

Summary of External Regulations and Inspections **Annual Assurance Report**

2023 - 2024

*Mae'r ddogfen
hon hefyd ar gael
yn Gymraeg. Gweler
y dudalen Gymraeg
ar ein gwefan.
This document is also
available in Welsh.
See Welsh page on
our website.*



Section 1 Summary of External Regulations and Inspections 2023/24

Audit Wales

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG (If applicable)
Springing Forward April 2023	<p>Report Link: www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/flintshire_council_springing_forward_english.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>Vision, strategies, delivery plans and the sustainable development principle</p> <p>R1 The Council needs to put the sustainable development principle at the heart of its future considerations, building on the experience of the pandemic, to develop a new long-term approach to its assets and workforce, which is integrated with other key plans and supported by costed delivery plans.</p>	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	June 24 June 24 June 24	<p>RAG – AMBER</p> <p>In terms of Assets, the Council will:</p> <p>Work with the Ystadau Cymru's North Wales regional Asset Management group (of which we have a Council representative) to establish whether regional Asset benchmarks can be agreed and adopted.</p> <p>Assist in the progression of the Office Accommodation Strategy.</p> <p>Provide an Annual Asset Management Monitoring Report.</p> <p>In terms of the Workforce:</p> <p>The Council's People Strategy has been refreshed and once approved by Cabinet will be published.</p> <p>The refreshed People Strategy has a number of performance measures, including but not limited to time to hire (working days from conditional offer to cleared to start) excluding 3rd party activity (DBS, reference checks), percentage of permanent employees who have left within the first year of employment, turnover % (excluding redundancy).</p> <p>The Council reports on two Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) (Absence and Apprenticeships) which enables it to compare its performance with the other 21 Welsh Local Authorities.</p>
	<p>Data and benchmarking</p> <p>R2 The Council needs to further develop the use of data and benchmarking to inform planning, budget setting and measure the longer-term success of its asset and workforce initiatives.</p>			

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG (If applicable)
Cracks in the Foundations - Building Safety in Wales August 2023	Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Cracks_in_the_Foundations_Building_Safety_in_Wales_English.pdf	COT Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	8 May 24 18 June 24 11 June 24 26 June 24	RAG - RED R5 We don't currently have a Local Action Plan that articulates a clear vision for how BC plan to effectively implement the requirements of the Act. This needs to be developed and put in place. This would include amongst other things the 4 bulleted points in R5.
	Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: R1/ R2 / R3 and R4 are targeted to Welsh Government R5 Local authorities should develop local action plans that articulate a clear vision for building control to be able to plan effectively to implement the requirements of the Act. The Plans should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be based on an assessment of local risks and include mitigation actions; • set out how building control services will be resourced to deliver all their statutory responsibilities; • illustrate the key role of building control in ensuring safe buildings and be linked to well-being objectives and other corporate objectives; and • include outcome measures that are focused on all building control services, not just dangerous structures. 			RAG - AMBER R6 Fees for Building Regulations are set locally by Flintshire County Council. Fees were last comprehensively reviewed in 2018. A review of Fees will take place in 2024 and will include a comparison with other local Councils, particularly neighbouring Councils in North Wales. Building Control is a competitive service. Customers can use other means to secure their Building Regulations outside of the Council (e.g., use independent Approved Inspectors) so a review and any subsequent review of Fees will need to ensure we remain competitive and do not out price the Council's services out of the market.
	R6 Local authorities should urgently review their financial management of building control and ensure they are fully complying with Regulations. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing a timetable of regular fee reviews to ensure charges reflect the cost of services and comply with the Regulations; • annually reporting and publishing financial performance in line with the Regulations; • ensuring relevant staff are provided with training to ensure they apply the Regulations and interpret financial reporting correctly; and, • revise fees to ensure services are charged for in accordance with the Regulations. 			RAG - AMBER R7 This will require discussion at regional level to explore the potential for collaboration and establishing a regional model. Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Partnership Authority Scheme is already in place which is share by all LA building control teams in England and Wales and this allows customers to work with any LA building control team to undertake all pre-app and design vetting work, regardless of the project's geographical location. We already provide this service for Iceland Foods. We vet their plans for new stores and re-fits regardless of where they are located geographically.

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG (If applicable)
	<p>R7 Local authorities should work with partners to make better use of limited resources by exploring the potential for collaboration and regionalisation to strengthen resilience through a cost benefit analysis of partnering with neighbouring authorities, establishing joint ventures and/or adopting a regional model where beneficial.</p> <p>R8 Local authorities should review risk management processes to ensure that risks are systematically identified, recorded, assessed, mitigated and subject to regular evaluation and scrutiny.</p>			<p>RAG - RED</p> <p>R8 A review of risk management processes needs to be undertaken. There are a number of risks already identified including the functionality of the back-office system and a lack of agile working functions (for surveyors on site) & the new requirements for registering as Registered Building Inspectors from 6 April 2024. The Building Control Team/ function could be an area supported by an internal Audit Review.</p>
<p>Assurance and Risk Assessment Review</p> <p>October 2023</p>	<p>Recommendation/Proposals for Improvement:</p> <p>R1 In order to meet its net zero ambition, the Council needs to fully cost its action plan and ensure that it is aligned with its Medium-Term Financial Strategy. If the Council does not develop more detailed business plans which will estimate the investment required, it is unlikely to be able to achieve its goal of becoming net zero carbon by 2030.</p>	<p>Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:</p>	<p>March 24 March 24 April 24</p>	<p>RAG – AMBER</p> <p>Every public sector body is experiencing the same difficulty with costing climate actions. This is due to a number of factors: the volatile financial climate, the changing energy prices, lack of ability or understanding to apply financials to non-quantitative factors (such as behaviour change), and an ever evolving and developing industry where we do not currently have all of the answers to mitigate our climate impacts.</p>
<p>Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes</p> <p>December 2023</p>	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/flintshire_council_service_user_perspective_outcomes_english.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 Information on the perspective of the service user The Council should strengthen the information it provides to its senior leaders to enable them to understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users.</p>	<p>Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:</p>	<p>18 June 24 13 June 24 26 June 24</p>	<p>RAG – AMBER</p> <p>R1 Service level user information is reported at the discretion of services to relevant influencing managers or portfolio leaders as appropriate. However, as part of the Council's Corporate Self-assessment 2022/23, the Council identified consultation and engagement as an opportunity for improvement and an action plan was devised to address and improve consultation and engagement across the Council. This includes developing a Consultation and Engagement Strategy, and as part of the development of this strategy a key focus will be to consider the needs of the service users and how we gather and use this information.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG (If applicable)
	<p>R2 Outcomes information The Council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and the intended outcomes.</p> <p>R3 Arrangements to check the quality and accuracy of data The Council needs to assure itself that it has robust arrangements to check the quality and accuracy of the data it provides to senior leaders relating to service user perspective and outcomes.</p>			<p>RAG – AMBER</p> <p>R2 To strengthen how the Council is delivering its outcomes and intended outcomes of service user perspectives, the annual review of the actions and measures detailed with the Council Plan 2023-28 will ensure, where applicable, information is captured and recorded on this specific subject matter, with outcomes that seek to deliver, short, medium and long-term benefit to our citizens and communities. This will be achieved by engaging with Portfolios directly to finalise the content review for 2024-25 of the Council Plan 2023-28</p> <p>Additionally quarterly Council Plan 2023-28 performance reports are presented to senior leaders which would include this information.</p>
				<p>RAG – GREEN</p> <p>R3 It is the responsibility of service area to review the accuracy of their data and the information it provides to senior leaders. Arrangements to check the quality and accuracy of data beyond existing arrangements would require additional capacity that the present financial environment would not allow.</p> <p>However, as an additional step, Performance Leads will be asked to confirm the monitoring arrangements they have in place to ensure data accuracy and that they arrangements are operating effectively. This would cover both data relating to service user perspectives and performance management outcomes for the Council Plan.</p>
<p>Sustainable development? – making best use of brownfield land and empty buildings.</p> <p>January 2024</p>	<p>Report Link: https://audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Sustainable_development_making_best_use_of_brownfield_land_and_empty_buildings_english.p</p>	<p>Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:</p>	<p>TBC TBC TBC</p>	<p>RAG – N/A</p> <p>We are aware of the report, our response is in preparation and will go via the governance process in due course.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG (If applicable)
	<p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 To enable stakeholders to assess potential sites councils should create a systematic process to find and publicise suitable sites for regeneration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this should draw on data already held by councils, as well as external data sources to develop a composite and more complete picture of sites; and • where known, key barriers should be named to help efforts to overcome them. <p>R2 To help ensure that regeneration activity and the shaping of the environment is informed by the needs of communities Councils should increase opportunities for communitybased involvement in regeneration, both in plan-making and actual development.</p> <p>R3 To provide focus and impetus to developing brownfield sites Councils should review their current regeneration approaches and where appropriate set clearer, more ambitious regeneration policies and targets. Together these should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out the approach and expectations of the council; • set out how their approach will be resourced; and • set out how the approach aligns with national policy goals and regional planning priorities 			

