff across both Adults and Children's Service areas. This is a slight increase on the number reported in 2024 / 2025 and is the result of successful bids to support the transformation of services being delivered.

Adult Social Care & Homelessness has had an average of **538** members of staff throughout the reporting period across operational teams and provider services and there have been on average **28** active vacancies throughout the period whilst is slightly lower than that reported in 2024 / 2025's report. This is a clear downward trend on last year's report. The reported vacancies continue to be a mixture of social

work posts, occupational therapy posts and social care worker posts and the service has employed on average **6** members of staff through agencies. This is a reduction on what we reported last year. These have generally covered social work posts in specialist areas such as BIA Assessors in Safeguarding and Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs) in Mental Health Services, but we are increasingly seeing using of agency staff in some Community Resource settings which we are seeking to address.

Education and Children's Services has had an average of **205** members of staff during the reporting period, and the average number of vacancies in the service has been **7** posts. This has related mainly to social work posts within front line operational teams where there remain significant difficulties in recruitment and retention. This is a trend recorded nationally across Wales and we are linking in with regional and nationwide initiatives to promote careers in social work and social care. The service has employed on average **5** agency workers over the period to cover both social work and support work posts.

The profile for care within Denbighshire continues to favour commissioned services with Care Inspectorate Wales reporting **189** approved care home, childcare and play services across the county (as of 28th January 2026) <https://www.careinspectorate.wales/data-tools>). This is a slight reduction from last year where we reported a total of 194 settings.

Care settings with and without nursing provision and children's homes largely remain unchanged from 2024 / 2025 and can be broken down as follows:

Service type	Number of services
Adults and Children without nursing	5
Adults with nursing	13
Adults without nursing	56

Children's home	10
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A total of **84** settings which provide a total of **1,486** places. In respect of Care Homes Services, **2,166** social care workers were reported to be employed in residential and nursing care home settings. This equates to **4.1%** of the working age population in Denbighshire.

The number of approved childcare & play services has reduced to **105** from the 110 reported in 2024 / 2025. The number of Children's Day Care Centre's has reduced by 4, and the number of childminders by has reduced by 1. In total we now have **3,207** places being provided.

The breakdown for these settings is as follows:

Service type	Number of services
Childminder	33
Children's Day Care Centre	72

The Annual Return data collated by Care Inspectorate Wales in respect of Domiciliary Care Services is reported by Local Health Board as opposed to by Local Authority. This is mainly due to agencies commissioned operating across multiple counties. In Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board which covers the six Local Authorities across North Wales, **111** agencies are reported to be in operation, including that offered by the Local Authority.

There remain difficulties in recruitment and retention across the care sector, especially in social work positions that require experience in Children's Service. In Adult Domiciliary Care Services and most notably in care services in the south of the county where the demography is more rural, recruitment tends to be more difficult. We are trying to establish career pathways with support from Local Colleges and initiatives led by WeCare Wales.

The average turnover rate within Adult Social Care & Homelessness for 2025/ 2026 is approximately **13%**, which is a decrease on last year. The average turnover rate

within Education and Children's Services is **10.8%**. Put in context, nationally, Social Care Wales reported in their 'Have Your Say Workforce Survey' that the equivalent of **15%** of the registered social care workforce left their roles in the year ending March 2026. Worryingly, they also reported **20%** of workers had indicated an intention to leave their roles within 14 months. These are certainly trends we are seeing locally and across the North Wales region.

Our 'grown your own' programme for social work continues to develop, and the number of candidates being sponsored by the Local Authority on the Open University (Wales) Social Work Degree programme continues to increase year on year. In other areas such as Occupational Therapy, we are continuing to work with Health Education & Improvement Wales (HEIW) and Social Care Wales (SCW) to increase the number of commissioned places on the Occupational Therapy Degree in Wrexham University with ring-fenced places for Local Authorities – recognition of the need for these posts within community as well as health settings. It is hoped that the development of these pathways will reduce future turnover.

Denbighshire's micro provider project continues to grow and as at 31st March 2026 **93** providers are recorded on the directory providing on average **1413** care hours per week. We have very a small number of citizens waiting a domiciliary care package month on month.

Wellbeing support for both directly provided and commissioned services continues to be made available through 'Canopi', who provide mental health support for NHS and social care staff across Wales free of charge. They provide a self-referral service and can offer support which includes self-help resources, wellbeing ally support, guided self-help and virtual consultations.

<https://wecare.wales/news/canopi-mental-health-support-for-nhs-and-social-care-staff-across-wales>

Directly employed staff are able also to access the corporate Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): 'Vivup'. The EAP offers similar support to that offered by Canopi; Support, advice, and information to help with mental health and wellbeing; independent confidential counselling support; assistance with many different issues including relationships, finances, family difficulties, anxiety, bereavement, stress, depression, workplace issues and trauma.

As a service, we continue to promote the use of Stress Risk Assessments and Wellness Action Plans to identify appropriate support and adjustments. As part of the Workforce Training Plan, we have members of staff trained to deliver the adult Mental Health First Aid course and both services have access to either Mental Health First Aiders or Mental Health Champions. Training on Mental Health awareness is available through e-Learning or classroom-based sessions.

In addition, directly employed staff have access to Occupational Health assessment and support through referral. The Occupational Health & Well-being Adviser can act in an independent and advisory capacity on all work health issues.

During the reporting period, there have been on average **31** members of staff on sick leave in Adult Social Care and Homelessness and **15** in Education and Childrens Services.

A key issue has been the recruitment of qualified and experienced staff to more senior and management positions. Job vacancies within several areas have remained vacant – experienced Children’s Social Workers most notably.

Recruitment to management positions remains a challenge and there does not seem to be the progression pathways for workers as there once were. We are anticipating the launch of a new Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) framework in the hope that this will provide a framework.

An aging workforce – currently **46%** of Adult Social Care and Homelessness (ASCH) fall into the age category 50-59 & 60+. Some of these are in key leadership roles. In Education and Children’s Services this same age range accounts for **38%** of the workforce, again including key leadership roles. We are working toward succession planning and developing a robust talent management strategy. This mirrors national trends with the Social Care Workforce Report 2024 completed by Social Care Wales reporting that **51.2 %** of workers in Local Authorities were aged 46 or over. This might suggest that workers are coming to Local Authorities later in their careers, a trend we hope to change with new career pathways.

The Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP) training plan is made available to the whole sector.

Social care workers have had access to a series of Career Development opportunities through the Higher Apprenticeship and other Learning and Development Frameworks.

Levels 2 & 3 Health & Social Care (Adults & Children)

Level 4 Professional Practice in Health & Social Care

Level 4 Leadership & Management in Health & Social Care

Level 5 Leadership and Management of Health & Social Care Practice.

Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) Levels 4 & 5

We support social workers to complete the Applied Mental Health Practice (AMHP) qualification through Chester University and the Cheshire AMHP partnership.

Practice Educators for Social Work through University of Wales Bangor and through Wrexham University for Practice Education for Occupational Therapists.

We have contributed to the regional First Three Years in Practice learning and development programme for social workers. Working regionally with Health Education & Improvement Wales (HEIW) to develop similar for Occupational Therapy and access to modules on various programmes.

Access to Team Management Development Programme (TMDP), Aspiring Middle Manager Programme (AMMP) and Middle Management Development Programmes (MMDP) through Social Care Wales.

Access to Academi Wales

<https://academiwales.gov.wales/repository/discovery?sort=recent&categories=42d3b6f4-6978-4eb9-ba6b-4ef5d008e12a&strict=0> and CCInform.

Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP)

With a zero-tolerance approach to racism in Denbighshire County Council, both Adults and Children's Social Care Heads of Service have engaged in senior leadership training and workshops to embed the actions within the plan across social services. We have appointed a cultural ambassador who is working with peers across Wales to identify best practice and drive forward transformational change.

Staff are encouraged to complete the Social Care Wales E-Learning module and further training is being sourced for the wider management team to support staff to

have open and honest conversations about dealing with racism. During the coming year more work will be done to ensure more actions from ARWAP are embedded into practice and we will monitor our progress using the ADSS Eliminate Racism Self- Assessment Tool.

Financial Resources

The 2025 / 2026 outturn is summarised in the table below with both Children and Adults' Social Care, including Homelessness underspending against their budgets:

2025 / 2026	Budget	Actual Spend	Over / (Under)spend
Children's Services	£21,780,962	£21,182,509	-£598,454
Adult Social Care	£58,263,043	£57,904,498	-£358,544
Homelessness	£5,063,056	£4,729,107	-£333,949
Adult Social Care & Homelessness	£63,326,099	£62,633,606	-£692,493
Grand Total	£85,107,061	£83,816,114	-£1,290,947

Children's Services' increased cost of care packages caused a larger than anticipated budget pressure, mainly due to higher provider fee increases, including some considerably expensive individual placement costs. However, this pressure was offset at year end through the reallocation of significant grant underspends.

Adult Social Care and Homelessness Services also underspent against the increased resources invested in 2025 / 2026; this was mainly due to additional grant funding that wasn't expected at the start of the financial year in Adult Social Care, whereas temporary and leased accommodation costs were lower than anticipated in Homelessness Services.

Each Autumn, financial forecasts are updated for the forthcoming years, which include assumptions for demand and inflation increases, with the aim of allocating sufficient resources to meet these rising costs. Once again, the Real Living Wage increase for 2025 / 2026 contributed to increased future care costs; however, a rise of 5% was considerably lower than the previous year's increase of 10%.

The Council allocated additional budget to meet these anticipated pressures as follows:

<i>Additional Budget Allocation towards 2025 / 2026 Pressures</i>	
<i>Children's Services</i>	£4,284,000
<i>Adult Social Care & Homelessness</i>	£3,732,000
<i>Total</i>	£9,696,000

Given the significant financial challenge faced by the whole of the Council and acknowledging the statutory requirements, unfortunately, neither Service is exempt from budget reductions. Although no savings targets were set for Children's services for 2025 / 2026, various schemes are under way to reduce costs. A savings target of £1.258 million for Adults Social Care & Homelessness was set for 2025 / 2026. Savings targets for future years are likely to increase, and elected members and executive team officers are engaged in this process.

Both services are under continued pressures to review their commissioning decisions to achieve the same and sometimes more, with limited resources.

Budget monitoring meeting discussions are increasingly focussed on pressured budgets and exploring how care can be delivered in alternative ways whilst still achieving outcomes for citizens at a reduced cost.

Denbighshire County Council continues to face growing financial challenges due to the growth in inflation and demand outstripping increases in funding and the need remains for all departments to play their part in identifying even greater reductions in pressures and savings over the next few years.

3. Performance assessment section

People

“All people are equal partners who have choice, voice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them”

“Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision”.

- CH/056: The total number of “Active Offers” of advocacy for children during the year - there were 127 active offers in 2025 / 2026 which is an 4.5% decrease in 2024 / 2025 (133)
- CH/057: The total number “Active Offers” of advocacy for children during the year where an Independent Professional Advocate was provided - 24 referrals for advocacy were made as a result of the active offer this is 2 less than in 2024 / 2025. Of these, 14 children and young people accepted the provision of an Independent Professional Advocate.
- AD/013: The total number of adults with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment has increased from 127 in 2024 / 2025 to 295 for 2025 / 2026.
- AD/032: The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified is 125 for 2025 / 2026 which is a 3.3% increase from 2024 / 2025 (121)
- AD/033: The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified and an independent professional advocate was provided was 100 adults during 2025 / 2026 which was only 2 less than in 2024 / 2025

Overall, our performance against our Key Performance Indicators has remained static in 2025 / 2026 compared to 2024 / 2025, with minimal increases / decreases in Adult Services. The rise in the numbers of citizens using Direct Payments to manage their care and support needs, gives individuals more choice and control on how they achieve their outcomes and What Matters to them

In Children’s Services we have seen a 15% increase in contacts, with a slight decrease (4.5%) of those having an active offer of Advocacy. Out of the 127 offers only 24 people were then offered an independent professional advocate, of which 14 accepted. This equates to 11% of those receiving an offer of advocacy actually took it up.

Citizens want a life not a Service

Our Single Point of Access (SPOA) remains a vital first point of contact for citizens across Denbighshire, providing information, advice, and assistance to support people to remain informed, independent, and self-caring.

In 2025 / 2026, SPOA prevented around 78% of 21,086 contacts from needing referral into Adult Social Care, demonstrating its effectiveness in early intervention and prevention. Feedback from citizens highlights the value of SPOA's "What Matters" conversations and its ability to work collaboratively with other agencies, offering both practical help and emotional support.

An individual experiencing financial hardship, housing issues, and mental health concerns contacted SPOA in a distressed state. The advisor listened, provided reassurance, and coordinated support, including a referral to the Complex Disabilities team, arranging an emergency food parcel through a Community Navigator, and signposting to housing and health services. Through this supportive approach, the individual became calmer and more engaged, with appropriate support now being progressed.

