

Social Services Annual Report

2025/2026

& 2026/27 Priorities





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Introduction

Section 1

This Social Services Annual Report is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, both of which place a statutory duty on the Council to report annually on its Social Services functions.

The focus of this legislation is on well-being, and the report summarises the key actions being taken in Flintshire to support our most vulnerable residents. It describes our challenges, provides our stakeholders with an overview of how we have performed and improved over the last year, and sets out our priorities for the coming year.

Stakeholders include people using our services, our workforce, elected Members, the general public, our partners, regulators, and Welsh Government. Engagement with stakeholders is fundamental to what we do and informs the development of our services and future plans.

In the report, we assess our performance against each of the four areas within the Performance Improvement Framework – People, Prevention, Partnership and Integration, and Well-being, and the eight quality standards under these four areas. This assessment is completed for both Adults' and Children's Services and describes how the local authority has aimed to achieve these standards throughout the year.

There are instances where the work described in this report relates to multiple quality standards; however, this is detailed in the area most appropriate.



Director's Summary

Section 2

Welcome to the 2025/26 Social Services Annual Report

Social care plays a vital role in supporting people to live safe, fulfilling, and independent lives. At its heart, it is about people, relationships, and compassion, working together to make a meaningful difference every day. Throughout 2025/26, our services have remained focused on supporting residents and their carers to live well, with dignity, independence, and choice.

During the year, we have continued to deliver vital support, empowering people to take control of their lives, strengthening resilience, and enabling individuals to remain connected to their communities wherever possible. Alongside this, we have introduced a range of innovative models and practices across adult, and children's services aimed at improving outcomes, enhancing efficiency, and responding more effectively to the changing needs of our population.

This has been a challenging year. We continue to operate in a context of escalating financial and workforce pressures driven by rising demand, increasing complexity of need, and growing costs within commissioned services. Recruitment and retention across key parts of the workforce – including social workers, occupational therapists, domiciliary care staff, and reablement workers – remain difficult, reflecting national and sector-wide challenges.

Despite these pressures, our work with individuals, families, and carers has remained central to achieving positive and sustainable outcomes. Families have played an increasingly important role in assessment, planning and decision-making, providing



Craig Macleod
Chief Officer, Social Services

valuable insight into what matters most. Working alongside professionals and community-based services, they have helped maintain safety, well-being and stability at home. This collaborative approach has supported a continued focus on prevention, early intervention and independence, even as demand has increased.

“Our priorities for 2025/26 focused on developing a more sustainable model of social care that supports long-term stability while continuing to deliver high-quality services. This includes enabling access to informal, universal and community-based support; strengthening personal and community resilience; and promoting self-support through reablement, recovery and progression pathways. Within children’s services, this has included strengthening parenting capacity and supporting families to develop their own solutions through approaches such as family group conferencing and restorative practice.”

Our model is underpinned by:

Passion for Practice

Through ‘what matters conversations,’ we will adhere to the principles of strengths-based practice, driven by a collective desire to make a positive impact on people’s lives.

Supporting Independence

We will adopt approaches and programmes designed to empower individuals and reduce the need for statutory support where safe and appropriate.

Care Closer to Home

We will support people within their community, reducing the need for hospital admissions and enhancing the quality of life through locally based provision.

Digital Support

Leveraging technology to enhance the quality, efficiency, and personalisation of care.

Sustainable Market

We will pay a fair price for care services that are environmentally, economically, and socially responsible, providing quality personalised outcomes to meet assessed needs.



This model is delivered by a passionate, committed, and professional workforce who continue to be innovative and dedicated to supporting the well-being and independence of our residents. Strong partnerships with individuals, families, communities, and providers enable statutory social care to focus on targeted intervention for those with the most complex needs.

There has been significant and positive work undertaken across services during the year in meeting our priorities, with many strong outcomes highlighted throughout this report. However, this has also been a demanding period that has required reflection, learning and the further development of strengths-based practice. We recognise that we are on a journey of improvement and that further improvement work is needed to achieve consistently high quality and assured practice. The need to assure system compliance and service quality has been reinforced through feedback from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), following two review inspections during 2025/26.

Our improvement priorities for 2026/27 are informed by CIW findings, learning from child practice reviews, and wider reflection on multi-agency working. We continue our work to strengthen our systems, support our workforce to develop confident and consistent practice, and ensure that robust safeguarding is at the centre of everything we do. We remain committed to building a resilient, learning organisation that continues to improve outcomes for the people and communities we serve.

To support the delivery of this ambition, the Council has put more money into social care to deal with rising costs and demand. An extra £7 million has been set aside for 2026/27. £6 million will go towards paying for care services, including residential care for adults and children, support for people in their own homes, and help for young people leaving care. Another £1 million will be used to support children's services in responding to increasing demand and to continue our journey in strengthening our responses. This funding is needed to sustain current services as part of the Council's commitment to supporting vulnerable people in need of social care support.

Contextual Data and National Performance Measures 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Adult Social Services

10,303 Number of new contacts received by statutory services during the year.

7,449 Number of those new contacts who were provided with advice or assistance. (This figure includes 1,140 contacts to statutory social services which resulted in advice & assistance from our social prescribing service).

7,540 Number of new assessments completed during the year.

17% Percentage of assessments that went on to have a care and support plan to meet their outcomes.

On the last day of the year, we were helping **1,167** people over the age of 65 to live at home and **696** older people in care homes.

73% Percentage of people with a package of support who had their care plan reviewed within timescales.

441 Number of people who completed a package of reablement during the year.

1,711 Number of adult carers who were identified and referred to our carers' service.

510 Number of people who commissioned their own services through a direct payment.

1,347 Number of adult safeguarding reports received during the year.

98% Percentage of those which progressed to Section 126 enquiries which were completed within 7 days.

333 Number of cases waiting to be allocated for a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards assessment in Flintshire.

During the year, **741** people were given care and support under the category of Learning Disability and **695** under the category of Physical Disability (this includes sensory impairments).

923 Number of supported hospital discharges directly overseen by a social worker or community assessment officer.

Children's Services

15,658 Number of contacts received by statutory services during the year.