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG (If applicable)
Homeless Services January 2024	<p>Report Link: Not yet available via Audit Wales's Website</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 To ensure the service is sustainable operationally and strategically, the Council ensures that funding is available to maintain its levels of service or make decisions on service delivery based on funds available.</p> <p>R2 The Council ensures arrangements for evaluating its homelessness activities are applied to all activities so it can provide assurance of its impact on service users and efficiencies.</p> <p>R3 To better understand the needs of residents, the Council should widen its engagement activity with residents to cover the development and evaluation of all services.</p>	<p>COT: Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:</p>	<p>Feb 24 March 24 March 24 April 24</p>	<p>RAG – AMBER</p> <p>R1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of revenue budget position against MTFS position and modelling to be undertaken by end of March 2025 Implementation of agreed mitigation measures by end of March 2025 Implementation of service restructure to maximise resources for service delivery by end of June 2024 <p>R2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and document all homelessness activities - not limited to Housing Support Grant Commissioned Services by end of March 2024 Review the evaluation processes that are currently in place for Housing Support Grant services and develop this further to enhance impact assessments and cost benefit analysis and apply to all the above identified homelessness activities by end of June 2024 Develop a rolling programme and local processes for the evaluation for all identified homelessness activities by June 2024 <p>R3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on existing resident engagement activities and develop a resident engagement framework for homelessness services that includes development and evaluation of services by end of September 2024

The Council has received the following draft reports from Audit Wales. Feedback is due to go to Audit Wales in March 2024. A Final Report will be published thereafter. A response to any recommendations and an update will be provided via the formal reporting cycle in due course.

- Unscheduled Care: Flow out of Hospital – North Wales Region (Draft Report received in February 2024)
- Digital Strategy Review (Draft Report received in March 2024)

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
<p>Performance Evaluation Report Flintshire County Council</p> <p>November 2023</p>	<p>Report Link: https://www.careinspectorate.wales/sites/default/files/2024-02/240221-flintshire-PEI-en.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for Improvement:</p> <p>ADULT'S SERVICES People - Voice and Control - Areas for improvement</p> <p>2.7 Care and support plans could be further developed by setting clearer SMART outcomes and consistently taking a proactive strengths-based approach. Also, whilst people's voices are clear in some assessments, this approach should be further developed in care and support plans. <i>Reference should be made to what matters to the individual and personal outcomes should be recorded more consistently in the first person.</i></p> <p>2.8 People are sometimes supported through a duty system whilst on a waiting list for allocation to a specific worker. This can be challenging for people as there is insufficient oversight of their circumstances, lack of continuity of support, and people have to re-tell their story. <i>The local authority should continue with its current efforts to ensure a consistent sufficient, qualified, and competent workforce to lessen the need for people to be supported by different practitioners who are unknown to them.</i></p> <p>2.9 There are examples of direct payment reviews being held. However, there was one example which had not received a review. <i>The local authority must review the arrangements for the making of direct payments and how they are being used in line with Code of Practice 4 (Meeting Needs) to assess whether personal outcomes continue to be met.</i></p>	<p>Cabinet:</p> <p>O&SC:</p> <p>G&AC:</p>	<p>18th June 24</p> <p>6th June 24</p> <p>TBC</p>	<p>Overall, we consider the report to be a positive reflection of the ongoing work within our services and with our partners. The Inspectors have identified good work and practice across all services. There are a few improvement areas, and we are developing an action plan to address these. The draft action plan will be finalised by the end of March 2024</p> <p>The draft action plan has been to Chief Officer Team and the final report will go to Social and Health Care Scrutiny in June 2024</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
	<p>2.10 When practitioners attempt communication with individuals, the local authority should ensure a more consistent evidence base that reflects the communication methods that have been considered and attempted.</p> <p>2.11 There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that advocacy is consistently considered and offered when it would have been appropriate. <i>This is an area that must be strengthened to demonstrate routine consideration of advocacy particularly in adult safeguarding.</i></p> <p>Well-being - Areas for Improvement</p> <p>4.6 In relation to adult safeguarding, we saw variation in social care records. Greater clarity is required in relation to the views of the adult at risk, decision making, determinations, and whether subsequent actions have addressed the original concern. The outcomes of the enquiries must be shared with the reporter. <i>The local authority must ensure that adult safeguarding practice consistently meets with the requirements of the WSP.</i></p> <p>4.7 There are examples of people's social care assessments and safeguarding reports indicating they lack mental capacity to make decisions about their care. The quality and decision making of these records is variable. <i>The local authority must ensure practice consistently aligns with the requirements and principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the relevant Code of Practice.</i></p> <p>4.8 In common with many other local authorities across Wales, people's rights are impacted by the waiting lists for Deprivation of Liberty (DoLS) assessments. <i>The local authority must ensure that arrangements for the provision for DoLS assessments are fit for purpose and responsive.</i></p> <p>4.9 The current recording system does not support practitioners to capture people's strengths and outcomes in a meaningful way. <i>The local authority should take this into consideration, with the imminent procurement of an updated recording system.</i></p>			