SPOA continues to evolve to improve service delivery. During 2025 / 2026, this included supporting the rollout of Independence Clinics by managing bookings, issuing pre-appointment self-assessments, and strengthening advisors' knowledge of adaptations and available community resources.

Moving with Dignity (MWD) and Turn Only Once (TOO)

The Moving with Dignity (MWD) and Turn Only Once (TOO) approaches support a move away from routine double handed care towards safe, person-centred single-handed care where appropriate. Advances in equipment and practice mean many people can now receive dignified support with fewer carers, improving wellbeing while maintaining staff safety.

During 2025 / 2026, MWD has been strengthened through partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and the appointment of a dedicated Occupational Therapist. This has improved reviews of care packages, supported safer hospital discharges, expanded training for care staff, and reduced pressure on

community services. Work will continue to train agencies and review existing double handed care in the coming year.

The TOO approach complements MWD, particularly for people living with dementia. By reducing handling and limiting the number of carers involved, TOO can lower anxiety, distress and resistance during personal care. Ongoing research and national sharing of practice are helping to build evidence and awareness. Together, MWD and TOO modernise care by promoting dignity, safety and efficiency, while improving experiences for individuals, families and care staff.

Mr A was assessed as no longer eligible for Continuing Health Care funding in 2025, Mr A was receiving five double handed care calls daily at high cost. The Moving with Dignity team worked with a new care provider to review his needs, using existing equipment and providing hands on support and training for carers. His care was safely reduced to four single handed calls per day, improving his involvement in care, reducing disruption for his family, and delivering safe, dignified support at a significantly lower cost.

Welsh Language is important to us

We continue to have Welsh champions in both Adult Social Care and Homelessness Services and Children's Services who provide advice and support on the Welsh language. From answering quick queries to proof-reading short texts, the Champions offer guidance and is always seeking ways to promote and strengthen the profile of the language within the workplace.

One of our Adult Service's Welsh Language Champions, continues to promote Welsh across Adult Social Care, helping ensure services can be delivered in Welsh by her team. She regularly attends meetings with the Welsh Language Officer to support standards and share ideas across the Council and provides translation help to colleagues and takes part in "More Than Just Words" meetings, including regional forums across North Wales.

She also supported a care home resident with dementia who reverted to his primary language and had little understanding of the English language, particularly following instructions in English. She supported the Care home who had few Welsh speaking staff by helping to adapt care through Welsh resources and simple language support,

she fine-tuned the care plan to include certain television programmes, books and simple words that the staff could learn.

The Mwy na Geiriau Strategic Board continued to meet quarterly throughout 2025 / 2026 and the Welsh Language champions in Adult Social Care joined the group. Over the last 12 months the Board has benefitted from having a number of guest speakers from different organisations including the Welsh Language Officer from both Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB). This has allowed us to hear about best practice to ensure the Active Offer of Welsh is embedded in our everyday practice.

Staff from across Children's service were delighted to take part in this year's Staff Eisteddfod, entering competitions for photography, design, sewing and knitting. Four members of Children's Services were successful in their respective categories.



Voice and Control – Advocacy

We promote advocacy to ensure citizens' voices are heard. In 2025 / 2026, 125 citizens accessed independent advocacy (121 the previous year). Recognising the importance of Advocacy, we raise awareness by including in staff induction, by having team champions, and arranging refresher sessions.

Mr B received advocacy support to express his wish to return home from residential care. The advocate ensured his views were communicated, supported him in meetings, and helped him understand information and take part in decisions.

Mr B successfully returned home with key adaptations and a care package in place, reporting improved wellbeing and satisfaction.

Advocacy is a key statutory element of the Social Services and wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. There are many forms of advocacy including formal advocacy Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA), Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA) and

funded advocacy services, family members and others can also provide informal advocacy to support citizens to express their views and opinions, ensuring that their voice is heard. The North Wales Together Programme has supported the development of self-advocacy for people with learning disabilities. It is very positive that the Denbighshire self-advocacy group is progressing, and representatives are participating in regional and national forums.

Denbighshire Dragons



From a merger of two previous groups, the Denbighshire Dragons were formed in January 2026. The members decided on their name, designed their logo and had the idea of the strap line "breathing fire into society". To join the group people need to have a Learning Disability and live in Denbighshire.

Denbighshire Dragons provide opportunities and space to share their experiences of living with a Learning Disability and inform people of their needs. As a group, members can have a louder, stronger and more confident voice to advocate their views for themselves. The group meets fortnightly alternating between meeting in person and on Zoom. It's important the Group's voice is heard to bring about change locally, regionally and nationally. Members of the Denbighshire Dragons represent people with Learning Disabilities in Denbighshire regionally, at the North Wales Flyers group (2 Reps), and nationally on the National Council of All Wales People First group (1 Rep). The Representatives are voted to do this job by their peers, bringing members news, updates, information and ideas from the regional and national groups.

Person Centred Planning (PCP)

The PCP project seeks to promote care and support being delivered in ways which recognise and reflect the unique and individual needs of our citizens. Citizens voice; choice and preferences are key to delivering care and support in a way with respects individuals. The PCP coordinator role has been working with citizens and care providers across learning disabilities services to ensure that care plans and support truly reflect the individual needs of the citizen.

During the last 12 months the PCP Co-ordinator has received 24 additional referrals to work with citizens alongside the 11 citizens that were engaged from 2024 / 2025.

Alongside this the PCP Co-ordinator has provided training to 164 staff over 23 training sessions.

Work has been going on collaboratively with the other Person-Centred Planning coordinators from Anglesey, Gwynedd and Wrexham to promote and re energise person centred practice across North Wales.

The Co-ordination has continued to work with citizens to develop person centred plans and did a short piece of work with 12 citizens to look at their future hopes around employment. This resulted in developing a Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) with each citizen that they could share with their work coaches. Work has also been completed to support citizens on making hot drinks independently, this has enabled the citizen to be more independent. The written plan has given the citizen's support staff clear guidelines on what support is needed and when to enable the citizen to continue to make hot drinks independently, the staff team now have a base from which to continue to develop the citizens skills and have an example to follow.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)

PBS is a way of working with citizens which respects individuality and choice providing flexible and person-centred support through a collaborative approach with citizens to ensure support arrangements are less restrictive. The North Wales Together Programme has led on regional work to promote the PBS approach with services and facilitated training and the development of PBS supporting material and resources.

The PCP Co-ordinator has led on this locally within learning disability services and this has led to the Denbighshire PBS group being formed with membership including citizens, support staff and Complex Disabilities Team members. The PBS group have now started to develop a Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope plan on how to embed and promote Positive Behaviour Support across Denbighshire, working collaboratively across health, social services, providers and with citizens.

The PCP Co-ordinator has attended 2 Positive Behaviour Support Community of Practice conferences, in one of them we had a stall to promote Person Centred Practice that showcased Person Centred tools and examples of completed plans and PATHS. One of Denbighshire's citizens was interviewed at the PBS Community

of Practice events and spoke about what their understanding of a PBS plan was, what it looked like when their support staff did or did not follow their PBS and PCP plans. This supported the citizen to increase their confidence in speaking out about how they want to be supported and expressing themselves when they are not supported in the way they want to be.

Children's Services Gateway

The Gateway have continued to be office based 3 days per week. Two additional Senior Practitioner posts have been allocated to Gateway to strengthen the management oversight on recording referrals. Whilst one vacancy has been filled, the other Senior Practitioner is due to start on the 1 May 2026. An additional data inputter has also been placed in Gateway to support the inputting of referrals.

Whilst staffing levels impacted on the actioning of referrals, additional managerial support was offered. The Gateway is now operating at full capacity.

Corporate Parenting

Denbighshire County Council have signed the Welsh Governments [Corporate Parenting Charter](#) and are fully committed to its aims and principles. The Charter places a responsibility on key public, third and private sector bodies to ensure care experienced children and young people receive support and are able to access services without restrictions given their own life experiences.

We promise to treat every care experienced young person with respect and dignity, and to celebrate who they are. We will actively challenge racism, discrimination and inequality in all its forms, and we are committed to being inclusive and affirming of disabled young people and Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning) (LGBTQ+) young people. We recognise that people's identities and lived experiences are different and can overlap, and we share a collective responsibility to create safe, inclusive, respectful and affirming environments for everyone. We will listen to them and work alongside them to make sure support is accessible, safe and shaped around what matters to them, as we support them toward independence.

Participation and Engagement

The Kids In Care (KIC) Club is a forum for Denbighshire's looked after young people who are aged 7 to 15 who live with foster carers. They meet during the half term holidays and take part in a range of activities and it's an opportunity to share their experiences, say what is going well and what they would like to change.

2025 / 2026 was again a busy year for members of the KIC Club and here are some of the things they have been up to:-

- May's session was all about healthy eating and took place at the Pantri Bach in Ysgol Christchurch. It was led by the Health & Well-being Team Leader and a Community Dietician, who helped everyone explore fun and tasty ways to eat well. The group enjoyed lots of hands-on activities, including a blind taste test of different fruits and making their own delicious overnight oats. There were plenty of smiles (and a few funny faces!) especially when it came to trying dragon fruit, which wasn't everyone's favourite!
- In August, the group enjoyed a fantastic summer trip to Gulliver's World, where everyone had lots of fun exploring the rides and attractions together!
- To get into the spooky spirit in October, everyone got creative and had lots of fun carving pumpkins and designing their own spooky Halloween creations!



Independent Living Skills Group – This is a group for young people aged 16+ who meet on a monthly basis and aim to help them become more independent and provide them with living skills. The group is facilitated by Social Care Practitioners in the 14+ Team within the Child Looked After Service.

Each session focuses on a specific theme and below is what they've covered during 2025 / 2026:-

- Rights and Responsibilities.
- Practical guidance on washing clothes, including understanding care labels and their meanings.
- Their needs v's wants.
- Session by the LAC Health Nurse on the Health Passport.
- Mind of My Own App where they completed a Pathway Statement.
- Quiz around healthy lifestyles and eating.
- A scavenger hunt around Rhyl, incorporating local history and interesting facts about the area.
- Introduction to Lifelong Links.

The Service encourages children and young people to take part in various consultations and activities to help shape Children's Services.

The voices of the children / young people - The Service ensures our children and young people have their voices heard on things that are important to them. There are a number of various tools available to them, and they are encouraged to use which they can access and complete either face to face with their worker, via an electronic link or by scanning a QR Code.

Child Protection Conference and Child Looked After Feedback Forms

To gain attendees views on the Child Protection Conference and Child Looked After Review process professionals, parents / carers and young people are asked to complete a feedback form which they can complete either face to face with their worker, via an electronic link or by scanning a QR Code.

To capture feedback on Initial and Child Protection Conferences that are part of the Effective Child Protection (ECP) process, a bespoke feedback form has been designed and shared with all attendees from January 2026.

Participants are regularly being encouraged to provide their feedback.

Have your Say Surveys

A range of Have your Surveys are available to be used to gain the views of children / young people and parents on the impact Education & Children's Services has had on

their lives and how useful the service received is or has been. The results assist in improving the service as well as recognising what has worked well.

In 2025 / 2026, 50 surveys were completed by parents / carers with 100% saying that they felt their views and wishes were listened to and 97% saying that the support received had made a positive difference.

End of Placements

At the end of a placement (regardless of the cause of the placement coming to an end) children / young people, foster carers, parents and social workers are encouraged to complete a survey to gain views about user and staff experiences of the placement and services they have received. The information provided is an important source for identifying potential quality improvements.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

We continue to receive placements via the mandated National Transfer Scheme. Denbighshire are committed to appropriately supporting this cohort of young people. However, to meet their cultural, religious, and linguistic needs we have commissioned out of county placements resulting in these young people being placed at a significant distance from our county. We remain concerned that this distance increases their vulnerability and lessens our ability to effectively support.

In order to increase support capacity and develop local placement solutions, we continue to work with Denbighshire's Global Re-Settlement Team, who have successfully supported a range of asylum-seeking families and individuals. Other challenges have related to the commissioning of legal advice to support young people in their asylum claim and appeal processes and the adequacy of Home Office funding which does not cover the full cost of care. This has placed further pressure on Local Authority budgets.

Effective Leadership

In September 2025, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) conducted a performance evaluation inspection of Denbighshire's Adult Services. As part of their findings CIW stated in the inspection report –

“Leaders are experienced, provide stability of leadership and know their service very well. Practitioners describe them as visible, approachable, and supportive.”

As well as – “There is a positive culture within the service, supported corporately and politically. Leaders and practitioners promote a two-way communication, and an open-door approach. There is a strong learning culture with opportunities to attend training, and to benefit from reflective practice. Leaders and practitioners also actively engage in constructive challenge to support development.”