11,584 Number of those contacts who were provided with advice or assistance.

1,217 Number of families that received information and support through the Early Help Hub.

2,589 Number of families passed to the Information Assistance and Advice (IAA) service.

109 Number of children on the Flintshire Child Protection Register on the 31 March 2026.

95% & 100% Percentage of initial child protection conferences and review conferences carried out within timescales.

6% Percentage of children added to the register that were re-registered within 12 months of deregistration.

10.4 months Average time that children remained on the register.

102 Number of children with a care and support plan where needs were being met through a direct payment as of the 31 March 2026.

91 Number of children / young people who have left care during the year.

2,318 Number of new assessments completed during the year.

22.2% Percentage of those who went on to have a care and support plan.

51.9% Percentage of those who had needs which could be met by any other means.

25.8% Percentage of those who had no eligible needs.

260 Number of children who were looked after in Flintshire on the 31 March 2026.

Leadership



**Councillor
Christine Jones**
Cabinet Member
for Social Services
and Well-being.

Political Leadership

Elected Members represent the residents of Flintshire and play a crucial role in the Council's governance, including agreeing the Council's priorities and approving policies to deliver continuous improvement. Flintshire County Council consists of 67 Elected Members, who represent their ward interests and participate in Full Council meetings to oversee the Council's performance. The Leader, Councillor Dave Hughes, appoints one Member to represent

each portfolio area as Cabinet Members. Together with the Leader, Deputy Leaders, Chief Executive Officer, and Chief Officers, they form the Council's Cabinet. Councillor Christine Jones is the Cabinet Member for Social Services and Well-being.

How We Make Decisions

Each Cabinet Member is supported by Overview and Scrutiny Committees. For Social Services, this is the Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Joint meetings with the Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee are held to discuss services for children and young people that cut across both Social Services and Education.

The Council Leader, Deputy Leaders, and Cabinet Member for Social Services are involved in the Social Services work programme through the Social Services Programme Board and Management Team meetings.

The Chief Executive Officer leads the Council's officers, supported by Chief Officers for each portfolio. The Chief Officer for Social Services also holds the statutory role of Director of Social Services. The Council's constitution outlines its operational structure, decision-making processes, and procedures to ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Internal governance is maintained through audit activity monitored by the Audit Committee, which can call on officers to provide evidence where concerns arise.

The National Office for Care and Support

The National Office for Care and Support, established by Welsh Government, provides national leadership and oversight for social care in Wales. Its role includes supporting the Chief Social Care Officer for Wales, developing and delivering the National Care Service, and implementing the national commissioning framework for care and support. Flintshire has continued to strengthen our governance arrangements through engagement with the National Office and other partners, supporting a consistent approach to accountability and assurance. This helps us align our services with national priorities and frameworks, while contributing to shared performance, workforce, and improvement activity.

Working with the National Office also supports our focus on continuous improvement. Access to national insight, benchmarking, and shared learning helps us to understand our performance, identify where we need to improve, and respond to wider challenges. This complements our local and regional partnerships and supports our aim to deliver sustainable, high-quality services that improve outcomes for people who need care and support.