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
	<p>Prevention - Areas for Improvement</p> <p>6.7 Waiting lists for social care assessments and reviews are high and can impact negatively on people. Oversight of waiting lists for social care assessments is inconsistent across teams. Whilst we received verbal reassurance about oversight of waiting lists in teams, there was limited records to evidence this. <i>The local authority must ensure that waiting lists are appropriately and consistently monitored and key information is recorded to evidence appropriate prioritisation of cases.</i></p> <p>6.8 Care and support plans are not always reviewed in a timely manner. <i>The local authority must keep care and support plans under review to understand whether the provision of care and support is meeting the identified needs of the individual, and to consider if their needs have changed and if a re-assessment is required.</i></p> <p>Partnership - Areas for Improvement</p> <p>8.5 Most partnerships are working well at an operational level; however, information is not always shared effectively due to different methods and systems for recording information. This means information regarding people's care and support needs is not easily available across partners, to include some practitioners employed by the local authority. <i>The local authority should consider, whilst they are procuring a new recording system, how they can further promote information sharing.</i> All relevant practitioners in different teams within FCC such as locality, substance misuse, and community mental health teams should be able to access all records of the person they support. This would support information sharing and promote a greater oversight and understanding of a person's circumstances.</p> <p>8.6 The local authority must strengthen its systems around carers assessments to ensure the rights and voice of all carers are fully promoted. Carers assessments are not adequately recorded or communicated with the local authority. We saw examples where practitioners are not aware of whether a carer's assessment had been undertaken, and if so, the outcome of the assessment. <i>The local authority must have greater oversight of these assessments to be confident that it fully meets its responsibilities in line with the requirements of Part 3 and Part 4 of the Code of Practice (assessing and meeting the needs of individuals).</i></p>			

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
	<p>CHILDREN'S SERVICES</p> <p>People - Voice and Control - Areas for Improvement</p> <p>3.14 Disabled children and young people have to wait long periods of time for short overnight breaks in a residential provision. The local authority aims to provide alternate support in the meantime through direct payments for example. However, <i>the local authority must so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure it is able to provide looked after and other accommodated children with accommodation that is within the local authority's area and that meets the children's needs. This in line with Code of Practice 6 (Looked After and Accommodated Children).</i></p> <p>3.15 As a result of the fragility in the social care workforce, children and young people experience changes in social workers. Children are supported through a duty system rather than an allocated worker at times. Changes in social workers makes it challenging for children to develop trusting relationships. We heard from one young person how they are aware their social worker will soon change. Parents also have to repeat their stories and views to social workers. As a result of changes in practitioners, support can be delayed, with oversight of children and young people's situation also impacted. <i>The local authority must continue with its current efforts to ensure a consistent, sufficient, qualified, and competent workforce to meet its statutory duties, and should consider an exit strategy for ending the reliance on the commissioned managed agency team.</i></p> <p>Well-being - Areas for Improvement</p> <p>5.6 There is indication the threshold for significant harm is not always applied consistently when considering removing children from the CPR. We heard this may be as a result of a misplaced conception that maintaining a child's name on the CPR is a means of ensuring continued support services for a child and their family. <i>The local authority should consider sharing guidance more widely with relevant partners and stakeholders to ensure consistent and shared understanding of thresholds and information sharing protocols.</i></p>			

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
	<p>5.7 Risks are appropriately considered, with timely progression to the right service for children and families. There are, however, delays for some families subject to child protection procedures as enquiries are not always completed promptly. It is not always clear what the determination is post completion of a Section 47 enquiry. <i>Managers must ensure that, following the timely conclusion of a child protection enquiry, next steps are explicitly recorded with clarity and rationale in relation to the determinations under Section 3 Part 1 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.</i></p> <p>5.8 As Section 47 enquiries are not always completed in the required timescales, this impacts on timely decision making as to whether a child's name should be included on the CPR. <i>The local authority should ensure that when it has been determined that a child is experiencing or is at risk of experiencing harm, abuse or neglect, a child protection conference is convened within 15 working days of the strategy discussion/meeting, or the last strategy discussion/meeting (if more than one has occurred), which initiated the Section 47 enquiry.</i></p> <p>5.9 Some care and support protection plans viewed are service led, with a focus on compliance instead of outcomes. Care and support protection plans are not routinely updated after core group meetings. It is acknowledged that recent training commissioned by the local authority has focused on clarifying roles and responsibilities for social workers. <i>An outline care and support protection plan devised at first conference should be developed into a more detailed plan at the first core group meeting as is highlighted in the WSP. Subsequent core groups should specifically review progress of outcomes for the child's safety. Leaders should ensure practitioners have clear systems and standards for developing plans which are child-centred and outcome-focused.</i></p> <p>5.10 We saw examples of disclosures by police about an individual's criminal background, with a potential risk for a child, having been appropriately considered to promote children's safety. However, sharing of the information was not always completed in a timely manner with pressures of work cited in one example as the reason for the delay. <i>When the local authority is aware of such information, and it has been agreed they can share information with relevant individuals to promote a child's safety, this must be done in a timely manner.</i></p>			

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
	<p>Prevention - Areas for Improvement</p> <p>7.5 Children who are neurodiverse or who are awaiting diagnosis of a potential neurodiverse condition, and their parents, do not always receive prompt and adequate support and communication. Delays in support impact on their well-being. It is acknowledged that the local authority is well-sighted on this and has recently developed their service to include having a dedicated role to respond and support parent/carers sooner, whilst their children are awaiting a neurodiverse assessment/diagnosis. <i>The local authority should continue to have oversight and monitor the effectiveness of this development and the impact of this for children and families.</i></p> <p>Partnership - Areas for Improvement</p> <p>9.6 <i>Children's services must communicate information about duty to report outcomes in a timely manner to the person who made the initial report.</i> There are inconsistencies in current practice in relation to this.</p> <p>9.7 <i>Children's services must ensure that appropriate agencies are invited to strategy discussions /meetings in line with the WSP, to include but not limited to, a practitioner making the report and practitioners from education and community-based health services if relevant.</i></p> <p>9.8 The views and experiences of parent/carers of disabled children indicated that the availability of support to them could be strengthened and more flexible. They told us the support offered was not always suitable for their and their child's needs. <i>The local authority must ensure the parent/carer is involved as a full partner in assessing to what extent they are able to meet their personal outcomes, or with the support of others who are willing to provide that support; or with the assistance of services in the community to which they have access.</i></p> <p>9.9 We saw examples of children who were leaving care having to present as homeless to receive housing support. Practitioners also shared that accommodation for young people is an ongoing challenge and an area for improvement. There are clear longer-term options to support young people in general with housing support, in line with the well-being objectives in the Council Plan for 2023-2028. An example is a strategic plan, informed by a multi-agency approach, to create a young person's homeless hub which will offer accommodation as well as support services. <i>However, the local authority must continue to prioritise its programme of ensuring appropriate housing options for young care leavers and relevant 16–17-year-olds.</i> This in both the longer and shorter term, and where possible, avoiding the need for care leavers to present as homeless.</p>			

Estyn

There were no inspection reports published from Estyn regarding Flintshire as an authority in 2023/24 therefore, there are no progress updates to provide.