“There is an excellent focus on staff wellbeing. Practitioners and leaders are supported through regular formal and informal supervision; necessary adaptations are undertaken to promote personal and professional needs.”

This approach is reflected right across Denbighshire’s Social Services and the Council’s values are demonstrated on a daily basis.

Values –

- Pride - We aim to create a sense of pride in working for our organisation.
- Unity - We all work for the same organisation.
- Respect - We aim to treat all people equally and with fairness, understanding that there are views and beliefs that differ from our own.
- Integrity - We aim to manage ourselves to maximise performance, act with high standard of conduct and present a positive image of Denbighshire.

What we plan for 2026 / 2027

To ensure we have sustainable services that will meet current and future demands both Adults and Children’s Services will be continuing to transform services. The focus is to ensure we deliver value for money services that meet the needs and achieve the outcomes of the people accessing our services.

Prevention

“The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best outcomes for people are achieved”

“Resilience within communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including carers to learn develop and participate in society”.

- AD/002: The number of new contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided – during 2025 / 2026 advice or assistance was provide to 9026 adults, this is a decrease of 59 citizens in 2024 / 2025 (9085)
- AD/005: Total number of new assessments - AD/005b: Needs were able to be met by any other means the number of new assessments during 2025 / 2026 was 9770 and of those 5362 had needs met by other means. Equating to 55% which is on a par with the previous year.
- AD/010: The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year this was 109 which is a decrease of 74 packages compared to 2024 / 2025 (183)
- AD/011: Total number of packages of reablement by outcome see table below

	2024 / 2025	2025 / 2026	Percentage Difference
Reduced the need for support	35	24	31% decrease
Maintained the need for the same level of support	24	20	16% decrease
Mitigated the need for support	101	49	51% decrease
Neither reduced nor mitigated the need for support	23	16	30% decrease

Reablement at the Front Door – Right-sizing Reablement

As part of our transformation programme and at the request of frontline practitioners, Adult Social Care started a pilot in South Denbighshire to roll out Reablement at the Front Door. This approach also helps us address the changing population needs, including earlier hospital discharge, increased complexity, and greater frailty. Following staff consultation, service evaluation, and learning from other Welsh

authorities, a new 'Three-Pillar Reablement Model' was adopted to ensure citizens receive the *right support, at the right time, in the right setting*.

The model allocates citizens to one of three pathways based on need and recovery potential:

- OT-Led Reablement: intensive short-term support to maximise independence
- Right-sizing Care: rapid stabilisation of proportionate long-term care
- Residential Reablement: short-term residential support to regain safety and skills for home living

A citizen with a mild learning disability experienced a fall down the stairs, resulting in a hospital admission and a significant back injury, which was managed conservatively. Prior to the fall, she was living independently. However, during her hospital stay she became deskilled, experienced reduced mobility and lost confidence.

At discharge, a residential placement was initially recommended. Instead, a time-limited residential reablement placement at Cysgod Y Gaer was offered. During this period, the citizen received coordinated support from Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and the Reablement Team.

As a result of this targeted intervention, she regained confidence, improved her mobility and functional skills, and was able to return successfully to independent living in her own home, avoiding the need for long-term residential care.

Community Navigators and Talking Points – *What Matters to you matters to us*

Talking Points are delivered in libraries across the county in partnership with organisations such as Working Denbighshire, Citizens Advice Denbighshire and volunteering services. They offer residents face-to-face support from Community Navigators, focusing on what matters most while promoting wellbeing, independence, and stronger communities.

From April 2025 to March 2026, 923 residents were supported, with 95% (880 people) requiring no referral to Social Services. A 10-week social media campaign,

supported by the Communications Team, raised awareness and reached over 50,000 views.

A 10-year anniversary event in June 2025 brought together 25 partners, with BCUHB recommending expanded partnerships. We also secured additional funding to produce more prescription pads, a tear of slip, which a General Practitioner (GP) can hand to a citizen during appointments.



Atgyfeiriad Pwyntiau Siarad
Talking Points Referral

Lle i chi alw heibio os oes angen help arnoch chi neu rywyn yr ydych yn ei adnabod i fyw bywyd bob dydd, neu i gael mynediad i grwpiau cymdeithasol lleol.
A place where you can drop-in if you or someone you know needs help with daily life, or would like support to access local social groups.

Fel arall gallwch drefnu apwyntiad trwy gysylltu ag Un Pwynt Mynediad ar :
Alternatively, to make an appointment please contact Single Point of Access on :
0300 456 1000

Llun i Gwener 10am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday
Ac eithrio Gwyliau Banc / Except for Bank Holidays

Dydd Llun Monday	Llyfrgell Llanelwy / St Asaph Library	
Dydd Mawrth Tuesday	Llyfrgell Y Rhyl / Rhyl Library	Llyfrgell Rhuthun / Ruthin Library
Dydd Mercher Wednesday	Llyfrgell Dinbych / Denbigh Library	Llyfrgell Corwen Library
Dydd Iau Thursday	Llyfrgell Llangollen Library	
Dydd Gwener Friday	Llyfrgell Prestatyn Library	Llyfrgell Rhuddlan Library

The service provides both immediate and long-term support, as highlighted in Mr A's case, addressing urgent needs such as food, housing and benefits while promoting stability and independence. The continued involvement of Edge of Care Volunteers has strengthened capacity and added valuable lived experience.

Edge of Care volunteer shared how valued and supported she feels. She continues to help others with forms and provide companionship, benefiting both herself and those she supports.

Mr A, attended Talking Points while homeless following a bereavement. With no food or income, he received immediate help with food, housing and benefit applications, including support with forms due to sight loss. Ongoing support included essentials, food access, and help reconnecting with services. His situation improved after receiving Universal Credit.

Independence Clinics reducing waiting times

The Independence Clinics launched in September 2025, started at County Hall, Ruthin, with fortnightly sessions alternating between Ruthin and Hafan Deg Day Centre, Rhyl. They offer quick assessments for citizens struggling with bathing and personal care, allowing them to see and try equipment while identifying those who may need major adaptations.

The initiative followed a review showing long waits (often over 8 months) for bathing assessments, where many people ultimately only required simple equipment. This caused frustration and highlighted the need for a more efficient approach.

A countywide team of Occupational Therapists developed the clinics, including the process and equipment setup. Appointments are booked via the Single Point of Access, with outcomes based on need—ranging from immediate provision of simple aids (e.g. shower boards) to advice and eligibility checks for major adaptations such as level access showers.

This approach has significantly reduced waiting lists and ensures those waiting have already been assessed as needing substantial support, with interim help in place.

From launch to the end of March 2026, 33 citizens attended and benefited from the clinics.

Citizen feedback: “we are very grateful for the help you gave today. At age 80 even small problems can seem daunting, and we came away convinced that the cavalry is on their way.”

Micro-Providers

Micro-Providers continue to play an important role in increasing choice, control and community-based support opportunities for citizens across Denbighshire. Through

flexible, person-centred approaches, Micro-Providers are supporting citizens to remain independent and continue living in their own homes for longer.

By the end of March 2026, Denbighshire had 93 active Micro-Providers operating across the county, supporting approximately 340 citizens with a wide range of services including companionship, community access, respite, personal care, domestic support, and wellbeing activities. During the year, the focus has not only been on increasing provider numbers, but also on strengthening quality assurance and ensuring the programme remains robust, sustainable and legally sound.

Key developments during 2025 / 2026 have included the continued implementation of the annual Micro-Provider 'MOT' process and the introduction of the Code of Good Practice. These developments have strengthened governance arrangements, promoted safe and high-quality support, and ensured clearer expectations and standards for providers operating within the programme.

Feedback from social workers and practitioners continues to demonstrate the positive impact of Micro-Providers, particularly in delivering community-based support options that traditional services may not always be able to offer. Practitioners have highlighted the value of Micro-Providers in supporting preventative approaches,

One example during the year involved a long-term carer supporting her husband who has lived with Parkinson's disease for over 25 years. Due to increasing stress, anxiety, exhaustion, and declining physical health linked to her caring responsibilities, there was a significant risk of carer breakdown. Through a flexible combination of Micro-Providers and Personal Assistant support, the carer was able to attend medical appointments, regain some independence outside the home, and focus on improving her own wellbeing, whilst ensuring her husband remained safely supported at home. The flexibility offered through Micro-Providers enabled support to be tailored around the family's routines and changing needs, helping both individuals remain together in their home and improving stability for the longer term. Following review, support was successfully reduced to a sustainable level whilst continuing to meet outcomes for both the carer and cared-for person.

reducing social isolation, maintaining independence, and helping carers sustain their caring roles safely.

Recognising and Valuing unpaid Carers

Denbighshire County Council and partners highly value carers and recognise the increasing pressures they face due to rising demand, complex needs, and the cost of living. Supporting unpaid carers to maintain their health and wellbeing is essential, and we are committed to listening to their experiences and improving outcomes while meeting statutory duties under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

A Bridging the Gap voucher was granted to give a carer some respite and a Micro provider was sourced when the caring responsibilities he had for his wife were becoming too much. Although his son helped out, the daily chores, shopping and the level of care and support he was providing to his wife was taking its toll. They were able to get a gardener to allow them to sit in the garden and listen to birdsong

He makes sure she showers and gets her clothes ready to put on. Conversation is very repetitive and can get frustrating with the same questions. They also now have a gardener as the garden was getting too much for him. They both like to sit in the garden and listen to the birdsong. However, the gentleman's biggest worry was the strain on him, and if he was to become poorly who would take over the caring role.

The Micro-provider takes the wife out twice a week, she has a wonderful time, and she gets to visit lots of different places, they shop, go to see some horses and call-in cafes. Following the success of the respite this was made permanent, continuing the service through a Direct payment, which has been a huge help for both. Allowing the carer to plan activities for himself knowing that his wife is safe and has company, going for walks on his own or time for a nap. This support has significantly improved both their wellbeing, giving the carer time to rest and recharge. He describes the difference as "priceless."

We are enhancing support through partnership working, early intervention, prevention, and strengths-based approaches to build resilience and reduce reliance on formal services.

Key improvements in 2025–2026 included streamlining processes and strengthening the partnership with NEWCIS, as well as improving multi-disciplinary collaboration to ensure holistic, community-based support.

Support and access is typically provided by SPoA who provide advice, signposting and links to preventative services, training, peer support, and social prescribing. There has also been a focus on developing workforce training and awareness of carers' needs across services.

Respite and additional support has seen an increased focus on short breaks and respite, including promotion of the Welsh Government scheme, Direct Payments, and expansion of micro-providers and volunteers. Along with new funded posts developed with Working Denbighshire to provide targeted support for carers.

Priorities moving forward into 2026 / 2027:

- Improve data recording and linking of carers to the person they care for.
- Strengthen partnerships between services and Carer assessors.
- Prepare for Mosaic implementation.
- Continue embedding learning from national projects.

UK Resettlement Team

The Resettlement Team supports refugees and asylum seekers in Denbighshire to rebuild their lives, in line with Welsh Government priorities, including the Nation of Sanctuary and prevention agenda. Our work focuses on early support that helps people feel safe, included, and able to live independently, reducing the need for more intensive services over time.

The team have ensured prevention is at the heart of their approach and have seen reductions in isolation. A Weekly Lunch Buddies event brings families and older residents together, improving English skills and reducing loneliness. This has also achieved Improved emotional wellbeing for all involved. Working collaboratively has

allowed us to introduce a Home Office–funded project with creative therapists which provides early mental health support and helps prevent crisis.

Mental Health and Well-being team

The Denbighshire Mental Health and Well-being team are a dedicated team of support workers who assist citizens experiencing mental health difficulties to gain greater confidence and independence. Support is provided in citizens own homes and the wider community with the following case study illustrating the work they do help citizens overcome barriers and improve their overall wellbeing.

A citizen experiencing trauma-related anxiety and distress was referred to the Wellbeing team, having disengaged from mental health services. Following assessment, a coordinated support plan addressed multiple challenges including anxiety, depression, isolation, self-neglect, and financial difficulties.

Support focused on rebuilding confidence, re-engaging with health services, and accessing financial advice. With consent, the team successfully helped the citizen reconnect with mental health services, including securing a psychiatry appointment.

To ensure ongoing stability, longer-term support was arranged through a micro-provider alongside social work involvement. The citizen reported that the intervention was life-changing, highlighting the significant positive impact of timely, coordinated support.

Progressional Approaches to Supported Housing (PASH)

The Progressional Approaches to Supported Housing (PASH) project is a collaborative initiative between Health and Social Care, working together to develop new integrated and coordinated models of service delivery that supports adults with learning disabilities, Autism and / or Acquired brain injury to progress towards greater independence. The project focuses on enabling planned progression from existing living arrangements, including the family home, community living, or residential settings, into more appropriate and less restrictive accommodation.