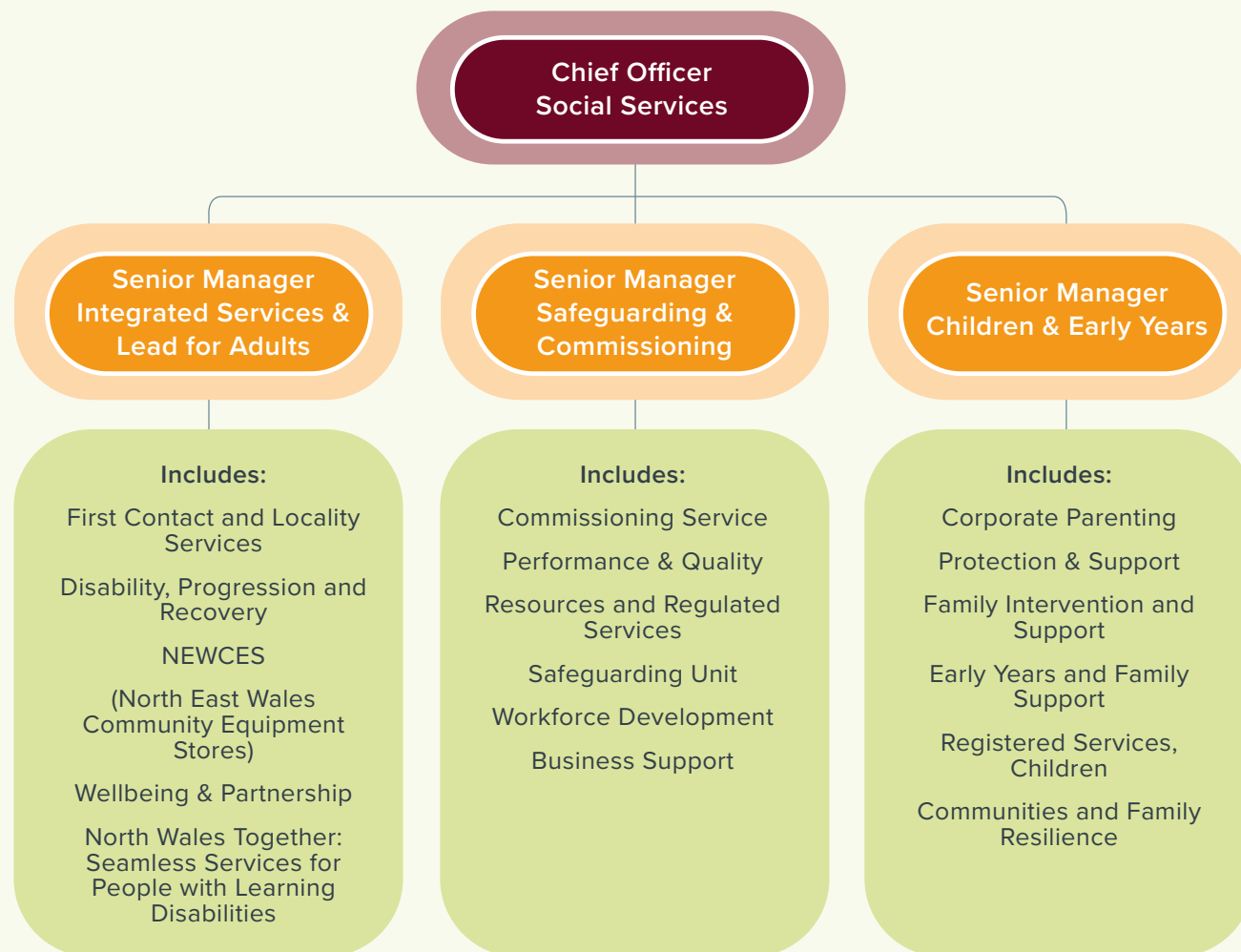
Partnership Working

Flintshire continues to work closely with partners through the North Wales Regional Partnership Board, bringing together local authorities, health, the third sector, and other key organisations to plan and deliver joined up services. This supports a shared understanding of need across the region and a coordinated approach to care and support, particularly for people with more complex needs. Through this partnership, we contribute to regional priorities, including prevention, integration, and improving outcomes for individuals and communities.

Our partnership working helps to create a more joined-up and sustainable system. By working collaboratively, we are better able to share resources, develop services, and respond to demand. This includes joint commissioning and service development, as well as strengthening links between health and social care. These approaches support our aim to provide consistent, high-quality services that are shaped around the needs of people and their families.



Social Services Management Structure



Workforce

Workforce Summary

- There are currently **1,174** staff employed in Social Services in Flintshire. This equates to **1,007** full-time equivalent posts.
- **288** of the staff are employed within Children's Services, **751** in Adults' Services and **135** in Safeguarding and Commissioning.
- **41.7%** of our staff work on a part-time basis.
- The majority of the workforce are women, **87.1%**
- Social care workers span a broad age range. The dominant age range is 55-64 which makes up **29%** of the workforce.
- **57%** of the workforce are over 45.

Recruitment, Retention and Turnover

There have been 134 leavers during the year but overall numbers of staff have remained very steady, with a slight increase in numbers between the beginning and end of the year.

Turnover for 2025-26 was 11.21% which has increased slightly since last year but remains lower than 2023-24.

We have a number of areas where it is challenging to fill vacant posts. To address this, we run regular recruitment initiatives and targeted marketing campaigns to promote these roles. Despite these efforts, some vacancies remain, and we therefore use agency workers and external providers to ensure we can continue delivering a high standard of service.



Professional Development

Flintshire's Workforce Development Team maintains high-quality learning and development opportunities, providing both planned and responsive support to meet the training needs of the social care workforce and to support the statutory functions of Social Services. The Workforce Development Team supports pre and post-graduate learning and vocational learning and offers training programmes to promote continued professional development and career progression.

Employee Support

The Council's employee assistance programme, 'VIVUP', is available online and via freephone 24/7. VIVUP provides support for employees with personal and work-related issues, as well as management support to complement existing policies. We have also worked with Canopi to offer a free self-referral service which supports social and health care workers with mental health support.

Where appropriate, our hybrid working policy supports flexible and agile working arrangements. This enables many individuals to achieve a better work-life balance, which in turn supports well-being.

Leaders are accessible, approachable, supportive, and overall ensure practitioners have the right training and skills. Flintshire has a comprehensive supervision policy, ensuring practitioners benefit from regular supervision. This policy facilitates positive conversations between employees and their managers, with annual appraisals strongly focused on well-being.

The Workforce Development Team offers a one-hour online workshop to provide new members of Social Services teams with the opportunity to meet and learn about processes and ways of working. We have developed comprehensive induction booklets to support colleagues who are new to the authority and/or Social Services in the first three months of their role, as well as for newly appointed managers to guide them through the transition into their managerial roles.

Micro-Care

Flintshire's Micro-Care project is a groundbreaking approach that supports people and small businesses to deliver care and well-being services in the area. Micro-Care has strengthened the local care market by offering a different option for care and support, and by bringing a new source of care workers into the market.

Financial Resources

The service is facing large increases in demand and costs for 2025/26, leading to a significant projected overspend. Like many other authorities, we are seeing a rise in both the amount and complexity of service need. This demand challenges both our capacity to respond to supporting people with more routine needs, and the financial capacity of the local authority. There are also a number of funding grants which are coming to an end, which will create risks which we will need to manage.

In summary, our financial position is:

	2025/26 Budget (net) £m	2025/26 Expenditure (net) £m	2025/26 Variance (net) £m
Adult Social Care - Older People	38.323	40.218	1.895
Adult Social Care - Working Age Adults	46.518	49.643	3.125
Children's Services	15.329	15.782	0.453
Safeguarding & Commissioning	4.029	3.169	-0.86
Total Social Services	104.200	108.812	4.613



Between 2024/25 and 2025/26 there was a budget pressure of £6.474m arising from increased demand, complexity of need, and the cost of care. Of the £6.474m budget pressures, 70.3% was for increases in commissioned care fees for both Adults' and Children's Services to support our independent care providers. It is important to note that even with the pressures, we sustained our focus on efficiency and were able to deliver savings of £0.756m.

Looking forward, the Council has made further financial investment in social care to recognise growing costs and demand. Additional funding of £7m has been allocated to support social care in 2026/2027. This includes £6m for demand increases in the charges made to the local authority for the cost of care that we buy from the

independent sector. This includes residential care for adults and children, support to enable people to live in their own home and young adults leaving care. This also includes £1m to support children's services infrastructure costs to meet growing demand and complexity and ensure safeguarding standards are maintained. This money is needed to sustain existing services. This additional investment recognises the value the local authority places on supporting vulnerable residents. However, my assessment is that central funding settlements are unlikely to keep pace with local demographic needs.

The above funding is a total investment in Social Services of **£13.474m**.

Performance Assessment

Section 4

This section asks local authorities to address the eight quality standards under four sections. This assessment is completed for both Adults' and Children's Services and describes how the local authority has aimed to achieve these standards throughout the year.