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
Information Commissioner's Annual Report 2022-23 July 2023	Report Link: https://ico.org.uk/media/about-the-ico/documents/4025864/annual-report-2022-23.pdf Recommendation/Proposals for Improvement: None	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	N/A

Section 2 Summary of External Regulations and Inspections 2022/23 – PROGRESS UPDATES

Audit Wales

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
Direct Payments for Adult Social Care April 2022	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Direct-payments-Eng-update-sept-2022.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for Improvement:</p> <p>R1 Review public information in discussion with service users and carers to ensure it is clear, concise and fully explains what they need to know about Direct Payments.</p> <p>R2 Undertake additional promotional work to encourage take up of Direct Payments.</p> <p>R3 Ensure advocacy services are considered at the first point of contact to provide independent advice on Direct Payments to service users and carers.</p> <p>R4 Ensure information about Direct payments is available at the front door to social care and are included in the initial discussion on the available care options for service users and carers.</p>	O&SC: G&AC:	April 23 April 23	<p>RAG: GREEN</p> <p>We recognise the importance of timely accessible information. The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service has coproduced, with citizens a range of information booklets, factsheets and other resources to help broader understanding of direct payments. We also recognize that regardless of the quality of written information it is often necessary to adopt flexible and bespoke approaches to enabling full understanding of the opportunities and responsibilities and have tried to facilitate an approach that recognises this. We broadly agree that promotion of direct payments as a genuine option for people ties in with social work practice, social work understanding, team culture, Social Work training and leadership. To give context to these recommendations we feel that providing examples of good quality resources such as available information, training approaches etc., details of what is currently available and what is missing in Wales would have been helpful and constructive in supporting progress in these areas.</p>	<p>RAG: GREEN</p> <p>R1 Review public information in discussion with service users and carers to ensure it is clear, concise and fully explains what they need to know about Direct Payments. We recognise the importance of timely accessible information. The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service has coproduced, with citizens a range of information booklets, factsheets and other resources to help broader understanding of direct payments. We also recognize that regardless of the quality of written information it is often necessary to adopt flexible and bespoke approaches to enabling full understanding of the opportunities and responsibilities and have tried to facilitate an approach that recognises this. We broadly agree that promotion of direct payments as a genuine option for people ties in with social work practice, social work understanding, team culture, Social Work training and leadership. To give context to these recommendations we feel that providing examples of good quality resources such as available information, training approaches etc., details of what is currently available and what is missing in Wales would have been helpful and constructive in supporting progress in these areas.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
	<p>R5 Provide training to social workers on Direct Payments to ensure they fully understand their potential and feel confident promoting it to service users and carers.</p> <p>R6 Work together to develop a joint Recruitment and Retention Plan for Personal Assistants.</p> <p>R7 Clarify policy expectations in plain accessible language and set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what Direct Payments can pay for; • how application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes work; • how monitoring individual payments and the paperwork required to verify payments will work; • how unused monies are to be treated and whether they can be banked; and • how to administer and manage pooled budgets. <p>Public information should be reviewed regularly (at least every two years) to ensure they are working effectively and remain relevant.</p> <p>R9 Work together to establish a system to fully evaluate Direct Payments that captures all elements of the process – information, promotion, assessing, managing and evaluating impact on wellbeing and independence.</p>			<p>With regards to R3, we are slightly confused that the report suggests that independent advice about direct payments should be provided from first contact. This appears to be contradictory to the report's findings detailed in exhibit 3 and paragraph 2.11 that citizens' receiving support from direct payments services provided by local authorities have a more positive overall experience than those using a commissioned service. The report's findings also suggest that 96% of direct payments recipients received initial information from local authority practitioners.</p> <p>Direct Payments and CHC Funding</p> <p>We welcome the Welsh Labor Governments Manifesto pledge to improve the interface between direct payments and CHC. We are currently involved in moving this agenda forward via stakeholder and focus groups. However, we are of the opinion that to enable people in receipt of CHC funding to benefit from the same rights to exercise choice and control over their arrangements as other direct payments recipients will require changes to primary legislation.</p>	<p>To this end we have worked with Flintshire citizens to improve access to information about a range of direct payments best practice examples, including the addition of informative short films available via the councils dedicated direct payments on-line platform.</p> <p>R2 Undertake additional promotional work to encourage take up of Direct Payments. The Flintshire Direct Payments Team has always aimed to work in partnership to provide information and enable the true potential benefits of direct payments to be understood and realised. Promotion of the scheme in Flintshire includes daily and ongoing joint working with the social care workforce and co-productive relationships with a broad range of key stakeholder including but not limited to social care providers, Carers organisations, the personal assistant workforce and micro providers. A new animated promotional film has recently been produced and launched via the council's web pages and this has served to compliment a wide range of promotional material available to both citizens and professionals.</p> <p>https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Social-Services/Direct-Payments/What-are-Direct-Payments.aspx</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
	R10 Annually publish performance information for all elements of Direct Payments to enable a whole system view of delivery and impact to support improvement			<p>Systems to evaluate Direct Payments The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service have developed core data sets and are using intelligent information to inform future priorities and practice. We are striving to align such data with the known impacts of direct payments solutions to provide a 360-degree evaluation process. We have also embedded citizen feedback into our work and are using this to shape and confirm the effectiveness' of our services. Inclusion of such examples within the report and/or proactive suggestions to help local authorities build more robust systems would have been welcomed.</p> <p>Recruitment and Retention Personal Assistants are employed directly by recipients who are empowered and supported to become good employers, meet their responsibilities and retain workers. We cannot see how a joint recruitment and retention plan could be adopted and implemented without undermining the autonomy enjoyed by direct payments employers. We would rather focus on providing high quality support services that helps direct payments recipients become high quality employers.</p>	<p>The team attend events whenever possible to promote direct payment and the innovative direct payments initiatives being undertaken in Flintshire. Our involvement often takes the form of attendance at Team Meetings, bespoke offers of training, visits to partner organisations, joint working with other local authority departments, social work training and a range of initiatives to support and develop the Personal Assistant Workforce in Flintshire.</p> <p>R3 Ensure advocacy services are considered at the first point of contact to provide independent advice on Direct Payments to service users and carers.</p> <p>With regards to R3, we are slightly confused that the report suggests that independent advice about direct payments should be provided from first contact. This appears to be contradictory to the report's findings detailed in exhibit 3 and paragraph 2.11 that citizens' receiving support from direct payments services provided by local authorities have a more positive overall experience than those using a commissioned service. The report's findings also suggest that 96% of direct payments recipients received initial information from local authority practitioners. However, independent advocacy is routinely offered where this would provide a benefit for the person.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