The PASH occupational therapist works proactively with citizens and their families to plan and identify local, cost effective, and person-centred supported living accommodation as an alternative to short-term out-of-county placements or residential care. A key emphasis of the project is preventative working, with specialist input provided at the early planning stage to reduce the risk of crisis-led or reactive decision-making.

During this reporting year, the PASH project has supported five citizens to progress into more appropriate supported accommodation or to transition from a home environment into a community living setting. Through this work, the project has contributed to preventing unnecessary escalation of need and reducing reliance on higher intensity or residential provision.

The Input of the PASH occupational therapist has been integral to these outcomes, both through direct occupational therapy assessments and indirectly through the systematic collection of housing needs data and compatibility matching when suitable accommodation voids have been identified. All activity is underpinned by each citizen's self-identified wellbeing goals, with a clear focus on promoting independence, choice, and progression towards less restrictive living arrangements.

Community Equipment Service

The service continues to demonstrate a strong preventative approach through the timely provision of community-based equipment aimed at supporting individuals to remain safely at home and reducing demand on acute services. This includes both standard and urgent "hospital prevention" deliveries, alongside a high volume of community equipment issued to promote independence and reduce the risk of deterioration.

Preventative practice is further supported through robust servicing and maintenance arrangements, including regular safety testing and ongoing review of equipment in the community. These measures ensure equipment remains safe, reliable, and fit for purpose, helping to mitigate risk and prevent avoidable hospital admissions.

Removing Profit from the care of children looked after

The Welsh Government's programme for government contained a vision for the transformation of children's services, which included fewer children entering local authority care, children cared for closer to home, and increased capacity and

diversity of foster carers. Also included was a clear commitment to remove profit from the care of children looked after.

On 24 March 2025, the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 became law in Wales. The 2025 Act includes provisions intended to restrict the extraction of profit by providers of children's home services, secure accommodation services and fostering services. These are known collectively as 'restricted children's services'.

The 2025 Act sets out a series of arrangements, some that will take effect from 1 April 2026, that will ultimately restrict the provision of those services (except when provided by local authorities) to 'not-for-profit' entities registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). To be a recognised 'not-for-profit' entity, a provider must: have objects or purposes that primarily relate to the welfare of children (or any other public good the Welsh Ministers may prescribe) and operate under one of 4 types of undertaking: a charitable company limited by guarantee without a share capital, a charitable incorporated organisation, a charitable registered society, a community interest company limited by guarantee without a share capital.

These permitted not-for-profit models identified in the 2025 Act all satisfy the principle that there must be no payment of dividends to shareholders or members and that any trading surpluses should be reinvested into the service (including building appropriate reserves and capital expenditure).

This programme is reflected in Denbighshire's Placement Commissioning Strategy, where the ambition to reduce the reliance on external placement providers is articulated. Ultimately our ambition is to have fewer children entering the care system and exiting care where it is safe and appropriate to do so. To support this ambition, we have developed a range of preventative and support services, including

- Edge of Care support, offering a range of therapeutic interventions to prevent escalation into care
- Expansion of support to children, and the carers, who are subject to and Special Guardianship Order or Supervision Order.
- Parental advocacy which supports parents to access the multi-agency solutions they need to enable them to safely support their children

- The establishment Bwthyn y Ddol assessment centre and Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)
- Collaborative Communication and Effective Child Protection models of service delivery, ensuring a strengths-based approach to working with families.

As part of Denbighshire's Transformation Programme, and in response to the not-for-profit agenda, two pieces of work have been ongoing within Education and Children's Services, one focussing of the improvement of recruitment and retention of foster carers which includes the improvement of our core offer, the other on the development of a small group home.

Denbighshire does not currently operate a residential children's home. In order to meet its sufficiency duty under the 2025 Act and to assist in realising our ambition to care for our children within Denbighshire and therefore closer to their home communities, plans to develop an in-house provision are underway.

A suitable property has been identified, which will provide a small group home for up to three children and young people. This model of small provisions is recognised to be the most suitable in providing positive outcomes for children.

Foster Wales Denbighshire Activities 2025-26

22 Local Authorities across Wales have come together to form a national network of local fostering expertise known as Maethu Cymru / Foster Wales. With a clear focus to make an impact on a national level, to work together with each other and with Foster Carers and to build better futures for local children.

Work with Foster Wales Denbighshire continues with a consistent and effective approach to recruitment and marketing on both a national and regional basis. This includes face to face events with regional employers and education provisions as well individually identified opportunities such as supermarkets. Advertisement at relevant local sites continues, as does the focus on Social Media advertising and raising awareness. For Foster Wales Denbighshire Social Media has been the most effective tool for encouraging enquiries, whilst other marketing activities offer a community engagement approach designed to drip feed the Fostering message. The National strategy has resulted in an increase in national media interest with TV

adverts, radio campaigns, social medias posts and blogs that portray 'real stories' from both children looked after and foster carers.

The Big Welcome is a tool which offers children and young people an opportunity to view the placement they are going to in real time on their Social Workers mobile phone has been launched – this is a huge step forward in supporting the young people to 'see' where they are going to be staying and hopefully to reduce some of the anxieties around going to a new place.

As part of Transformation Programme project all services, under our One Council approach, were tasked to consider what, if any, support they could offer to existing foster carers as part of improving retention, and new foster carers in order to boost recruitment. This work has resulted in the development of a generous core offer for Denbighshire approved foster carers which includes; Foster Friendly HR policy – giving additional 5 days leave for fostering commitments, Council Tax discount scheme, free parking for foster carers in long stay car parks, free entry into Denbighshire heritage sites, additional free trolli-box for larger fostering households, free green waste bin subscription, and DLL gym and swim membership for fostering households.

The Transformation Programme has also approved a project that will further assist with recruitment by enabling targeted digital marketing which will reach a specified demographic.

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support

The SGO Service has been further developed with additional support to both individuals and the establishment of support groups. Regular coffee mornings are held to promote peer support, and a regular newsletter is compiled. Annual reviews of support plans are completed and the SGO support workers are available for both specific pieces of work and for general advice and guidance. The team has been expanded using grant funding.

Early Intervention Services – Families First & Flying Start

Across the year we have made steady and consistent progress, maintaining stability in core services while moving forward with key developments. Each quarter has built on the last, with a strong focus on maintaining quality, strengthening partnerships and preparing for the next phase of delivery.

Childcare provision has remained stable and in high demand across Flying Start areas. Alongside maintaining existing places, we have supported the phased expansion of Flying Start in response to widening eligibility. This has required careful planning and close coordination to ensure readiness without compromising quality. Teams have remained focused on delivering safe, nurturing environments, and feedback from families continues to highlight positive relationships, good communication and confidence in the care provided.

Families First delivery has continued to centre on early intervention and whole-family support. Referral levels have remained steady, with increasing evidence that families are engaging earlier. Pathways between services are becoming clearer, helping families access coordinated support rather than navigating services separately. Joint planning between teams has improved, resulting in more cohesive support plans and clearer outcomes.

Our Early Language Development (ELD) teams have responded well to increased demand linked to Flying Start expansion. Screening and early identification work has continued consistently, with practitioners working closely alongside childcare staff to embed language-rich practice into everyday routines. This closer collaboration is supporting earlier intervention and more seamless support for children who require additional input.

Commissioned services delivered through Families First continue to play an important role in supporting families with more complex needs. Partnership working with Barnardo's, Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU) and Y Bont has strengthened over the year, with improved communication, clearer referral routes and more coordinated case planning. These services provide targeted interventions, including support around domestic abuse and family vulnerability, complementing our core provision and ensuring families receive the right level of support at the right time.

Team Around the Family (TAF) arrangements remain central to multi-agency coordination. There has been more consistent partner engagement and clearer identification of lead professionals, which has improved accountability and follow-through on agreed actions. Meetings are increasingly outcome-focused, providing families with clearer plans and expectations.

Partnership working with Health has also continued to develop positively. Collaboration with Flying Start Health visiting teams has supported earlier identification of need and smoother referral pathways into Families First and Early Language Development services. Improved information sharing and joint working have reduced duplication and strengthened preventative support for families.

A key highlight of the year was the celebration of 20 years of Flying Start. The anniversary was marked through a dedicated family information sharing event, bringing together partner agencies and services to showcase the range of support available. The event created an accessible space for families to engage with practitioners, learn more about local provision and strengthen connections across services.

An evening celebration event was also held, attended by staff, partners and families. Importantly, families who have received support through Flying Start shared their personal experiences, reflecting on the difference the programme has made to their confidence, wellbeing and their children's development. These contributions provided powerful insight into the long-term impact of the service and reinforced the importance of early intervention. The anniversary was further recognised within parenting groups during the week of the event, providing opportunities to reflect on the programme's journey and celebrate progress alongside families currently accessing support.



Significant groundwork has also been undertaken to progress the development of the Family Hub model. While the Hubs have not yet opened, this year has focused on planning and preparation. Work has included identifying suitable locations, mapping community need, engaging partners to shape the integrated Families First and Flying Start offer, and developing governance and referral frameworks. This preparatory phase has strengthened the foundations required for successful implementation.

Internally, reporting and monitoring processes have become more embedded, improving oversight and supporting clearer performance tracking. Cross-team communication has strengthened, particularly in relation to Flying Start expansion, commissioned services and Family Hub planning.

Overall, the year reflects steady, practical progress. Core services remain stable, partnerships are stronger, expansion activity is underway and significant groundwork has been completed to support the next stage of integrated delivery.

Collaborative Communication

Denbighshire Therapeutic Service have invested heavily in Collaborative Communication, which is a strength based, outcome focused model of service delivery. Collaborative Communication aims to deliver outcome focused service delivery which works collaboratively with children and families where personal outcomes are explored to overcome various life challenges. Collaborative Communication also enhances and invests in the wider workforce through developing mentors and trainers to enable Collaborative Communication to be embedded into practice. Collaborative Communication focuses on a series of skilled, thoughtful conversations that aims to resolve the service user dilemmas.

Collaboration in establishing sustainable outcomes whilst maximizing autonomy, independence and strengths is at the heart of the model. Collaborative Communication notices people for the problems they face not the problems they cause; notices the resources and strengths people have to overcome their personal obstacles and explores their strengths, values, hopes and aspirations. The Collaborative Communication model of service delivery aims to move away from the traditional problem focussed approach with task focussed plans to holistic approaches that focus on the person and their networks/family whilst understanding the unique identity of each person and situation. The ultimate goal of the model is to enable people to live as fulfilled a life as possible and achieve a sense of wellbeing. Collaborative Communication has developed a number of mentors and trainers across both children's, adults and early help services with reflective groups forming the thrust of cultural change. All new starters will be provided with Collaborative Communication skills to ensure that this approach is embedded into practice as The Denbighshire Way. The Collaborative Communication Training Team are made up of

both Adults and Children's practitioners who manage to facilitate training days throughout the year, alongside their daily responsibilities. This is a great commitment and achievement with four cohorts completing the Collaborative Communication Training Package resulting in 56 colleagues joining the 'Denbighshire Way'.

Feedback continues to be highly positive "I just wanted to say thank you for the training. I have found it so useful both in work and personal life. It was one of the best training courses I have attended". New Mentors have been able to complete the Train-the-trainer event to build further capacity across the training team.

Collaborative Communication is closely aligned to the Effective Child Protection approach.

Formi App

This continues to be embedded within the Therapeutic Service, ForMi is a person-centred planning and outcome recording tool for individuals receiving personalised support. The system makes the planning, goal setting and review process come alive and gives ownership to the individual as far as possible which in turn motivates them to achieve and develop. It supports engaging conversations where an individual and their aspirations can be understood and goals developed that are aligned to their strengths. With the support of a Mentor from the Therapeutic Service, each individual creates a strength-based personal profile and set of outcome focused goals. Actions are agreed that will support the individual to achieve each goal. These are jointly reviewed at regular intervals, including a judgement of progress against each goal on a 0 to 10 scale. Uniquely, the individual captures their achievements through words and pictures on a smartphone, very similar to a newsfeed used on many social media apps. This has the result of empowering the individual to take ownership of their own development and progress. Where wider professionals are involved in supporting the individual, Formi enables a more joined-up approach through their Circle of Support. Each person who is involved with the family's Circle of Support can see how the individual is progressing and provide encouragement, coaching, feedback and additional evidence of progression. They also have access to the individual's story, seeing their achievements in real time. This in turn enables recognition to be given on a continuous rather than periodic basis.

Lifelong Links

Lifelong Links aims to identify and engage relatives and other supportive adults connected to a care experienced child who are willing to make a lifelong commitment to that child. Research shows that the continuity and permanence of these relationships can offer young people ongoing support, provide an explanation of historical events, and reinforce their identity and sense of belonging. The Lifelong links process provides the child or young person with supportive connections for the future.

The process is guided by the young person, parents and the Lifelong links coordinator. However, the allocated social worker for the young person has specific responsibilities and expectations during the different stages of the Lifelong Links process.