The self-assessment approach asks local authorities to address the following four questions:

- What do we know about the quality and impact of what we are doing?
- How do we know? e.g. what evidence from research, engagement and the metrics are we using to inform this assessment?
- What are we doing well and how can we do better? What are our priorities for improvement particularly over the coming year?
- What progress did we make on the areas for improvement identified in last year's report? What difference did we make?



People



Quality Standards

- 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.

Social Care Accolades 2026 – Inspirational Leadership

We are delighted to share that Melvin Jones, former Service Manager for Regulated Services for Children, has been nominated for the Inspirational Leadership Award. Although Mel has since moved on to a new role, the impact of his leadership continues to be felt across Flintshire's children's services, where his commitment to young people set a standard of practice that remains influential.

Mel is an exceptional and inspirational leader whose commitment to Flintshire's young people has made a significant and lasting difference. His calm, consistent approach and unwavering belief in the potential of every young person have helped create supportive environments where they feel safe, respected, and able to thrive. His nomination video further highlights the depth of his impact and can be viewed [here](#).

We are proud of Mel and the positive influence he has had on both the young people he supports and the colleagues he inspires. His dedication, professionalism, and compassion reflect the very best of social care in Wales, and his recognition at the Accolades is thoroughly deserved.

Direct Payments

Flintshire's Direct Payments (DP) Manager has been elected Chair of the All-Wales DP Forum, representing all 22 local authorities and strengthening Flintshire's national profile.

The DP Support Service has expanded its remit to provide the same specialist information, advice, and support to people choosing to self-fund their social care support, as those utilising DPs, enabling self-funding individuals to set up and maintain their arrangements safely and sustainably.

Flintshire continues to lead the way in supporting early work to introduce DPs for healthcare, giving people with primary health needs greater control over their support. This work has strengthened partnership working with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and helped people who trigger Continuing Health Care funding to move more smoothly from Social Services funding to health-funded arrangements. BCUHB currently spot-purchases support from the service, and discussions are underway to explore ongoing provision and future income opportunities from this partnership.

To find out more about direct payments, please click [here](#).



Case Study:

A's Journey Through Direct Payments

A is a young person living with their parents who has long-standing challenges linked to autism. When support began, A was experiencing severe self-neglect, very low self-esteem, and had not left their bedroom for over a year. Education had broken down, and the family felt they were at crisis point.

Despite A's clear potential, they had become extremely isolated. Family-based support and community services were tried but were not enough on their own. Action for Children suggested a DP, which the social work team supported, to help A work towards their goal of having an ordinary social life and improving how they saw themselves.

The DP Support Service helped the family recruit a personal assistant (PA) with the patience and skills to build trust at A's pace. Early communication was only possible through a gaming app, but over several months the PA developed a strong relationship with A and supported them to take small, confidence-building steps.

A has since made remarkable progress: leaving their bedroom, planning simple meals, going for walks, visiting a restaurant, and even travelling to Liverpool by train, something unimaginable a year earlier. The PA shared a story where they visited a restaurant and A made eye contact and interacted with the waiter, normally A would not attend, or if they did, would be unable to give eye contact, lift their head or engage...so this was a huge breakthrough! These experiences have boosted A's confidence and helped rebuild their relationship with their family. A is considering ideas for days out with their PA and organising future trips into the local community.

This relationship-based approach, made possible through Direct Payments, has enabled A to begin reconnecting with the world and feeling hopeful about the future. The DP Support Service has now stepped back, with the expectation that A will continue to grow their independence without ongoing statutory support.

Feedback received:

Having a DP means that I have some quality of life. I have support on a daily basis; I am well looked after. I have a social life. I feel that my voice is being heard and respected. I have a good relationship with my daughter. The pressure is taken off her too. Without DP would mean I wouldn't go out, I couldn't look after myself or run my house. I would be lonely. My daughter would be stressed.

It means I can have very welcome respite from caring duties and experience 'normal' life again including meeting friends, shopping and time to myself. It has made a big difference.

The support we have received from the DP service has been absolutely fantastic. We feel as a family very supported, and help is only a phone call away.

Having a DP has made an enormous difference to my dad and has enabled our choice over his care. It is such a good system and both my dad and us as a family are very happy with it.

Mwy na Geiriau

In 2025/2026, we have strengthened our commitment to the Welsh language across Social Services in many areas, with clear growth in colleague confidence and capability. In 2025 alone, Welsh language skills increased across all levels: 422 colleagues were recorded at Level 1 (a 5% rise), 160 at Level 2 (up 3%), 36 at Level 3 (no change), 34 at Level 4 (up 3%), and 37 at Level 5, which saw the strongest increase at 16%.

We have introduced six new Welsh Language Champions who promote daily use of Welsh, offering support to colleagues with emails and phone calls, supporting learners, encouraging correct pronunciation, assisting with recruitment, and leading promotional activities such as Dydd Miwsig Cymru and our presence at the National Eisteddfod in Wrexham in August 2025.

We are also proud to be a pilot site for the ARFer Project, a behavioural science initiative developed by Bangor University's Canolfan Bedwyr. This work helps our workforce build everyday habits that make using Welsh a natural part of workplace communication. Alongside this, we have reintroduced our 'Paned a Sgwrs' lunchtime sessions at Tŷ Dewi Sant, giving learners of all levels a relaxed space to practise conversational Welsh. These efforts are making a clear impact as the number of Welsh speaking colleagues has increased by 2.6% from 659 in 2024 to 689 in 2025.

In other areas, our Single Point of Access (SPoA) has been relocated to ensure bilingual support is offered from the first point of contact, and we continue to celebrate Welsh culture throughout our care homes and extra care settings, marking events such as Dydd Miwsig Cymru and Dydd Gŵyl Dewi.

Looking ahead, we are focused on building on this momentum. We aim to expand our network of Welsh Language Champions and support more colleagues to progress from Level 0 to Level 1, with plans to increase the number of individuals at Levels 1 and 2 in the future. Engagement with Independent Care Providers will be ongoing, to ensure the Welsh language is recognised as an essential part of the care experience.