				<p>Clarify Policy Expectations We believe that the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 and Part 4 Code of Practice provides the information, guidance and framework to enable local authorities to deliver on this recommendation.</p> <p>We would also be concerned that a recommendation suggesting that what direct payments can pay for are defined could stifle innovation and lead to a more prescribed process focused approach.</p> <p>There are already light touch, user friendly systems in place within Wales to reduce bureaucracy, paperwork and manual auditing enabling people to focus on what matters to them. Examples of good systems would have helped demonstrate the options.</p> <p>Unused Funding In Flintshire we promote the flexible use of direct payments, enabling people to change the way they meet their needs and outcomes and adapt to changing circumstances. However, where funding is no longer needed to meet assessed needs and outcomes, we strive to work in partnership with individuals to reuse money that is no longer needed. Funding is returned to the local authority to be used with other people. We do, however disregard the equivalent of eight weeks funding to support the flexibility inherent within the scheme.</p>	<p>R4 Ensure information about Direct payments is available at the front door to social care and are included in the initial discussion on the available care options for service users and carers. Direct payments surgeries are offered to the social care workforce to both inform them of direct payments and to explore potential options and solutions prior to initial visits. The direct payments team offer the opportunity of information visits to support practitioners to have productive and well-informed discussions with citizens about direct payments and the potential opportunities. The direct payments team provide both written and digital information packs providing easy to access information about direct payments to inform both practitioners and citizens and enable informed choices to be made. The FCC direct payments web pages are highly regarded Nationally and a number of local authorities in Wales and England have adopted the format and resources available to people. The web pages contain a range of information as well as contact details should additional support be required.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information	2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
			<p>Personal Assistants</p> <p>We acknowledge that Personal Assistants are an important source of support for many people, and often enable a very personal, flexible relationship which has major benefits. The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service has designed, developed internally and implemented some highly innovative resources that support and recognize the roles that Personal Assistants play locally. These innovations are the first of their kind in Wales and we were disappointed that they were not referenced within the report. Such approaches are often the catalyst for discussion, challenge and improvement and in this regard, we feel that the decision not to reference this and other work being undertaken across Wales was another missed opportunity.</p> <p>We don't fully agree with the statement <i>"Personal Assistants are essential to people making the most of Direct Payments, but service users struggle to recruit them"</i>. As stated, Personal Assistants can be the best solution for many people, particularly those in need of physical care and support, however we feel that this emphasis on Personal Assistants is unhelpful and demonstrates a very limited perspective. Certainly, the focus of direct payments in Flintshire is on helping people achieve their personal outcomes, so solutions should not be limited. Further to this we could have provided a range of creative examples.</p>	<p>R5 Provide training to social workers on Direct Payments to ensure they fully understand their potential and feel confident promoting it to service users and carers. Mandatory training is provided via the Social Services Workforce Development Team to Social Workers on a quarterly basis. This training is delivered by the direct payments team manager, so accurately reflects local resources, approaches, examples, and priorities. Further to this bespoke training can be delivered to teams and individuals on request. This has extended to newly qualified SW sessions as well as sessions delivered to other local authority practitioners to support them in their direct payments journey.</p> <p>R6 Work together to develop a joint Recruitment and Retention Plan for Personal Assistants. Personal Assistants are employed directly by recipients who are empowered and supported to become good employers, meet their responsibilities, and retain workers. We cannot see how a joint recruitment and retention plan could be adopted and implemented without undermining the autonomy enjoyed by independent direct payments employers. We prefer to focus our resources on providing direct payments employers with high quality support that helps them meet their employment responsibilities, develop safe working practices, offers a range of benefits to employees, supports personal growth and development and provides a professional career choice for people. Employing Personal Assistants provides people with a range of</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
				<p>Good Quality and accessible Information</p> <p>We welcome the finding that the vast majority of recipients involved in your survey found out about direct payments from a local authority officer. We were also encouraged that all local authorities are striving to provide quality information about direct payments. From a Flintshire perspective the team have worked with citizens and I.T partners to completely reinvent our web-based resources. This has resulted in an 800% increase in activity over the past 12 months. Additionally, we have facilitated forums, publish a quarterly newsletter, have an on-line news page, have developed Facebook and Twitter feeds, have written direct payments related articles, produced high quality promotional videos accessible via the Flintshire YouTube channel, addressed elected members, developed a catalogue of examples of innovative use of direct payments and have supported innovative solutions particularly during the pandemic to help people resolve personal challenges. We strongly feel that sharing such practice would have helped balance the report and supported other local authorities to develop their resources and approaches.</p>	<p>benefits and is highly resource efficient. The current Personal Assistant workforce saves the department a significant amount of money compared to traditional service led solutions. The recruitment of a dedicated Personal Assistant Coordinator would ensure that these recommendations are met and that the potential value and cost benefits associated with the Personal Assistant Workforce can be realised. Invest to save business case being developed. Specialist employer training is being arranged via specialist direct payments insurers and offered to direct payments employers in Flintshire.</p> <p>Flintshire County Council are offering a range of training and development opportunities for Personal Assistants in Flintshire including an induction certificate, bespoke e-learning modules via Grey matter Learning, A welcome to the PA role provided quarterly and facilitated by the direct payments team manager. We have also developed a broad range of complimentary benefits that support the Personal Assistant role, incentivise this career choice and supports retention.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information	2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
			<p>Average spend per Direct Payment recipient</p> <p>We don't understand fully the value of this comparison. Is the report suggesting some correlation between direct payments funding per person and needs met, or outcomes achieved? If so, it would be helpful to have included examples to better explain. From our experience some of the lowest cost, innovative solutions can enable the achievement of individual outcomes whose benefit is hugely disproportionate to the financial cost.</p>	<p>R7 Clarify policy expectations in plain accessible language and set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •what Direct Payments can pay for; •how application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes work; •how monitoring individual payments and the paperwork required to verify payments will work; •how unused monies are to be treated and whether they can be banked; and •how to administer and manage pooled budgets. <p>We are confident that the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 and Part 4 Code of Practice provides the information, guidance and framework to enable local authorities to deliver on this recommendation. Further to this the direct payment team manager has recently been asked to make recommendations to Welsh Government regarding minor changes to the Part 4 code to ensure that it remains current and fit for purpose.</p> <p>Direct payments in Flintshire are being utilised creatively to meet both individuals and collective assessed needs and agreed well-being outcomes. Direct payments can be utilised in a multitude of ways to help achieve very individual and bespoke needs and circumstances. Solutions take into account individual strengths, networks, interests etc, so suggestions that a prescribed list be produced to describe what a direct payment can and cannot be used to fund would significantly stifle innovation and lead to a more prescribed process focused approach. We are confident that our</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