If staff are considering a young person for Lifelong Links, they request a Therapeutic Consultation with the Therapeutic Service, to discuss the appropriateness of the referral. If it is decided that the Lifelong Links process is a good fit for the young person, the young person will be required to consent before being allocated a Lifelong Links Coordinator. The allocated social worker and the Lifelong Links coordinator will discuss the process further and define the expectations. Further consent is required from the individual who has PR for the child or young person to progress to a planning meeting which is arranged by the Lifelong Links Coordinator where all significant professionals are invited. Links to Lifelong Links is now live on Denbighshire landing page to ensure care experienced children and young people can also have this information to hand and contact Denbighshire Lifelong Links direct. This has proven successful so far with care experienced young people and potential supporters making contact using this link.

Family Group Conference

The Therapeutic Service provide a Family Group Conference (FGC) Service which is a process led by family members to plan and make decisions for children whom professionals have expressed concerns and who may be deemed to be at risk. This risk can be from many quarters and may be a risk of significant harm towards the children and/or a risk of the children becoming or remaining looked after by someone other than family etc. The FGC is a process that aims to build on a family's strengths

to empower them to understand the wider concerns and plan, where necessary, with the support of professional services and community networks, to keep their children safe. A FGC is often effective in making safe plans for children, enabling many to stay within their family network as an alternative to going into or remaining in care and the allocated FGC coordinator remains independent of the family situation. The FGC offer is becoming embedded into childcare practice and regular information sessions are provided to teams across the service to ensure new starters are aware of this offer.

In-Depth Working Case Study – Therapeutic Service Delivery

Mr B and Mrs B have 4 children, two of whom were in Local Authority Care when the Therapeutic Service became involved. Independent assessments of the couple identified they needed a bespoke parenting intervention to understand the needs of their children, how their drug taking behaviours had impacted on their parents, how their relationship, when volatile had caused trauma to the children and how the life experiences of their children so far may impact on them as they grow-up. Mr B and Mrs B were also identified as having learning difficulties with global IQs on the borderline with learning disability.

The team set to work building a relationship with Mr B and Mrs B so they felt safe to come to session, talk openly and let them know when they didn't understand or need information re-explaining. Videos, Virtual Reality Goggles, Drawings, Role-Play, Therapeutic Letters and Group learning were the tools used to offer psycho-education around trauma, addiction, change and wellbeing to the family over a 12 month period by a consistent small group of professionals who checked in regularly with the couple.

The outcome of this work is that all 4 of the children have now returned to the care of their parents. The children report that their parents are different now, more attentive and calmer. The grandparents say they see a clear difference and feel their grandchildren are safe. Interestingly the parents themselves discuss the shock in themselves looking back over the last few years and the remorse in their past behaviour.

This story shares the diversity of support that the Therapeutic Service can offer with families and the capacity to follow a family through their journey. Names and specific details changed for confidentiality purpose:-

Young Carers

During the 2025–2026 financial year, young carers in Denbighshire accessed a wide range of groups, trips and wellbeing activities designed to provide respite, build friendships and increase confidence. Activity was delivered across Rhyl, Prestatyn, Denbigh and rural South, with strong engagement and growing participation.

Key highlights included the success of our groups in all areas with increased numbers in Prestatyn in particular. Group activities included pizza making, crafts, party games, rock painting, rice crispy cakes, jam sessions and wellbeing discussions.

Holiday provision included day trips, family activities, first aid sessions, music production, residentials and outdoor experiences.

Other memorable experiences included crabbing at the beach, ice skating and inflatables in Deeside, Alton Towers ScareFest, Zip World Forest Coaster, Salford Children's Camp overnight stay for Under 12's, BeWILDerwood family trips and the All-Wales Young Carers Festival for our 12-18 yrs where they can meet young carers from across Wales. The trips and activities were funded by a range of different sources with our core contract supporting staffing both in coordination and at the event in some cases.

Innovation and collaboration

Denbighshire Young Carers have partnered with many brilliant local Charity sector organisations and Council run youth and play teams over the year which all add to a broader offer of support and awareness raising. We have started using Youth centres in Rhyl & Prestatyn which are being offered freely and build better working relationships with their staff.

Collaborative wellbeing sessions were delivered on a local housing estate in Rhyl with Denbighshire Play Rangers and Denbighshire Leisure Ltd, providing free family activities, snacks and community-based support. As the county is geographically spread out, support for younger children was flexibly embedded into family trips and younger age activities where appropriate.

We delivered 4-week Well-being programmes in 3 Primary schools across Denbighshire with an external provider bringing play-based workshops covering the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. The work quickly formed the young carers into a kind and inclusive group who now recognise each other in school as having caring responsibilities. It also raised awareness for the school of their status.

We have developed more relationships with High schools across our County with our rural worker using schools to support young carers individually. School drop-ins and school assemblies have started where there is energy and need.

Our rural worker has been able to offer Welsh language support more immediately and actively.

Barriers and learning

Young carers identified low confidence, anxiety about group settings and worries about staying away from home as key barriers. Pre-residential meetups, smaller trips and practical adjustments such as skating aids helped young carers feel safer and more able to take part. Learning from the year also showed that some activities need to be more flexible and tailored, particularly for quieter young carers or those who need smaller, more personalised support.

Young carers' voice

Young carers described the year positively, with comments such as:

"I loved making my own pizza – I got to choose everything!", "The residential was the best – I didn't want to go home!", "Crabbing was so fun, I even saw a jellyfish!", and "I made new friends and can't wait to see them again."

These comments reflect the importance of fun, friendship and confidence-building opportunities in helping young carers feel included and supported.

Young Carers from Denbighshire have also given up their time to be part of the Carers Trust Youth Council and the Wales Young Carers Advisory Board. A small group travelled to Cardiff for Young Carers Action Day in February to host a husting with Members of the Senedd.

One Young Carer from Bodelwyddan was invited to attend an evening at Windsor Castle with the King & Queen and Sir Keir Starmer. He took his mother on the train

in her mobility scooter only to find lifts out of order and a poor support service. However, they made it to the event just in time.

More recently a group of Denbighshire Young Carers attended a consultation day around a new initiative to collect Youth Voice in Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board.

Individual young carers have supported with training sessions with student nurses and assemblies in schools.

Overall impact

Overall, 2025 / 2026 was a strong year for Denbighshire Young Carers, with high levels of activity, meaningful partnership working and a clear focus on providing respite, building peer connections and responding flexibly to young carers' needs across the county.

What we plan for 2026 / 2027

To increase the number of Micro-Providers across Denbighshire, expanding the range of support available within local communities, and continuing to strengthen quality standards and governance arrangements to ensure citizens receive safe and person-centred support.

To expand the Community Navigator and social prescribing offer through a new partnership with BCUHB Public Health.

To continue to develop our small group home to meet our sufficiency duty under the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025.

To develop our family hubs in key locations across the county.

Partnership and Integration

“The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best outcomes for people are achieved”

“Resilience within communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including carers to learn develop and participate in society”.

Our partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and the Third Sector is vital for us to deliver seamless health and social care in line with the Social Services and Well- Being Act.

The Denbighshire Integrated Services Forum continues to provide us with an opportunity to get together to collaborate in the wider development, implementation and reporting of integrated service delivery across Denbighshire, with representatives from Health and Adult Social Care and the Third sector.

‘This is a key meeting in my diary. It gives me the opportunity to ensure our joint working is on track and provide assurance on the use of funds and in meeting our obligations. It also provides an opportunity to discuss issues as they arise, and to share experience and generate ideas. The Forum gives us protected time to focus on our joint working and ensure we are doing what we can to meet the needs of our citizens and patients’. Alison Kemp (Associate Director – Primary Care & Community Services)

‘The Denbighshire Integrated Services Forum strengthens collaboration across agencies and professional groups. By improving communication, structuring information-sharing, and supporting joint decision-making, we align our organisational goals more effectively and deliver services that are safer, more efficient, and better tailored to the needs of the people we serve.’ Chair David Soley (Adult Social Care Principal Manager, Lead Commissioner)

The Community Resource Teams (CRT) made up of Health, Social Care and Third Sector staff, with close links to GP practices continue to deliver integrated models of working to benefit citizens. A lead for each of the 4 Denbighshire CRTs alongside CRT coordinators meet with Senior Managers and leads from Conwy CRTs at the CRT Leads Focus Group, to share updates, plan and seek support for new developments. On 11th February 2026 we came together at a CRT development workshop, where we reaffirmed our commitment to CRT working and started to plan what more we want to do.

To test our view that we do deliver better services together, throughout 2025 / 2026 we have continued every month to contact citizens for feedback on the service they have received.

“We felt very comfortable talking to the Occupational Therapist and she asked all the right questions”

“The service received was excellent. The person got it right as to what was needed and what would best support me”

‘We are very grateful for the service we have received as it's made a big difference to us and we do not feel there is anything else at this stage that is needed from Social Services, we are very pleased with how the services have all come together to help him’.

‘Everything was done through the correct procedures and as it should be, there was nothing that could have been done better’

“Very happy with the service received by a lovely District Nurse”

Commissioning Services

Denbighshire County Council led on the re-tendering of the updated regional domiciliary care framework, which commenced 1st April 2025. All North Wales Local Authorities and BCUHB are party to this framework, and all partners contributed to the development of the updated contract and tender process. Feedback from agencies during a consultation exercise also significantly informed the final specification. This re-tender resulted in several new providers coming into the Denbighshire domiciliary care market, and the ‘waiting list’ for domiciliary care allocation in Denbighshire has since reduced drastically.

We continue to work with the other North Wales Local Authorities and BCUHB on the development of the updated supported living framework, due to commence in 2027.

We have built upon close working relationships and establishing more consistency with all other North Wales Local Authorities and BCUHB when it comes to care fee setting and negotiation, including the shared use of Care Cubed software to support a more consistent and transparent fee setting / negotiation methodology. Regular

regional meetings take place, and a SharePoint has been set up to ensure that all partners are able to efficiently share information and collaborate to reach fee agreements that reflect true costs of care.

We have numerous regional / sub-regional contracts, including support for young carers, Shared Lives, Independent Professional Advocacy, some Housing Support Grant supported housing, counselling for survivors of childhood sexual abuse, amongst others.

We have commissioned a refreshed self-advocacy service with Conwy Connect, that sets out to enable people with a learning disability to advocate for themselves on the things that matter to them, helping them to shape support and other services.

Joint work has continued around planning for the re-commissioning of a large number of supported living contracts, with a specific focus on enabling citizens to have a much greater degree of choice and control, supported by new procurement legislation.

Forums and Groups

Various forums have continued / been established to support effective partnerships and integrated approaches, including:

The Denbighshire Regulated Care and Support provider forum has been re-established, to share key information, network, and build stronger links between providers and Denbighshire County Council, to support best practice in commissioning and delivery.

Denbighshire Carers Strategy Group is a forum of carer organisations from both the statutory and third sector who provide information, advice, and assistance to unpaid carers. This is co-chaired by Denbighshire County Council and a Voluntary Sector partner organisation, currently North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS). The group works to develop support to meet the needs of carers in Denbighshire, members share information and experiences, and work collaboratively, linking with other local forums including Ageing Well in Denbighshire. The Group also feeds into and informs the Regional Carers Groups that report to the Regional Partnership Board.

Fortnightly Carer Peer forums follow a collaborative format and provide opportunities to find more sustainable and creative solutions to meet the support needs of carers. It helps us to better develop our understanding of carers' needs and share this across services; everyone's experience, knowledge and skills are used to create better outcomes.

Contracts and Commissioning Officers attend a working group with BCUHB and other Local Authority partners with the aim of ensuring that collaboration with the third sector is effective and meaningful. This includes exploration of joint commissioning options.

Engagement with citizens, carers, providers and wider stakeholders is used to inform the Population Needs Assessment, coordinated regionally for the six North Wales local authorities and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Service development and quality monitoring

Regular monitoring takes place for all commissioned services, which includes sourcing feedback from stakeholders, including other Denbighshire County Council teams, referrers, citizens and their families / representatives. This includes a questionnaire for citizens /families / representatives to gather feedback on care homes and domiciliary care agencies where there are concerns. Providers are also encouraged to share case studies.

In 2025, we organised a process mapping workshop with our commissioned provider NEWCIS to explore the carers' journey from referral through to monitoring and review, which helped us to review and improve referral processes and support pathway for unpaid carers. Our focus is on people's strengths and capacity and using community services where possible.

Age Friendly Communities

In Denbighshire our work to become a more age friendly community is steered by the Ageing Well in Denbighshire (AWiD) group, a network of individuals and agencies from the voluntary, statutory, and independent sector who share a common goal of working collaboratively to make Denbighshire a good county in which to grow old.