Modernising Social Services Through Digital Innovation

We are continuing to modernise the way Social Services work by introducing new digital tools that make our services more efficient, accessible, and responsive. One of the key developments underway is the procurement of a Large Language Model (LLM), a type of artificial intelligence designed to understand and generate human-like language. This technology can help summarise information, draft documents and case notes, and identify patterns in data. By taking on some of the routine administrative tasks that currently demand significant time, the LLM will support more consistent and timely record-keeping and free practitioners to focus on the relational and person-centred aspects of assessment, care planning and support.

Alongside this, we are progressing our ambition to be 'digital by default' by reducing reliance on paper-based systems and strengthening the digital skills of our workforce. A key step in this journey is the rollout of a new online self-service module for financial assessments. Individuals who need to complete a financial assistance claim form for a means-tested assessment can now do so online, making the process quicker, more convenient, and more aligned with the way many people already manage other aspects of their daily lives. Together, these developments are helping us build a more modern, efficient, and accessible service for residents and colleagues alike. At the same time, we remain committed to ensuring that our shift toward digital services does not create barriers, and we will continue to provide accessible, supported alternatives for anyone who may be at risk of digital exclusion.

Implementation of our new client information system – Mosaic

Connecting Care is a national programme to improve how community, mental health, and social care services in Wales share information. As part of the programme, all six North Wales councils have purchased a new case management system called Mosaic. It's the first time the whole region will use the same system, which should make it easier for services to work together. Each council will still have its own version of Mosaic, allowing them to tailor it to local needs while benefiting from a shared regional approach.

Since commencing in May 2025, the Mosaic implementation has made strong and steady progress. Core project foundations were established early, including governance arrangements, training for system administrators, and the establishment of a representatives' group to support engagement across services.

Over the year, the supplier has built the testing environments and collaborated with Flintshire teams on 30 workflow workshops, shaping the system's configuration based on operational needs. A key milestone of completing the first Data

Migration Iteration has been achieved, which has seen core client demographic information loaded into Mosaic. Service representatives are working with Business Systems colleagues to review the initial build and provide feedback to ensure the system is fit for purpose. A forms review and User Acceptance Testing (UAT1) will be completed before April 2026.

This work has strengthened the organisation's readiness for change, increased workforce involvement, and highlighted opportunities to improve recording practices. Engagement in the workshops shows a growing understanding of the benefits of a workflow-based system and has supported constructive discussions about improvements.

Strong collaboration with the supplier and stakeholders, supported by consistent communication, has helped maintain momentum. The project remains on track with a solid foundation established for the next phase of development and testing.

Strengthening Our Workforce: Recruitment, Development, Retention and Succession Planning

Building and sustaining a skilled, motivated workforce is central to delivering high-quality social care. Over the past year, we have focused on attracting new applicants, supporting existing team members and creating clear pathways for long-term careers in Flintshire. Below is an overview of the progress we have made, the impact of our work, and the areas where we continue to grow.

Progress Made

A Dedicated Workforce Task Group

We established a Social Services Workforce Recruitment and Retention Task Group to lead improvements across the service. This group is streamlining HR processes and developing bold and modern approaches to advertising and recruitment.

Targeted Marketing and Recruitment Campaigns

To attract qualified social workers and occupational therapists, we commissioned Creed Communications Ltd to deliver a three-month targeted marketing campaign. This work is helping us reach the right candidates with the right messages.

Listening to Our Workforce

Focus groups with social workers have provided valuable insight into what keeps people in their roles. These conversations are directly shaping our recruitment and retention strategies, ensuring they reflect real experiences from across the workforce.



Values-Based, Culture-Led Recruitment

Our new recruitment campaigns highlight the values that define Flintshire such as creativity, innovation, and autonomy. By focusing on what makes our culture unique, we aim to inspire applicants who share these values.

Commitment to National Collaboration

We have signed the All-Wales Pledge, supporting a unified approach to managing the social work agency market across Wales.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

Flintshire continues to use the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, demonstrating its commitment to providing fair and equitable opportunities for eligible candidates.

Showcasing Real Experiences

Our current residential worker recruitment campaign features videos of workers sharing their passion for their roles and for working in Flintshire. The campaign can be viewed [here](#).

The Difference We Are Making

Growing Our Own Workforce

Over the past decade, we have supported 46 individuals through our “Grow Your Own” Social Worker programme, with 35 remaining with us today, an excellent retention rate of 76%.

Supporting Future Occupational Therapists

Each year, we support two Occupational Therapy students through our traineeship programme. One of these placements is fully funded by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), made possible through collaboration with North Wales Local Authorities, the Health Board, and the Regional Workforce Board.

Understanding Our Impact

To ensure our work is effective, we are gathering meaningful evidence from colleagues and service data. We ask people why they choose to join Flintshire County Council and why they leave, enabling us to compare themes and identify areas for improvement. This feedback helps us refine our approach and respond to emerging workforce needs.

What We Are Doing Well and Where We Can Improve

Strengths

- A comprehensive First Line Manager Toolkit (e-book)
- Strong supervision support for managers and all team members
- A wide-ranging Workforce Development and Training offer
- A central database of Social Services job adverts and job descriptions
- Regular engagement with Year 3 Social Work students to promote careers in Flintshire
- A clear career pathway for social workers, from newly qualified roles through to team manager positions
- Competitive remuneration for Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs)
- Active support for the WeCare Wales campaign, including promoting social care careers and attending school careers events

Opportunities for Further Improvement

- Further streamlining of HR processes
- Making job opportunities easier to find and navigate
- Increasing dedicated resources to promote and support recruitment across the service

Developing Our Future Workforce in Health and Social Care

Growing Our Own Social Workers

Flintshire's Grow Your Own Social Work programme remains central to our workforce development strategy. Over the past five years, we have expanded the number of supported trainees to meet increasing demand and strengthen long-term workforce stability. From 2021/22 to 2025/26, the programme has supported 27 new trainees, with annual intakes ranging from three to nine learners.

Expanding Opportunities in Occupational Therapy

Annual funding from Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) enables each North Wales local authority to support one Occupational Therapy trainee per year. This pathway has been particularly successful for individuals progressing from roles such as Direct Care Workers, Community Equipment Technicians and Community Care Officers.