					<p>conversations with people and their representatives recognise what matters to the person and enables genuine co-production between all parties to explore and implement solutions.</p> <p>There is already light touch, user friendly systems in place within Wales to reduce bureaucracy, paperwork and manual auditing enabling people to focus on what matters to them. Flintshire has a wide range of best practice examples to help demonstrate the options.</p> <p>R9 Work together to establish a system to fully evaluate Direct Payments that captures all elements of the process – information, promotion, assessing, managing and evaluating impact on wellbeing and independence.</p> <p>The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service have developed core data sets and are using intelligent information to inform future priorities and practice. We are striving to align such data with the known impacts of direct payments solutions to provide a 360-degree evaluation process. We have also embedded citizen feedback into our work and are using this to shape and confirm the effectiveness of our services. Inclusion of such examples within the report and/or proactive suggestions to help local authorities build more robust systems would have been welcomed.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
					<p>R10 Annually publish performance information for all elements of Direct Payments to enable a whole system view of delivery and impact to support improvement.</p> <p>Direct payments are paid to people in leu of traditional services. The approach enables individuals to create bespoke arrangements that are often creative and flexible. However, the outcomes are always to achieve the assessed needs and well-being outcomes identified via a statutory assessment and care & support planning process. The achievement of these are reviewed at set timescales and will identify whether the solutions being purchased via the direct payments are meeting their intended purpose. If they are not there would be an expectation that they would end and an alternative service provided. The direct payments support service are happy to report on any aspect of the scheme on request. For this to be of benefit we would need to know what performance needs to be measured.</p> <p>Further Information Unused Funding In Flintshire we promote the flexible use of direct payments, enabling people to change the way they meet their needs and outcomes and adapt to changing circumstances. However, where funding is no longer needed to meet assessed needs and outcomes, we strive to work in partnership with individuals to reuse money that is no longer needed. Funding is returned to the local authority to be used with other people. We do, however</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
					<p>disregard the equivalent of six weeks funding to support the flexibility inherent within the scheme.</p> <p>Personal Assistants We acknowledge that Personal Assistants are an important source of support for many people, and often enable a very personal, flexible relationship which has major benefits. The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service has designed, developed internally and implemented some highly innovative resources that support and recognize the roles that Personal Assistants play locally. These innovations are the first of their kind in Wales and we were disappointed that they were not referenced within the report. Such approaches are often the catalyst for discussion, challenge and improvement and in this regard, we feel that the decision not to reference this and other work being undertaken across Wales was another missed opportunity.</p> <p>We don't fully agree with the statement "Personal Assistants are essential to people making the most of Direct Payments, but service users struggle to recruit them". As stated, Personal Assistants can be the best solution for many people, particularly those in need of physical care and support, however we feel that this emphasis on Personal Assistants is unhelpful and demonstrates a very limited perspective. Certainly, the focus of direct payments in Flintshire is on helping people achieve their personal outcomes, so solutions should not be limited. Further to this we could have provided a range of creative examples.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
					<p>Good Quality and accessible Information</p> <p>We welcome the finding that the vast majority of recipients involved in the survey found out about direct payments from a local authority officer. We were also encouraged that all local authorities are striving to provide quality information about direct payments. From a Flintshire perspective the team have worked with citizens and I.T partners to completely reinvent our web-based resources. This has resulted in an 800% increase in activity over the past 12 months. Additionally, we have facilitated forums, publish a quarterly newsletter, have an on-line news page, have developed Facebook and Twitter feeds, have written direct payments related articles, produced high quality promotional videos accessible via the Flintshire YouTube channel, addressed elected members, developed a catalogue of examples of innovative use of direct payments and have supported innovative solutions particularly during the pandemic to help people resolve personal challenges. We strongly feel that sharing such practice would have helped balance the report and supported other local authorities to develop their resources and approaches.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
					<p>Average spend per Direct Payment recipient</p> <p>We don't understand fully the value of this comparison. Is the report suggesting some correlation between direct payments funding per person and needs met, or outcomes achieved? If so, it would be helpful to have included examples to better explain. From our experience some of the lowest cost, innovative solutions can enable the achievement of individual outcomes whose benefit is hugely disproportionate to the financial cost. We would draw attention to some of the pooled direct payments initiatives in Flintshire that have enabled people to pool resources to build shared solutions, reduce costs, increase benefits and prevent the need for more formal statutory support.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 July 2022	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Public_Sector_Readiness_for_Net_Zero_Carbon_by_2030.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>Given the high-level nature of the review, no specific recommendations were identified however, they encourage public bodies to consider the five messages within the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen your leadership and demonstrate your collective responsibility through effective collaboration • Clarify your strategic direction and increase your pace of implementation • Get to grips with the finances needed • Know your skills gaps and increase your capacity • Improve data quality and monitoring to support your decision making. 	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	Feb 23 Feb 23 Jan 23	<p>RAG – AMBER</p> <p>As a Council we have strengthened our leadership through a committed Cabinet Member for Climate Change, a formalised Climate Change Committee, and cross-departmental Officer working groups to demonstrate collective responsibility through collaboration. We are working with our public sector partners to better understand the finances associated with decarbonisation, and to share best practice with improved data quality. The Council must continue to increase the pace of implementation of carbon reduction projects and increased capacity where skills gaps exist by providing the necessary investment.</p> <p>In July 2022 Welsh Government also published their 'Decarbonising Social Care in Wales's report which highlights key actions needed by the public sector to better understand the carbon emissions from social care services and to ensure actions to decarbonise are included in strategic plans. The Council's Climate Change Strategy already encompasses many aspects associated with social care; however, this will be reviewed as part of the strategy review in 2024/25. Within this review content and detail will be compared to the 'Social Care route map' to ensure this service area is effectively represented. Future carbon emission submissions to Welsh Government will require a separate analysis of emissions from social care.</p>	<p>RAG – N/A</p> <p>Audit Wales have since undertaken individual audits within each Local Authority which followed up on these recommendations.</p> <p>Please refer to Section 1 - Assurance and Risk Assessment (July 2023).</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
				<p>The methodology for the 2021/22 carbon emission data submission to Welsh Government was modified to incorporate the addition of new measures around Homeworking. The methodology used for calculating these emissions has a very high Relative Standard of Deviation due to necessary data being difficult to determine. In order to make this data meaningful and a true reflection of the carbon impacts from home working, we need to better understand the quantity of time our employees work from home. This data collection could be tied into the wider 'employee commuting' survey. Due to the disparity of data, and emissions from Homeworking not being included in our baseline figures, we have not included this in scope for our 2021/22 carbon emission data report.</p> <p>With the addition of Homeworking emissions in 2021/22, and social care in 2022/23, the moving of reporting goalposts has potential to adversely affect the progress made in reducing our carbon emissions. It should be decided if any changes in methodology are to be included in future internal reporting or if the original baseline figures should be maintained.</p>	