We have just under 100 members and meet quarterly to discuss areas of concern or development. We have gained the status of being an Age Friendly community, (AFC) as ratified by the World Health Organization (WHO) and supported by the Older Person's Commissioner for Wales. To become a member of the WHO AFC, we worked collaboratively to create an action plan, looking at the actions we need to focus on, under the 8 different AFC domains:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transport
- Housing
- Social participation
- Respect and social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services

Our multi agency steering group meets quarterly to steer and evaluate progress and to ensure that everyone is involved, including statutory and 3rd sector and older people themselves.

Cllr Elen Heaton, Lead Member for Health and Social Care, continues to take an active role as our Age Friendly and Older Person's Champion.

With the help from a Welsh government grant we are able to extend knowledge and awareness of AWiD amongst community-based groups and other organisations with connections to older people, and in so doing expand the membership of AWiD and continue to develop Denbighshire as an Age Friendly County by:

- Promoting awareness of Denbighshire's Age Friendly Action Plan and developing links with stakeholders and others to progress and measure the benefits of the defined actions.
- Maintaining active membership of relevant Age Friendly Support networks including the All-Wales Age Friendly Community of Practice and North Wales Age Friendly Community of Practice.

Ageing Well in Denbighshire (AWiD) includes, amongst others, members of Denbighshire Leisure, DCC Contracts and Commissioning team, Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, North Wales Police, Public Health, Housing representations, British Red Cross, Care and Repair, Disability fora and individual members of the community. Members represent AWiD on other relevant regional and county groups such as the carer's strategy group and Regional and Denbighshire wide Dementia groups.

AWiD hold regular engagement activities with older people who help to evaluate themes which matter to them and to crystalise the actions considered to be age friendly thus helping us to develop our action plan.

Examples of ongoing activity include:

- Extra Care Housing tenants, care home activity coordinators and other volunteers are engaging with older people across the county, collecting and recording their stories with a view to collecting them on 'Casgliad y Werin'.
- Ongoing engagement events across the county, for instance in connection with Carers' week or Dementia Action week. This includes supporting various creative intergenerational projects, many including schools, and helping a care home arrange a walk in memory of one of their residents to raise awareness of dementia
- We are involved in regular Walkability / Wheelability audits in which members of AWiD advise planners and the Active Travel team on the kinds of things they should take into account when changing the design of towns. Representatives of our Sensory Loss team, FDF, the Disability forum and Wheelability who gives advice based on experience as a wheelchair user and experience as an equality advocate.
- Members of AWiD have advised colleagues from Public Health on the reasons for poor take up of health screening in the county and work is currently underway to look at the transport and parking challenges which contribute to this.

We try hard to engage too with older people who do not traditionally take part in formal events and meetings. Members of AWiD have individual discussions with older people who have excellent ideas to contribute but who prefer 1:1 meetings.

Discussions often take place in residential settings, extra care housing schemes and people's own homes, if invited.

Our membership helps to allow us access to those who are less frequently represented for instance members of North Wales Regional Equality Network. Members representing those with disabilities ensure that all venues that we use are accessible, all our work is bilingual, and interpreters are always available including British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters.

We have close working relationship with Dementia Aware Denbighshire who support most of our age friendly initiatives and a strong focus on initiatives with an intergenerational aspect. Recent intergenerational work around falls and an intergenerational sports day are two examples.

General Practice and Additional Activities

Good practice, case studies, tool kits and briefing sheets encouraged community and voluntary involvement in the Population Needs Assessment, as well as surveys, engagement events and feedback from practitioners.

We do a lot of listening to unpaid carers and creating opportunities for them to contribute to the design of services, ensuring their voice is heard at different levels e.g. in assessment and involving them in the commissioning and contract monitoring of services. Our communications team promotes carers information via social media, and we have worked with them to raise awareness of activities for National Carers Week, Carers Rights Day and Carers Week.

We also utilise community facing resources such as our Talking Points sessions to reach out and complete outreach work around hidden carers. This approach ensures a clear and effective referral process between social services health and third sector.

We have a close working relationship with Working Denbighshire. Local carers are benefitting from a proposal that was developed through a partnership approach, ensuring best use of resources and reduce duplication, highlighting any gaps that Trail Blazer funding may be able to address. Trail Blazer funding has also been secured for two new posts, working specifically with unpaid carers.

Community Resource Teams support integrated working between primary care and community. Our commissioned Carer Assessors are linked to the four community resource hubs located across Denbighshire.

Community Equipment Service

Partnership working and integrated service delivery remain central to the service's approach. During the year, strong collaborative relationships have been maintained with health partners, including district nursing teams and wider clinical services, supported by regular engagement and attendance at team meetings to promote shared understanding and consistent practice.

Joint working initiatives, such as collaborative reviews of equipment in care home settings and ongoing engagement with operational teams, have strengthened coordination across services. The service has also contributed to regional activity, including participation in the North Wales Maintenance Contract, demonstrating a commitment to system-wide improvement.

Ongoing work to align processes for Continuing Healthcare (CHC) equipment highlights the service's continued focus on improving integration across organisational boundaries and ensuring a coordinated approach to service delivery.

The Local Integration Family Team

Denbighshire hosts the Local Integrated Family Team (LIFT), a Regional Integrated Fund project that aims to intervene early to support families experiencing difficulties with managing their child's challenging and harmful behaviours at home. Now in its 5th year the project is a partnership collaboration between Denbighshire and Conwy County Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

In the last 12 months the team has incorporated Family Systemic Therapy into the team's interventions and continued to implement the Positive Behavioural Support Framework, specifically developing their skills in supporting families to create 'capable environments' for young people.

We have successfully recruited a Clinical Psychologist and Family Systemic Therapist into the team, and alongside our Occupational Therapist they provide expert input into our support plans for the families we work with.

LIFT offers three branches of support: Direct intervention with families, provision of specialist advice and signposting and workforce development through collaborative communication consultations with professionals working with families.

Demand for the support offered by LIFT continues to be very high with significant factors driving demand linked to rise in the incidence of neurodiversity, use of social media, impact of the cost-of-living crisis, parental physical emotional/mental health and substance misuse.

Direct Work with Families

LIFT has directly worked with 42 families during the year. Our approach is about empowering families as opposed to creating dependency or solving the problem for families. LIFT helps both families and other agencies understand why people/children/young people behave the way they do - how there is always a feeling and a function to a behaviour. Sometimes that understanding alone can bring about change and other times more bespoke strategies/interventions maybe needed. Evidence does suggest that there is no child behaviour change without main carer change and/or environmental change. "Regulated connected children who feel safe behave well". Main carer and environmental change can be a barrier to supporting families where there are behaviours of concern at home.

A key theme from family feedback was positive communication.

They were 'listened to' and they felt "it was a big relief to finally be heard". As a result of this they described a 'good' sense of 'connection'.

Families described 'everything always' being 'explained' that the team ensured 'other professionals were on board'. The team helped 'to recognise issues and were straight with us' and the support was 'outstanding and very beneficial'. As a result 'there was a huge difference', 'we're back on track' and 'there is so much lifted off my shoulders'.

To help with empowerment, this year, the LIFT team has created three publicly available psycho educational links available on LIFT's website -

<https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/health-and-social-care/children-young-people-and-families/lift.aspx>

When families leave the service, we provide them with a closure letter that summarises their goal and progress they achieved when supported by the team, the interventions and techniques that they have used and signposting to key resources used for future reference.

We completed an analysis of closure letters which provides an overview of the work the LIFT team have completed with families and summarises the outcomes achieved using the baseline and closure outcome measures.

Children and families were referred to the Local Integrated Family Team (LIFT) due to a range of complex and interrelated needs. Referrals commonly cited behaviours that challenge, including physical and verbal aggression, disruptive behaviour, property destruction, meltdowns and difficulties managing emotions. Many children experienced additional concerns around sleep, eating, sensory sensitivities, emotional wellbeing, school attendance, peer relationships and transitions within education. A number of referrals also highlighted self-injurious behaviours and ongoing mental health concerns. Neurodevelopmental differences, including concerns relating to autism and ADHD, were frequently noted, alongside the need for further assessment or coordinated support.

Families often sought support to better understand their child's behaviour, strengthen relationships and manage difficulties at home and school, particularly where early experiences, care arrangements or increased stress had impacted family functioning. Goals set by the family related to behaviours of concern including reducing 'outbursts', 'meltdowns' and 'not going off like a firework' and 'reduce self-harming'. Families wanted to understand their children better, including their behaviours and triggers and learn strategies to support their children and 'be consistent', 'set structure in a way they understand' and 'have boundaries in place'.

Workforce Development through Collaborative Communication consultations

LIFT also has a role in workforce development, upskilling staff working directly with families to better understand how they can support families manage behaviour that challenges at home. We do this by providing collaborative communication/consultation, training and support to both professionals and families, building skills and capacity in workforce. This year the team completed 390 collaborative communications/consultations with professionals supporting families during the year.

Helping services to 'hold on', rather than 'refer on' in line with the regions 'No Wrong Door' ethos.

Feedback from professionals describe our support as:

"Incredibly valuable, we explored a range of actions, tailored to the family's needs. They encouraged us and used their expertise to break things down into manageable steps. The information around how to manage behaviours, person centred, and strength-based approaches was very informative. They had a calm and reassuring approach, I felt at ease and supported, especially during moments when I felt unsure or stuck. They put me at ease from the beginning and helped me to move forward with a plan. Always approachable and full of enthusiasm, nothing was too much trouble. They connected with the parents, showing empathy and working openly and honestly. There was a significant and positive shift with the family, something I genuinely didn't think was possible".

Practical and Preventative Support

LIFT provided practical and preventative support designed to stabilise families and reduce the need for crisis led responses. This included completing neurodevelopmental and sensory profiles, using tools such as the Capable Environments Audit, and supporting environmental adjustments at home and in school to better meet children's needs. Families were supported to access appropriate assessments and services, including neurodevelopmental pathways, health appointments and specialist provision, with practical assistance provided where barriers existed. By helping families put strategies and structures in place early, and by strengthening wider support networks, LIFT enabled families to manage difficulties more effectively, reducing reliance on crisis intervention and supporting sustainable change beyond closure.

Over the next year we aim to build on the stability of having a full team, develop and promote our publicly available resources with our partners and communities and plan for the future development of the team following the cessation of the Regional Integrated Funding.

Bwthyn Y Ddol

Bwthyn y Ddol is a residential assessment centre and multi-disciplinary team established in partnership with Conwy CBC and BCUHB. The multi-disciplinary team continues to work with children and young people who are at the edge of care and are at risk of becoming looked after as their parent or carer, for a variety of reasons, is unable to manage a healthy family dynamic. The team initially focus on completing a holistic formulation of strengths and difficulties, risks and needs through a consultation process, in order to recommend a program of interventions.

The model of care has been developed through a multi-agency team with a focus on the requirements and specific needs of the children and young people within Denbighshire and Conwy. This innovative approach to an evidence-based model of care, along with the reflective practice adopted by the team, has already seen positive results with children / young people successfully completing the intervention and safely remaining at home with family.

There is a clear pathway for referral into the unit and children from both Conwy and Denbighshire have been successfully supported within the residential element of the centre, both in the planned admission building and the emergency provision, Eryri. Bwthyn Y Ddol has been subject of a CIW inspection and received a rating of Good in all domains.

Parent Advocacy Child Protection

Over the past 3 years, Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) have been providing independent professional advocacy for parents of children in the Child Protection Arena across North Wales which is person-centred, issue based and outcome focussed. Parents are entitled to support at related meetings, including Initial Child Protection Case Conferences, Review Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Groups and referrals can be made by email/telephone/face-to-face either direct from parents or from professionals having secured the consent of the parent.

The table below shows the number of referrals and meetings supported:

	2024 / 2025	2025 / 2026
No. of referrals	21	18

Meetings Supported		
• Initial Child Protection Conference	3	1
• Core Group	11	8
• Review Child Protection Conference	10	6

TGP have received 2 spot purchase requests for parents they were already working with to assist and support with parenting assessments, solicitors, court hearings and also to support with understanding paperwork associated with these forums as well as liaising with professionals on behalf of parents.

Active Offer of Advocacy

Any child or young person who becomes looked after or enters the Child Protection arena is entitled to an active offer of advocacy to help them have their voices heard at meetings etc. The Advocacy Service is currently being provided by Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP)

The table below shows the number of referrals received and how many went on to Issue Based Advocacy:

	2024 / 2025	2025 / 2026
No. of Active Offer referrals received	14	24
• Child Protection	9	16
• Looked After	5	8
No. of referrals that went on to IBA	4	14

Mind of My Own

The service continues to offer Mind of My Own as a tool to gather and evidence the voice of the child. Platform updates now allow children and young people to add further detail or context when saying they feel scared, unhappy or unsafe.

Individualised reports have also been developed for children and young people who

have submitted multiple statements, to consider frequency, patterns and themes. Independent Skill Group have also utilised Mind of My Own in a 'Planning for Adulthood Session'.