Accredited Training in Moving and Handling

We are pleased to have achieved Open College Network (OCN) accreditation for our Moving and Handling (People) Train the Trainer course, allowing us to offer a recognised qualification to colleagues in direct care and support roles and reinforcing safe, high-quality practice.

Looking Ahead: The Flintshire Social Care Academy

From 2026/27, Flintshire County Council will partner with Coleg Cambria to establish the Flintshire Social Care Academy, creating a dedicated pathway for learners entering the sector. The Academy will provide structured placements for students studying health and social care qualifications, giving them early, meaningful experience of working within real service environments.

By engaging learners at the start of their career journey and showcasing the breadth of roles available, the Academy aims to raise the profile of social care as a rewarding and impactful profession. Students will gain hands-on experience across a range of teams such as in-house provider services, social work, family centres and occupational therapy, helping them build confidence, practical skills and a strong understanding of person-centred care.

This partnership will support the development of a skilled, compassionate and future-ready workforce, strengthening social care provision for individuals, families and communities across Flintshire.



Workforce Development Team

Additionally, between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, the Workforce Development Team (WDT) achieved the following:

- Delivered **320** courses with **4020** places available. Overall attendance rate was **83%** from places booked.
- **2435** attendees with **34%** from independent and 3rd sector
- Received **1977** evaluation forms
- **88%** of participants reported enhanced knowledge.
- **83%** reported increased confidence.
- **21** learners completed the Health & Social Care Core qualification.
- **62** learners are completing Level 2 Core, Level 2 Practice, or Level 3 Practice.
- Supported **46** social work trainees (Wrexham University and Open University).
- **4** individuals are undertaking the OT traineeship
- **5** individuals enrolled on the SW traineeship with **8** people on the K1202/123 modules.
- **12** newly qualified Social Workers attended our comprehensive induction programme and were supported to undertake the Consolidation Award, with **6** completing
- **4** individuals are undertaking AMHP, Pre-AMHP courses
- **7** colleagues completed the Practice Educator Award.

Embedding Equality and Anti-Racist Practice in Social Services

Flintshire's Strategic Equality Plan sets out the Council's four-year commitment to ensuring everyone is treated fairly and has equal access to services. It provides a clear framework for reducing discrimination, strengthening inclusion, and creating a more equal Flintshire for all residents. Social Services play a key role in delivering this ambition, working in alignment with the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP) to embed equality and anti-racist practice across the workforce.

Through the national implementation programme led by ADSS Cymru, Flintshire has contributed to strengthening anti-racist practice across social care, including through the Cultural Ambassador Programme and the development of an Anti-Racist Self-Assessment Tool for all local authorities. This work supports the wider aim of ensuring that anti-racist commitments translate into meaningful, everyday change.

Within Social Services, our Workforce Development Team reinforces these principles through regular induction sessions for new starters and for team members progressing into senior roles. These sessions highlight our zero-tolerance approach to racism, outline whistleblowing and reporting routes, and introduce the expectations set out in the ARWAP. Anti-racism guidance is also included in the induction booklet so that expectations are clear from the outset.

For existing colleagues, a programme of anti-racism training has been delivered throughout the year, with strong engagement across the service. All Senior Managers have now completed anti-racism training, and plans are in place to extend this to Team Managers and Deputy Team Managers. During 2025/26, 57 colleagues have attended dedicated anti-racism sessions, and further learning opportunities will continue as Social Care Wales rolls out new e-learning modules in 2026.

Our broader equality work includes mandatory training on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, VAWDASV, and LGBTQ+ awareness, with 41 colleagues completing LGBTQ+ sessions this year. Ask and Act training, delivered in partnership with DASU, further strengthens confidence in recognising and responding to domestic abuse and sexual violence.

During the reporting period, one complaint was identified as racially biased against a member of our workforce. This reinforces the importance of reviewing complaints for potential discrimination and ensuring colleagues feel supported when facing inappropriate behaviour.

Together, these actions demonstrate how Social Services are putting both the Strategic Equality Plan and the ARWAP into practice, building a safer, fairer, and more inclusive service for the workforce and residents alike.

2026/27 Priorities

- Listen to what matters to people and evidence how their 'voice' informs their assessment, care, and support plan and development of personal outcomes
- Demonstrate an active offer of independent advocacy for people who need this support
- Embed the 'collaborative communications' practice model
- Develop a Choice Policy so people understand their options and what we can offer to meet their assessed eligible needs
- Build capacity and focus for timely, quality reviews including direct payments
- Invest in our workforce through a 'grow your own' approach to recruitment and development
- Review our structure to improve resilience and reduce reliance on agency staff
- Complete an anti-racism self-assessment supported by a clear action plan
- Prepare and commence the implementation of a new IT system (Mosaic), with strong training for staff
- Safely pilot and use AI tools to give staff more time to focus on working with people

Prevention



Quality Standards

- 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.

Removing Profit from the Care of Looked After Children

Flintshire continues to expand its in-house residential and fostering provision to meet rising demand and secure long-term sufficiency. As part of the Foster Wales national network of 22 local authorities, we remain committed to providing stable, nurturing, not-for-profit homes for children. Despite the UK-wide shortage of foster carers, Flintshire has retained a strong and experienced fostering community, celebrated at our Foster Carer Awards in December 2025.

The work detailed in this report is driven by a commitment to a not-for-profit model of care, focused on strengthening in-house provision and reducing reliance on high-cost independent providers.

Fostering

Foster Wales Flintshire achieved steady, meaningful growth in 2025–2026, strengthening its in-house fostering community and improving stability for children.

Key achievements

- **15** new fostering placements were created through eight newly approved households and increased capacity among existing carers.
- Recruitment quality improved, reflected in low assessment drop-out rates and a **75%** rise in website traffic following enhanced digital engagement and the launch of a new website.
- The 'Cuppa with a Carer' model successfully connected prospective applicants with experienced carers and has since been adopted by five other Foster Wales authorities.
- Partnerships with local businesses expanded recruitment reach, including QR-coded coffee sleeves that boosted enquiries during Foster Care Fortnight.
- Carer retention remained strong, supported by 13 well-being events, updated policies, accessible digital guidance, and three new training programmes.