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
				<p>In December 2021, the Welsh Government committed to the development of regional energy strategies and Local Area Energy Plans in its approach to create a national energy plan by 2024. This exercise maps out future energy demand and supply for all parts of Wales to identify gaps and enable future planning.</p> <p>The North Wales Energy Strategy and Action Plan has now been developed through a public sector working group and has been approved by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. The strategy and action plan now needs to be endorsed by each Council, and implementation of this will be led by Ambition North Wales.</p> <p>Ambition North Wales are also leading on the development of the Local Area Energy Plans and work with each Council will commence in 2023. The Planning is being funded by Welsh Government and the resulting Local Area Energy Plan will inform both local and national investment and decisions on future requirements for energy across all sectors.</p>	

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
<p>Equality Impact Assessments: More than a Tick Box Exercise?</p> <p>September 2022</p>	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Equality_impact_assessment-english_0.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>There were four recommendations identified but only one was in relation to public bodies.</p> <p>Reviewing public bodies' current approach for conducting EIAs</p> <p>R4 While there are examples of good practice related to distinct stages of the EIA process, all public bodies have lessons to learn about their overall approach. Public bodies should review their overall approach to EIAs considering the findings of this report and the detailed guidance available from the EHRC and the Practice Hub. We recognise that developments in response to our other recommendations and the Welsh Government's review of the PSED Wales Specific regulations may have implications for current guidance in due course.</p>	<p>Cabinet:</p> <p>CROSC:</p> <p>G&AC:</p>	<p>June 24</p> <p>June 24</p> <p>June 24</p>	<p>RAG: AMBER</p> <p>Agree with the four recommendations detailed within the report however three of these are related to Welsh Government (WG).</p> <p>The three recommendations related to WG will provide greater clarity for public bodies on what is to be assessed, and what an integrated impact assessment should look like and will ensure partnership arrangements are included in the updated regulations.</p> <p>R4 Agree with the recommendation. Discussions are taking place with another organisation and opportunities to adopt their approach to Impact Assessments. An action plan to implement the findings of Audit Wales has been developed.</p> <p>EHRC guidance was followed in developing the Equality Impact Assessment, a North Wales model has been adopted and this was sent to the EHRC for their approval.</p> <p>The Practice Hub is available on the Council intranet/Infonet as a resource.</p> <p>Provisional reporting dates have been provided; however, these may change.</p>	<p>RAG: GREEN</p> <p>A pilot project on a new Integrated Impact Assessment tool is in progress with Manchester University. An evaluation of the pilot project is due to start in April 2024.</p> <p>The majority of actions in the action plan developed in response to the Audit Wales report have been completed.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
Welsh Language Report 2021-22 October 2022	Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Welsh_Language_Report_2021-22.pdf Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: None	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	RAG: N/A	RAG: N/A
National Fraud Initiative 20-21 October 2022	Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/The_National_Fraud_Initiative_in_Wales_2020_21_English_0.pdf Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: None	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	RAG: N/A	RAG: N/A
Time for change – Poverty in Wales November 2022	Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Time_for_%20Change_%20Poverty_English.pdf Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: R2 In Paragraphs 2.13 – 2.23 and Paragraphs 3.33 – 3.35. we highlight that councils and partners have prioritised work on poverty, but the mix of approaches and a complicated delivery landscape mean that ambitions, focus, actions and prioritisation vary widely. We highlight that evaluating activity and reporting performance are also variable with many gaps. We recommend that the councils use their Wellbeing Plans to provide a comprehensive focus on	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	TBC TBC TBC	RAG: N/A We are aware of the report, our response is in preparation and will go via the governance process in due course.	RAG: AMBER We continue to work with our Poverty priorities in the Council Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Poverty • Child Poverty • Food Poverty • Fuel Poverty • Digital Poverty Each section has actions and measures associated and are reported in line with council plan performance reporting. We have yet to develop a combined strategy for Flintshire, this is still very much work in progress. The time for Change audit report is

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
	<p>tackling poverty to co-ordinate their efforts, meet local needs and support the revised national plan targets and actions. This should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include SMART local actions with a greater emphasis on prevention. • include a detailed resourcing plan for the length of the strategy. • be developed with involvement from other public sector partners, the third sector, and those with experience of poverty. • include a robust set of consistent outcome indicators and measures to increase understanding of poverty locally; and • be subject to annual public reporting to enable a whole system view of poverty locally to help improve delivery and support. <p>Leadership on the poverty agenda</p> <p>R3 In Paragraph 2.23 we note that just over a third of councils have lead members and lead officers for addressing poverty. Given the importance of effective leadership in driving the poverty agenda forward and breaking silos within councils and between public bodies, we recommend that each council designate a cabinet member as the council's poverty champion and designate a senior officer to lead and be accountable for the anti-poverty agenda.</p>				going to be presented later in the year, once schedule of committee meetings has been confirmed.

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
	<p>Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty</p> <p>R5 In Paragraphs 3.2 – 3.6 we highlight that people in poverty are often in crisis, dealing with extremely personal and stressful issues, but they often find it difficult to access help from councils because of the way services are designed and delivered. We recommend that councils improve their understanding of their residents' 'lived experience' through meaningful involvement in decision-making using 'experience mapping' and/or 'Poverty Truth Commissions' to review and improve accessibility to and use of council services.</p> <p>Single web landing page for people seeking help</p> <p>R6 In Paragraph 3.14 we highlight the difficulties people in poverty face accessing online and digital services. To ensure people are able to get the information and advice they need, we recommend that councils optimise their digital services by creating a single landing page on their website that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is directly accessible on the home page • provides links to all services provided by the council • that relate to poverty; and • provides information on the work of partners that can assist people in poverty. 				

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
	<p>Streamlining and improving application and information services for people in poverty</p> <p>R7 In Paragraphs 3.15 and 3.16 we note that no council has created a single gateway into services. As a result, people have to complete multiple application forms that often record the same information when applying for similar services. We highlight that whilst it is important that councils comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. We recommend that councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data; • undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests • create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services • undertake a data audit to provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and • review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities 				

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
	<p>Complying with the socio-economic duty</p> <p>R8 In Paragraphs 3.27 to 3.32 we set out that while all councils undertake some form of assessment to determine the likely socio-economic impact of policy choices and decisions, approaches vary and are not always effective. We recommend that councils review their integrated impact assessments or equivalent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that they draw on relevant, comprehensive and current data (nothing over 12 months old) to support analysis. • ensure integrated impact assessments capture information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - involvement activity setting out those the service has engaged with in determining its strategic policy such as partners, service users and those it is coproducing with. - the cumulative impact/mitigation to ensure the assessment considers issues in the round and how it links across services provided across the council; - how the council will monitor and evaluate impact and will take corrective action; and - an action plan setting out the activities the Council will take as a result of the Integrated Impact Assessment. 				