Mind of My Own Good Practice Case Study re: Child Protection

Recent feedback received from a Conference Chairperson highlighted a school's proactive use of Mind of My Own as part of a Child Protection Conference, capturing the child's views and lived experience, allowing interventions to be adjusted in response to any concerns.

Child A is 7 years old and subject to the Child Protection Conference process, their name is placed on the Child Protection Register and are receiving ongoing support from School.

Feedback from Conference Chairperson:

"School supplied a thorough report for conference in timescale. The support they are providing Child A is excellent! They are appropriately advocating for them, gaining their wishes and feeling through nurture sessions and the use of Mind of my own app (Child A has really engaged with this tool . Child A is able to use a quiet area at lunchtime. Staff have caring and trusting relationships with this child, it's clear school is their safe place and they feel able to share their worries. They promote their strengths and achievements and are communicating regularly with parents in a respectful manner whilst continuing to raise safeguarding concerns as soon as they arise."

Feedback from the Child's Social Worker:

Child A sent several Mind of My Own statements including those where they have reported they feel either unsafe, unhappy or scared. Whilst each individual statement is received and reviewed, we have been able to work with Child A's Social Worker to produce a report to analyse patterns and trends which have been used in a chronology when considering care proceedings. Evidencing the child's voice, lived experience and reporting of concerns.

"Child A is supported every morning for emotional wellbeing, school give Child A the option of using Mind of My Own during the session hence we don't have statements every day. Most children won't need to have daily check-ins but for Child A it is needed, so sometimes we get loads of statements and other times not so much. Child A uses their school Hwb email, and they log in to Mind of My Own at school, it works really well. School has time to explain and use Mind of My Own, and they have good relationships with the children. Children can use it even when Social Workers aren't there, and it captures 'in-the-moment' feelings / thoughts and means we can then act quicker and visit the child to address any concerns between the regular scheduled visits. Having more schools onboard would be such a big help in getting views of children instead of waiting for our visits"

Return Home Interviews

Denbighshire are currently in a pilot regarding Return Home Interviews. This was agreed following a regional workshop to look at the Return Home Interview process across all 6 Local Authority's in North Wales. Denbighshire started the pilot in January 2026 and Ynys Môn in November 2025. We are both working with the regional partnership board who have funded for two return home coordinators.

The purpose of the pilot is to streamline the process so that all 6 Local Authorities have the same process to work in partnership with the one North Wales Police force. The aim is to look at the data to understand any barriers to completing this work and understanding the reason to why children and young people go missing not just from an exploitation perspective. It will support the understanding as well as any prevention services that can be offered to reduce 'Missing' episodes.

Joint Working Case Study – Therapeutic Service Delivery

The Therapeutic Service and BCU Neurodevelopment (ND) Team have been working together for many years to support the children in Denbighshire who are open to Statutory Services. Over the last few years following an agreed pathway many children, and their families, have received a fuller understanding of themselves and their Neurodiversity through this joint working. This is a short story about one such young person (name and specific details changed for confidentiality purpose):

Child B, His parents would say that he has always been a little “different” from his siblings, however due to the many external factors impacting on Child B and his family such as food poverty, learning difficulties within parents and bullying within the community Child B’s challenges within the school and home were always formulated within this context.

Six months ago the ND Team and Therapeutic Service got together to think about Child B holistically. Using their shared resources, and the already known history of the family and Child B within the education setting a full understanding of Child B was drawn together, without the family being exposed to complex assessment or appointment demands which would have overwhelmed them. This meant that the family spent time with known professionals understanding their son in their home at their own pace and earlier this year he received a diagnosis of ADHD.

The parents shed tears of relief when the news was shared with them. They explained that they felt heard and that they understood the needs of their Son and his lived experience so much more.

National and Regional Collaborative Working

Across Adult and Children’s Social Services, the management team are working collaboratively with a range of key stakeholders and partners across the North Wales Region and nationally across Wales.

The Director of Social Services is a long-standing member of the Association of Director’s of Social Services who work collaboratively with Welsh Government and the National Care Office to support the sustainability of Social Care services in Wales. The Director is also joint chair of the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Board and a member of the Regional Partnership Board, Vice Chair of the Area

Planning Board and a member of the Education Workforce Council where she chairs the Regulation and Registration Committee

The Head of Services for Children's Services is the chair of the All-Wales Head of Children's Services which feeds into work being undertaken by the National Care Office. They are also a member of the North Wales Children's Regional Partnership Board, as well as representing Denbighshire on a range of other groups such as – NW Vulnerability & Exploitation Board, North Wales Single Unified Safeguarding Case Review Group (Children's), Local Family Justice Board, and Digital, Data and Technology Board

The Head of Adult Social Care and Homelessness is a member of the All-Wales Adult Heads of Social Care which works collaboratively with the National Care Office, and they represent the group on the national Social Care Climate Change Board. They are also the chair of the Regional Supported Employment Project Steering Group as well as being heavily involved in the North Wales Heads of Adult Social Care Group.

Denbighshire Social Services is represented by managers within the leadership team at a range of both national and regional partnership meetings, steering groups and boards.

Well-Being

“People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm”

“People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible”

- CH/021: The number of Strategy Meetings held during the year that progressed to Section 47 enquiries. 422 strategy meetings progressed to Section 47 enquiries compared to 351 in 2024 / 2025
- CH/022: The total number of Section 47 enquiries completed during the year that progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference. 106 cases

progressed to Initial Child Protection Conferences, which is an increase of 49% compared to 2024 / 2025 (71)

- CH/024: The number of children who were added to the child protection register during the collection year: There were 84 children added to the child protection register which is a 45% increase from 2024 / 2025 (58)
- AD/020: The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during the year. In 2025 / 2026 this totalled 449, an increase of 94 from the previous year
- AD/023: The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk where it is necessary for enquires to be made. This was 449 during 2025 / 2026
- AD/026: The total number of enquiries where it was determined that additional action should be taken. In 42 cases it was determined that additional action should be taken which is a 16% decrease from the year 2024 / 2025 (8 cases)

In Children's Services we have seen an increase of 17% in the number of strategy meetings held that resulted in Section 47 enquiries compared to 2024 / 2025, this then seen the number of enquiries progress to an Initial Child Protection Conference increase to by 49%. There is also a 45% increase in the number of children being added to the Child Protection Register.

In Adult Services we have also seen an increase of 8% in the number of reports of an adult suspected at being at risk, however the number of enquiries resulting in additional action decreased by 16%. There are varying reasons for this, but could include the person was not deemed to be an adult at risk or there was not sufficient evidence of abuse or neglect to meet the thresholds for safeguarding.

Training: Safeguarding 2025 / 2026

Regional learning opportunities are promoted to staff on a regular basis and are encouraged to attend. Training to support safeguarding in 2025 / 2026 included:

On-line digital resilience, Ask and Act, Group B Safeguarding Children and Adults, Assessing and Analysing the Risk of Significant Harm, Extremism Prevent and Vulnerability, Effective Child Protection, VR Trauma Informed Workshop, Understanding Cannabis: Norms, Risks and Responsibilities.

Virtual Reality Training

Since November 2022 Denbighshire have been investing in Virtual Reality (VR) headsets and content through the Anster / Cornerstone Group who specialise in training from children and young people. The content has been developed in collaboration with children and young people who have experienced care settings and highlights issues such as the impact of early childhood trauma, neglect and abuse; therapeutic responses to challenging behaviour in school and in placement; the causes and impact of criminal exploitation and a series of scenarios which deals with topics such as sexual exploitation, domestic violence and the impact of social media on young lives.

The Therapeutic Team are utilising the resource to support key family members in understanding the lived experience of children in their care. This intervention has been impactful and allowed them to consider the effect early childhood experiences has had on shaping emotional responses whilst in placement. The use of VR to support learning has been so well received, it is now also being employed in the roll out of the Effective Child Protection model.

Alongside this, the Workforce Development Team has been leading a series of workshops with a variety of staff in Denbighshire County Council to support understanding of being trauma aware in practice and consider the roots of trauma and trauma responses in the individuals we work with. The evaluations have demonstrated that this has been well received and that the use of VR has supported deeper emotional connectedness to the subject matter and greater empathy with the child/young person's point of view. "As an adult I found I couldn't make eye contact with the man in the film and shocked at how powerless I felt. That does not come from a textbook". The team are continuing to use the resource to support learning events and regularly lead sessions with students in Wrexham University and Coleg Llandrillo Menai. They are also currently in discussions with North Wales Police to deliver sessions to officers.

The use of VR technology has now been incorporated into specific parent psychoeducational programs called Connected Parent and NPP which supports parents and carers to understand child development through the lens of attachment, trauma and neurodiversity.

These programs have been well received thus far with feedback highlighting “I always knew my own childhood wasn’t great and to do this [program] has helped me understand what happened for me so I can stop my children having the same life”.

Safeguarding Standards

The Workforce Development Team are continuing the development and rollout of Group B and Group C training. Working with external training providers to develop training packages, and with internal teams and the wider sector to ensure that workers are accessing the correct level of training for their role.

Just Enough Support

Just Enough Support is a time limited project which will provide short term support to help individuals to learn new skills or build on existing skills. The project is occupational therapy led. Occupational therapy helps people do the things that are important to them, need or have to do in their lives. Following an assessment that identifies occupational potential and utilising preventative approach, it has also been seen to reduce the need for long term statutory support. The project works with adults with Learning Disabilities and / or Autism to become more independent with a variety of activities of daily living. For example, personal care routines, cooking skills, travel training and money management and support to engage within local communities and support to obtain and attend volunteer placements.

Just enough support looks at all internal and external resources to help identify the most appropriate level of support for citizens, thus following the universal level of support that the Royal College of Occupational Therapy (RCOT) promotes. This year the service has worked alongside Llandrillo College.

We have seen an increase in referrals to Just enough support within the complex disabilities team. Citizens are being referred to the service for support regarding budgeting. Due to the complexity and interrelated areas that budgeting covers, we

were keen to create an opportunity for our citizens to access a local college and a tailored made course, specifically to increase their education around the subject. The 5 week course developed and delivered in partnership with Llandrillo college covered the following areas.

Attitudes to money

- What is Income and expenditure
- Essential and non-essential spends
- Personal wants as needs (prioritising spending)
- Cost of products- Economically shopping
- Taste test- brand vs none brands
- Shopping on a budget
- Banking terminology bank cards, process of payments and understanding a bank statement
- Creating a personal budget plan

Following the course, those attending provided the following feedback:

“I understand how to save better”

“It has been very interesting”

“I felt happy on the course”

“It was very helpful”

“I can do more things on my own, I can now do a monthly budget”

“It has helped me to be careful with my money”

The tutor from Llandrillo College provided the following feedback:

The sessions went well, and I thoroughly enjoyed working with the group. I believe this course is essential, as there is a clear gap in the current system. We are continuing to collaborate with the occupational therapist from the Complex Disability Team to develop and offer additional courses in 2026.

The Just Enough Support project will be planning further collaborative courses with Llandrillo College to support citizens independence and autonomy over the next 12 months.

Edge of Care Programme

The Edge of Care Program sits within the Therapeutic Service and aims to:

- Support families to address their problems and make positive changes that can reduce the risks for their children, as well as helping them make a positive contribution to the community in which they live.
- Provide intensive support to vulnerable families with multiple complex problems, where there is or has been a strong possibility of a child becoming looked after
- Enable a child's circumstances to improve and to give the family skills so they can sustain their own improvements.

The program has a clear focus on providing intensive home-based intervention for the whole family where children are considered to be 'on the edge of care'. The edge of care program also provides a similarly high intensity intervention for care-experienced children including those in residential settings where the plan is for them to return to their family of origin or general foster care or children who have been adopted where significant support is required to prevent their placement from faltering. The edge of care program works within the IFST model of assessment and intervention and provides the intervention over a maximum of 12 weeks delivering practical short and building community/wider resources using clear outcome focused goals co-developed with the child/young person and their family.

Parent Participation Group

The Parents and Carers are our first line of defence in keeping children safe from all forms of exploitation. Being aware of the changes that might indicate their child is being exploited means parents can seek the right support.

PPG is a parent and carer led group which brings parents and carers together to share experiences in a safe space. The group is facilitated by Denbighshire Therapeutic Service and below are some of the things parents and carers have said about the group:

“I was scared to walk in, but the people made me feel so welcome and less alone”

“I am not alone...I feel more confident”

“I have learnt so much around CSE and now I understand”

“I cried when joining, it was so emotional”

The group has professionals from various sectors join the session to share the purpose of their role and share education, the group provide feedback on things that go well and the things don't go so well. Through this process of both professionals and families sharing information and learning from each other the children in the community are able to be kept safer. We have received ten new attendees to the group. The venue now requires a small payment to reserve this space and this is seen as a wise and continued need for our parents and carers.