Impact

- More children can now remain within Flintshire, supporting continuity in education, community links and family time.
- Reliance on independent fostering agencies reduced, without an increase in unplanned moves.
- Positive feedback and stable retention demonstrate a resilient, well-supported fostering community.



What the evidence shows

- Engagement events, disruption meeting data and recruitment metrics all indicate high satisfaction, strong placement stability and effective recruitment activity.

Areas to strengthen

- Continued investment in our workforce is essential to sustain growth and maintain a predominantly in-house, not-for-profit model.
- The financial offer requires review to remain competitive with neighbouring authorities, particularly around council tax exemptions.
- Further development of local business partnerships and a stronger community-based support model will support recruitment and align with the Mockingbird ethos.

To find out more about Fostering please click [here](#).



Mockingbird Fostering Network Program

Mockingbird continued to grow and strengthen in 2025–2026, with clear evidence of improved stability, strong community support, and sustainable expansion.

Key achievements

- Three fully established constellations now support around 30 fostering households.
- Flintshire's practice has been highlighted nationally, with examples shared with The Fostering Network as part of UK-wide evaluation work.
- Expansion is progressing well: a third Hub Carer began in February with families ready to join from the waiting list, and a fourth Hub Carer is due to start in early summer.
- Long-term Welsh Government funding is secured until 2028, ensuring stability for the programme.
- The Lleol Transitions Care project continues to complement Mockingbird by supporting children returning from residential care into local, not-for-profit fostering arrangements.

Impact

- Children benefit from a family-style model of care, stronger relationships, and a more connected fostering community.

- Evaluation in May 2025 and January 2026 shows placements within Mockingbird are three times more stable than those outside the model.
- Established constellations reduce pressure on the fostering team, with carers increasingly resolving challenges within their own support network.

Evidence of quality

- Monthly reporting to The Fostering Network tracks support hours, sleepovers and engagement.
- Flintshire's own Mockingbird Impact Report and the national Big Impact Report both draw on consistent data submitted by the service.

Strengths and areas for development

- Expansion is being delivered sustainably, supported by secured funding to 2028.
- Continued investment in our workforce is essential, with a dedicated Deputy Team Manager now leading the programme.
- A long-term strategy beyond 2028 will be needed to maintain momentum and ensure ongoing sustainability.

Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)

Special Guardianship activity in 2025–2026 shows clear growth, stronger support for carers, and improved permanence outcomes for children.

Key achievements

- 16 SGOs were granted during the review period, with one court date pending and four awaiting scheduling. Nine further assessments are underway.
- Assessment capacity increased through dedicated full-time roles, supported by targeted investment.
- A strengthened support offer was introduced, including specialist groups, training, newsletters and regular engagement.
- Mockingbird resources were extended to SGO families, ensuring continuity of support when transitioning from fostering.
- Post-order support has been strengthened, helping sustain legal arrangements.

Impact

- Fewer children now remain on Full Care Orders or require ongoing legal intervention.
- Guardians are better equipped through training, resources and tailored support plans that meet the needs of each child and carer.

Evidence of quality

- SGO arrangements are being sustained, supported by positive feedback gathered through event surveys.
- Metrics show more children remaining with their carers under SGOs rather than continuing in proceedings or on Full Care Orders.

Strengths and areas for development

- The service is progressing well, but ‘no detriment’ expectations from the courts remain inconsistent, with significant variation across local authorities.
- Financial packages continue to be carefully considered, with foster carers retaining their pre-order allowance for 24 months before means testing.
- Further workforce investment will be needed to maintain timely, high-quality assessments and continue developing the service.

To find out more about Special Guardianship Orders please click [here](#).

Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN)

Flintshire continues to expand its Multisystemic Therapy (MST) services to support children at risk of abuse and neglect. In 2025/26, a new specialist team was established to deliver highly targeted, trauma-informed, evidence-based treatment. This service is delivered through a partnership between Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council and BCUHB, and forms part of a wider clinical study with Teesside and Kent Universities.

The team's focus is on increasing safety so that children can remain at home with their families and within their communities. Therapists work intensively with parents to address issues such as substance use and mental health difficulties and are trained to deliver a range of specialist interventions. These include Reinforcement-Based Therapy for substance misuse, Prolonged Exposure Therapy for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for children experiencing trauma symptoms, Family and Couples Therapy, Anger Management CBT, and wider systemic interventions that support the whole family.

“

A parent has described their experience with MST-CAN as:

“I feel I am being supported by MST-CAN and they are helping me loads, to be fair I wouldn't of known what to do or where to turn if it weren't for the service thank you all so much”.

”

Early Years and Childcare

Promoting the Oxford Brain Story in Child Development

The international Oxford Brain Story (OBS) provides an accessible, evidence-based framework to explain how early experiences, including trauma, shape brain development and lifelong outcomes for individuals. It bridges the gap between scientific understanding and practical application within frontline services.

Building on progress over the past four years, 214 practitioners from health, education, social care, and early years settings have completed training across 24 sessions, gaining tools to recognise how early adversity and nurturing environments directly influence neurological development. Knowledge scores increased from 20% to 81% after training, and 171 participants rated the sessions 9–10 out of 10.

Integrating this approach into daily practice has encouraged more reflective conversations between professionals and families, strengthened a shared language around brain development, and created clearer opportunities for early, effective support by recognising that everyone has their own ‘brain story’.

Regular workshops and reflective sessions have strengthened collaboration, allowing colleagues to share best practice and challenges, increasing confidence in recognising adversity and engaging families in meaningful conversations. Early feedback shows improved multi-agency working and wider use of a shared language around brain development and resilience, laying the foundations for broader integration of OBS across frontline services, with further expansion planned for the coming year.

OBS aligns with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act by promoting prevention, long-term thinking, collaboration, and trauma-informed practice, supporting more proportionate and preventative responses for families. Investing in early intervention and supportive environments can help reduce long-term societal costs linked to mental health difficulties, school disengagement, and chronic illness. Ongoing work with regional and national partners, including the University of Oxford, will continue to develop OBS, progress accreditation, and establish a sustainable model for wider use.