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
<p>'A missed opportunity' – Social Enterprises (National Report)</p> <p>December 2022</p>	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/A_missed_opportunity_Social_Enterprises_English_0.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 To get the best from their work with and funding of Social Enterprises, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place. We recommend that local authority officers use the checklist in Appendix 2 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-evaluate current Social Enterprise engagement, • management, performance and practice. • identify opportunities to improve joint working; and • jointly draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified through the self-evaluation. <p>R2 To drive improvement we recommend that the local authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally approve the completed Action Plan • regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees; and • revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance. 	<p>O&SC: Cabinet: G&AC:</p>	<p>May 23 May 23 June 23</p>	<p>RAG: N/A</p> <p>We are aware of the report, our response is in preparation and will go via the governance process in due course. Provisional reporting dates provided.</p>	<p>RAG: GREEN</p> <p>Progress towards delivering the action plan, including how the Council has fulfilled its section 16 responsibilities, will be formally reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny on an annual basis.</p> <p>R1 Flintshire County Council, in response to the Audit Wales report, has completed a self-evaluation process on its work with social enterprises in consultation with the sector. This used the template provided by Audit Wales (Appendix 1). The Council, in response to the findings of the self-assessment, has worked with the sector to update the social enterprise action plan (Appendix 2). This will be submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for discussion and presented to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>R2 The social enterprise action plan will be presented to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for discussion and will be formally approved by Cabinet. Progress on supporting social enterprises is already reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny as part of the formal Council Plan monitoring. However, as set out in the action plan, opportunities to raise the awareness and understanding of social enterprises amongst elected members will be created through specific events and more detailed reporting.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
	R3 To ensure the local authority delivers its S.16 responsibilities to promote Social Enterprises we recommend that it reports on current activity and future priorities following the evaluation of its Action Plan including the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services.				R3 To ensure the local authority delivers its S.16 responsibilities to promote Social Enterprises we recommend that it reports on current activity and future priorities following the evaluation of its Action Plan including the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services.
A Picture of Flood Risk Management December 2022	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/A_Picture_of_Flood_Risk_Management_English_0.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>None</p>	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	<p>RAG: AMBER</p> <p>We are aware of the report. There are no specific recommendations identified for Local authorities and Audit Wales did not expect local authorities to provide a formal response to the flooding report, or to table the report for a committee meeting. They are hoping it will provide useful context to inform scrutiny of flood risk management. The report does raise a number of questions that need to be considered further by the Council, as the expectations being placed on Councils by Welsh Government in relation to flood risk management do not match the reality of the ability of Councils to resource and respond to this significant challenge. The questions to be considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's approach to reviewing its flood risk management strategy and creating a realistic and achievable action plan that prioritises Flintshire's most vulnerable flood risk areas, • The amount and distribution of Welsh Government funding, 	<p>RAG: GREEN</p> <p>There are no specific recommendations identified for Local authorities and Audit Wales did not expect local authorities to provide a formal response to the flooding report, or to table the report for a committee meeting.</p> <p>The report raised a number of questions that will be picked up in the ongoing review of the Council's Flood Risk Management Strategy. This will begin to be reported to informal Cabinet, Scrutiny and Climate Change Committee from late spring, before requiring final Cabinet approval following public consultation in the autumn, to then submit to Welsh Government.</p>

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council-wide approach to flood risk management, • The collation of a complete picture of the Council's responsibilities for flood risk management assets, • The lack of experience and professional capability in the flood risk sector and an inability to recruit and retain flood risk management expertise, • The added burden placed on Councils to act as SuDS Approving Bodies which often draws from the same internal resource that exist for flood risk management, if indeed this resource does exist, • The ability of Welsh Government to provide professional and technical direction and support to Councils in a flood risk sense, rather than simply acting as grant administrators, and • The degree of co-ordination and collaboration between the Council and other flood risk management bodies including Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales. <p>These and other considerations will be picked up in future reports to the Council.</p>	

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
<p>‘Together we can’ – Community resilience and self-reliance (National Report)</p> <p>January 2023</p>	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Together_we_can_Community_resilience_and_self_reliance_English_2.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 To strengthen community resilience and support people to be more self-reliant, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place. We recommend that local authorities use the evaluation tool in Appendix 2 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-evaluate current engagement, management, performance and practice; • identify where improvement is needed; and • draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified in completing the evaluation tool. <p>R2 To help local authorities address the gaps they identify following their self-evaluation, we recommend that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally approve the completed Action Plan arising from the evaluation exercise. • regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees; and • revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance. 	<p>Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:</p>	<p>18th June 24 12th June 24 26th June 24</p>	<p>RAG: N/A</p> <p>We are aware of the report but given that the report covers such a cross cutting area (and is not very well defined), an officer has been agreed as the nominated lead for this, but input will be required from a number of service areas.</p> <p>A response will be prepared and will go via the governance process in due course. Provisional reporting dates provided.</p>	<p>RAG: N/A at present</p> <p>Appropriate Officers have considered the Audit Wales report and recommendations. A report outlining the proposed response is drafted and will be reported to the appropriate Council Committees and Cabinet in June 2024.</p> <p>An update on progress regarding this report will be conveyed within next year's External Regulation annual report.</p>

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

There were no inspection reports from CIW regarding Flintshire as an authority in 2022/23 therefore, there are no progress updates to provide.

Estyn

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
Adult Community Learning Provision (Jointly provided with Wrexham) May 2022	<p>Report Link: Inspection report Wrexham and Flintshire ALC Partnership 2022 (gov. wales)</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for Improvement:</p> <p>R1 Increase opportunities for adult learning in the community bilingually and through the medium of Welsh</p> <p>R2 Track, monitor and evaluate learners' long-term progress through the partnership's provision</p> <p>R3 Develop a partnership approach to self-evaluation and improvement of learning and teaching across all the partnership's provision.</p> <p>R4 Improve opportunities for learners to receive advice and guidance about joining the partnership's provision.</p>	Cabinet: O&SC:	Sept 22 Oct 22	<p>RAG: GREEN</p> <p>The four recommendations from the inspection are being delivered through the ACL Quality Improvement Plan which is overseen by the ACL Partnership Board. A future report to Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be presented in twelve months outlining the progress made.</p> <p>Also, the ACL Partnership was asked to produce two best-practice case studies for Estyn. They can be found:</p> <p>Establishing a new adult learning in the community partnership in Wrexham and Flintshire: https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/establishing-new-adult-learning-community-partnership-wrexham-and-flintshire</p> <p>Family Learning: https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/family-learning</p>	<p>RAG: GREEN</p> <p>Scrutiny members were provided at their 13th July 2023 meeting with an update on progress being made against the recommendations. The committee accepted the recommendation to note the progress made against the Estyn Inspection recommendations and to be assured by the rigour of improvement planning and evaluation within the Partnership.</p> <p>Ongoing work is absorbed into the annual improvement cycle of the ACL Partnership.</p>

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Report Title / Date	Recommendations / Observations	Reporting Information		2022-23 Response and RAG (If applicable)	2023-24 Progress Update and RAG
Information Commissioner's Annual Report 2021-22 July 2022	<p>Report Link: https://ico.org.uk/media/about-the-ico/documents/4021039/ico-annual-report-2021-22.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for Improvement:</p> <p>None</p>	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	RAG: N/A	RAG: N/A