With strong links to the Iveson Trust, the Therapeutic Service secured a full day Train-the-trainer Experts by Experience event which was attended by Denbighshire social work, health, safeguarding, independent residential care providers, Bwthyn y Ddol, education, return home specialists, youth justice and specialist exploitation police officer. The intent for the coming year will be to develop a small training team to develop this as a resource in the wider community.

DBT Skills Group

The Therapeutic Service have delivered a well-respected therapeutic intervention Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) for nearing seven years. DBT is a skills-based experience that allows parents and carers to develop core life skills that help

individuals regulate strong emotions, manage stressful situations and experience a kinder relationship with themselves and others. The group covers four sets of skills; Mindfulness (increasing self-awareness to help a person cope); Interpersonal Effectiveness (feeling able to communicate with people more effectively); Emotion Regulation (learning how to understand emotions and how they affect behaviours) and Distress Tolerance (increasing ability to tolerate feelings of distress and to cope more effectively in a crisis). When brought together, these skills build towards a life worth living.

The Therapeutic Service has great success in working with men as fathers and carers and a male DBT Group is now part of the DBT offer. Four separate groups have been facilitated by the Therapeutic Team seeing 42 mothers and fathers benefit from learning together. Feedback remains positive “amazing, I should have had this when I was younger”, “very powerful stuff, will never forget this and will keep practicing”.

Where parents and carers may struggle to attend the group, 1:1 DBT skills can be offered as a way of building confidence to join a future group as the messages from attendees highlights the powerful nature of being alongside others in validating progress and potential barriers to recognizing and celebrating personal strengths.

Effective Child Protection Model

Denbighshire Education and Children's Service are in the process of implementing the Effective Child Protection Model. Training for our internal staff and partner agencies has taken place with further sessions scheduled.

Training & Support	Attendees
Internal Staff Training	79
Mentor Support Sessions	14
Partner Agency Briefings	64
Partner Agency Half Day Workshops	65

1st December 2025 Soft Launch - all documents, guidance and templates made available to staff in order to support preparatory assessments and reports required to

enable Conference to be scheduled. Staff are provided with continued ongoing support via drop-in sessions with mentors and reflective sessions for support and guidance.

1st January 2026 Conference Launch - all initial Child Protection Case Conferences as of this date have taken place under Effective Child Protection model.

Regular Bulletins are shared internally with staff and partners. Discussions have taken place with a variety of stakeholders to further develop processes and embed the model, across internal teams and services but also with our partner agencies and other Local Authorities using ECP, sharing good practice. Guidance for professionals, families, children and young people updated in line with ECP Model and made available on public facing webpage.

We continue to welcome feedback from our stakeholders which informs further developments.

What we plan for 2026 / 2027

To implement actions resulting from the Supreme Court judgment redefining deprivation of liberty

To continue collaboration with Llandrillo College and our Just Enough Support service to deliver collaborative courses to support citizen's independence and autonomy.

To further develop processes and embed Denbighshire's Effective Child Protection Model

4. Other information section

Inspections and reviews

During 2025 / 2026 Adult Social Care and Children's Services were inspected or reviewed by Care Inspectorate Wales in 4 different settings.

All inspections and reviews follow the principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and each inspection looks at 4 main themes – People, Prevention, Well-Being and Partnerships.

Cysgod Y Gaer residential care home in Corwen was inspected in August 2025 and a link to the report can be found here [Cysgod Y Gaer CIW inspection report](#).

Independence at Home Team our domiciliary care service was inspected in August 2025 and a link to the report can be found here [Domiciliary Care Service CIW inspection report](#)

Adult Social Care had a Performance Evaluation Inspection in September 2026 and a link to the report can be found here [Performance Evaluation inspection report](#)

Dolwen residential care home in Denbigh was inspected in December 2025 and a link to the report can be found here [Dolwen CIW inspection report](#).

Complaints and representations

Complaints relating to Social Services are processed under two separate procedures. These procedures are managed by a dedicated and statutory officer namely the Statutory and Corporate Complaints Officer.

1. Social Services Complaints Procedure Regulations (Wales) 2014 where the subject of complaint is receiving a service from the authority or the complainant is acting with consent. This could be a family member or, for example, an advocate.
2. Your Voice Complaints Policy. This is the council's own complaints policy and adopted from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales own Model Guidance for Complaints 2019.

This enables members of the public, who whilst not directly receiving services, to make appropriate complaints where they feel a service failure has occurred.

This could, as an example, involve a member of the public making a complaint against a Authority run Care Home due to an observation made even though they have no family residing there.

Direct complaints against members of staff where misconduct or professional standards are questioned can also be dealt with internally via HR processes due to GDPR.

Complaint areas are broken down into the following areas: Communication, Confidentiality, Courtesy and Respect, Equality, Information, Service and Staff. Equality complaints are further broken down into the Protected Characteristics.

The complaints process has two stages, informal resolution at Stage 1 and formal resolution at Stage 2.

Service Area	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Upheld/Partly Upheld Complaints
Education and Children Services	3	12	8
Adult Social Care and Homelessness Service	13	5	10

There are complaints / concerns that cannot be subject to the complaints policies where investigations are ongoing. These would be complaints involving, for instance, court proceedings or adult/child protection matters. In those cases, a complainant is invited to resubmit their complaint when the relevant processes have been concluded.

In addition, where a complaint is raised verbally and responded to within 24 hours to the satisfaction of the complainant this is not recorded as a complaint and is classed as an informal concern. This accounts for a number of issues that might arise on home visits where prompt and detailed explanations of processes are able to satisfy initial concerns.

This is often helpful for complainants not wishing to be involved in a full complaints process and who feel that an initial conversation, usually with a Team Manager is sufficient.

Most complaints recorded in 2025/2026 related to issues concerning 'Service' and 'Communication', categories that encompass most functions within Adult and Children's Services.

An example of a complaint relating to service was investigated at Stage 2 in 2025 / 2026 where an issue existed with the services provided by a Care Home. As the Authority ultimately commissioned the service, a Stage 2 complaint investigation was carried out by an Independent Investigating Officer who found no issues in the Authorities role and did not uphold the complaint.

The systems used to record complaints are designed to assist in determining the root cause analysis of complaints to the Authority. There were no areas of concern that were repeatedly raised in 2025/2026.

There were no complaints or representations received by the Authority in 2025/2026 linked to the Protected Characteristics. The Arbiter for Local Authority complaints processes is the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, and no investigation decisions were made against the Authority in 2025/ 2026, although we did receive a recommendation for one case.

Other sources of information

Glossary of terms

Bwthyn y Ddol

This is a multi-disciplinary team approach to working with children and young people who are at the edge of care and are at risk of becoming looked after as their parent or carer, for a variety of reasons, is unable to manage a healthy family dynamic. The team initially focus on completing a holistic formulation of strengths and difficulties, risks and needs through a consultation process, in order to recommend a program of interventions.

The model of care has been developed through a multi-agency team with a focus on the requirements and specific needs of the children and young people within Denbighshire and Conwy. This innovative approach to an evidence-based model of care, along with the reflective practice adopted by the team, has already seen

positive results with children / young people successfully completing the intervention and safely remaining at home with family.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

Care Inspectorate Wales are the independent regulator of social care and childcare in Wales. They register, inspect and take action to improve the quality and safety of services for the well-being of the people of Wales.

Community Navigators

Work alongside the local authority's Single Point of Access and conduct a What Matters assessment to determine what help they can provide and/or signpost you to suitable support in the community. See details available on [DEWIS Cymru](#) resource.

Community Resource Teams (CRTs)

Offer a more holistic approach to community-based health and social care with health staff (including community nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and older person's mental health teams) and social services staff (including social workers, occupational therapists and social care practitioners) all based together. There are nine joint teams in Denbighshire and Conwy focusing on working closer together to provide care closer to home, offering better provision for the population and an increased focus and investment on prevention and early intervention. See details in [County Voice](#)

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Skills Groups

DBT is a skills-based experience that allows parents and carers to develop core life skills that help individuals regulate strong emotions, manage stressful situations and experience a kinder relationship with themselves and others.

Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU)

DASU supports and advocates for individuals and their children who are abused by someone with whom they have a close and intimate relationship. Further details can be found on the [DASU](#) website

Edge of Care Team - Adults

The Edge of Care team is based within Adult Social Care Services and recruits, trains and deploys Volunteers. The Team has demonstrated how the project can

positively impact on planned care pathways, supporting discharge from hospital for citizens, working closely with our Community Resource Teams in delivering a 'team around the individual' approach, reducing demand for traditional planned care.

Edge of Care Service - Children

This is support for vulnerable families whose children are on the at risk of becoming looked after by the local authority. Details available on [Welsh Government](#) website.

Families First

Families First is a program designed to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families by offering early intervention and support to whole families, rather than just individuals. It emphasizes a strengths-based approach, focusing on what's working well within a family to build resilience and self-reliance. The program promotes multi-agency collaboration to ensure families receive joined-up support when they need it, aiming to prevent problems from escalating and reduce the need for costly statutory services later on. [Get help from Families First | GOV.WALES](#)

Flying Start

Flying Start is a Welsh Government program targeting disadvantaged areas to improve outcomes for children aged 0-3 and their families. It provides enhanced services like childcare, health visiting, parenting support, and language and play programs, aiming to give children a "Flying Start" in life before they begin school. The program is geographically targeted, focusing on areas with high proportions of children living in income-deprived households. [Flying Start programme | GOV.WALES](#)

Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA)

Independent Mental Capacity Advocates are entirely independent of local authorities and NHS bodies. Their primary role is not to make decisions, but to ensure that the individual's wishes, feelings, beliefs, and values are fully represented and that decision-makers follow the legal "best interests" process.

Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA)

An Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA) is a free, confidential advocate who specialises in the Mental Health Act. They help people understand their rights,

explore care options, and ensure their voices are heard when decisions are made about their treatment.

More than just words (Mwy na geiriau)

More than just words” (or Mwy na geiriau) is the Welsh Government’s strategic framework for the Welsh language in health, social care, and early years services. It mandates an “Active Offer,” requiring services to be provided in Welsh proactively without someone having to ask for them.

Moving with Dignity

Since 2019, an Occupational Therapist has been working on this project within the Review Team, moving forward with practical plans to implement changes to the way Denbighshire residents are assessed for and receive moving and handling support. She has been tasked with scoping the issue, researching best practice, and identifying ways of providing effective training and reaching the right staffing groups (including local authority, health colleagues and provider services).

This potentially has the benefit of speeding up the hospital discharge process and it could have a positive impact on the well-being and sense of control of citizens and their carers, increasing resilience and engagement.

North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS)

Deliver information, one to one support, training and counselling to unpaid carers in North East Wales. Details available on [DEWIS Cymru](#) resource.

Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)

PATH is a person-centred, visual planning framework that helps individuals and teams define long-term goals and map actionable routes to achieve them. It is widely used in education, healthcare, and transition planning to focus on potential rather than limitations.

Section 47

A Section 47 enquiry is a legal investigation by Local Authority, Children’s Service’s and the police. It is triggered when there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, ‘significant harm’. Its goal is to find out if the child is safe and determine if protective action is needed.

Single Point of Access (SPoA)

The team consists of experienced staff from health, social care, and the third Sector, who are able to provide information, advice and assistance about the services available. SPoA acts as the 'front door to services' to ensure you receive the right care, in the right place by people who have the right skills at the right time, first time. Details available of [DCC](#) website.

Social Services and Well-being Act (SSWBA) 2014 and Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act (RISCA) 2016

The SSWBA provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. More information available on the [Social Care Wales](#) website.

The RISCA strengthens protection for those who need it, establishes a regulatory system that is in-line with the SSWBA and creates a regulatory system that is centred around people who need care and support, and the social care workforce. The Act provides the statutory framework for the regulation and inspection of social care in Wales. More information available on the [Social Care Wales](#) website.

The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP)

The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) is a Welsh Government strategy launched in 2022, designed to actively dismantle systemic and institutional racism. Its overarching goal is to achieve an anti-racist nation by 2030 by driving measurable improvements in the everyday lives of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities.

Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru

TGP Cymru is a registered provider of statutory advocacy services. In line with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Further details can be found on [Tros Gynnal Plant \(TGP\) Cymru](#) website.

Turn Only Once

The Turn Only Once approach is an alternative method of washing and dressing individuals living with dementia. The approach aims to minimise unnecessary sensory stimulation and passive movement during personal care routines in order to

reduce distress, paratonia, and resistive responses. The philosophy underpinning the approach is strongly sensory-informed and focuses on preserving dignity, privacy, and emotional safety throughout care delivery.

Y Bont

Y Bont is a charitable organisation working to meet the needs of children and young people who for whatever reason are separated, or are at risk of being separated, from their families and to give them support. Further details can be found on [Y Bont](#) webpage.