EPEC Autism: A Community-Driven Early Intervention Model

The EPEC (Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities) model is nationally recognised as an evidence-based, community-led parenting approach that strengthens early intervention and reduces pressure on specialist services. Across the UK, a national EPEC team trains local teams as facilitators in several programmes, including the core programme, 'Being a Parent' and several other targeted programmes, including those that aim to provide structured, accessible support for families whose children have emerging or diagnosed neurodevelopmental needs. The autism-specific strand offers practical, relationship-based tools and family-centred support, helping parents navigate complex health and education systems. By training local parents to lead programmes, EPEC exemplifies asset-based community development, building sustainable, peer-led networks of support.

In Flintshire, EPEC Autism is delivered by the Early Years and Family Service (EYFS) as part of a wider suite of peer led programmes. It is increasingly recognised as a vital early intervention offer for families awaiting support from CAMHS, Early Years Learning Development Teams (formerly Preschool Development) and the Neurodevelopmental (ND) Team. Using the NYTH framework, the team has embedded the programme and expanded volunteer capacity to meet rising demand. Sessions are delivered in welcoming Early Years Family Centres, helping to reduce barriers for families.

The programme provides crucial support during the waiting periods between services. Its integration within wider children's services has strengthened its reputation as a trusted early help pathway. Recent partnership work with Early Years CAMHS and the Early Years Learning Development Teams in BCUHB has created cohesive support networks for families seeking to understand their children's behaviour, build relationships through play and support communication needs.

In 2025/26, the team delivered three EPEC Autism courses with a course average of 11 parents attending. The summer term 2026 course is already full, and a waiting list is in place due to increasing demand. Each volunteer, as a parent, attends the programme, and can volunteer to be trained in the core programme and then specialise. During 2026/27, more volunteers will be offered the opportunity to train in the autism specific programme, which will help expand provision. Many of the parents themselves have a diagnosis or are pre-diagnosis and have increased their own understanding, before helping others.

Further to this, a cohort of parents declined the programme due to work commitments and apprehension about a 10-week programme and what that may entail. The team aimed to overcome this barrier, and working with the national EPEC team and the EPEC team at Sheffield City Council, they developed a



three-week, two-hour workshop for parents, providing a light-touch version with key strategies, and aiming to reduce any apprehension. This has taken 12 months to develop, with the first pilot having 66% of parents signing up for the full course. The EPEC Research team is providing the evaluation which is expected to be completed in 2026/27.

“

Parents shared the following feedback about the programme;

“The group itself and the atmosphere were great. I found that I am not alone. I learnt to understand my child and how to deal with difficult situations.”

“My child has reduced his meltdowns and I have gained a deeper relationship with my eldest child.”

“I always felt very alone as a family, no support and no one cared, they just wanted to judge us and comment. The course helped me to realise we are not on our own.”

”

Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme

The Childcare and Early Years Capital programme continues to invest in high-quality, purpose-built childcare facilities that strengthen links with schools and expand access to funded childcare. Earlier this year, Cylch Tŷ Mair, based in Oakenholt, opened its doors to families offering Welsh-medium childcare provision for up to 40 children in their new building.

Construction is progressing on the Cornist CP school project in Flint, to create 40 additional childcare places in an area identified as having insufficient provision in the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The project is due for completion in June 2026, and 58 families have already expressed interest in using the new childcare offer.

These modern facilities provide colleagues with well-equipped, supportive workspaces that encourage creativity, well-being and professional development. Closer collaboration between childcare teams and school-based practitioners is strengthening relationships, easing children's transition into full-time education and building a shared sense of community.

Further capital developments across multiple sites are ongoing as part of the 2025–2028 programme, with additional

projects now moving into the design and procurement stages. The approved investment provided by Welsh Government exceeds £5 million.

This enhanced offer across Flintshire, alongside pop-up childcare, will increase accessibility and availability. By working closely with providers to deliver high-quality childcare, the service helps reduce developmental gaps for children experiencing poverty or adversity, with long-term benefits for social care, youth justice and mental health services.

Mrs X said:

'My children are so lucky to have such wonderful facilities. I had not really thought of them going to a Welsh school, and this one is right on my doorstep, but once I saw the lovely childcare facilities and spoke to the staff, I knew this was the place for them. My daughter goes in with a smile and comes out exhausted from play!'



Review of Early Years & Family Centres

The review of Early Years and Family Centres will ensure centres are located in the areas of greatest need and viability; while identifying gaps for future development so families can access safe, welcoming, and nurturing environments with inclusive play opportunities and developmentally appropriate resources that reflect the Five Ways to Well-being and frameworks such as NEST.

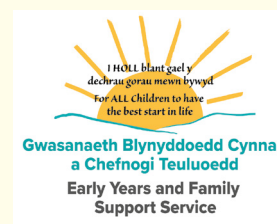
The Early Years and Family Centres act as the ‘front door of prevention’ for more than 1,300 children and parents/carers, including 1,160 Flying Start children, 186 outreach families, (outside of the Flying Start targeted areas), 121 children with additional needs, and 656 needing support with childcare due to a need. Five Centres, Holywell, Flint, Aston, Buckley and Connah’s Quay provide multi-agency support and outreach services, with additional childcare provision being delivered from centres in Gronant and Sealand.

As Flying Start approaches its 20th year in 2026, a strategic review of all Early Years and Family Centres is underway to ensure the estate, workforce, and delivery model align with local needs and programme goals. The review focuses on optimising local authority and community spaces, strengthening co-location with health and social care partners,

and ensuring services continue to target areas of deprivation and emerging demand. By taking an evidence-based approach, the aim is to increase impact, improve accessibility, create more family-friendly environments, and ensure every space delivers clear social value so children have the best start in life.

This year’s continued grant investment in the centres reflects a strong commitment to prevention and demand management in Children’s Services. Strengthening community-based, multi-agency centres aims to reduce escalation to statutory services, improve long-term outcomes for children, and support financial sustainability in a challenging fiscal climate.

To find out more about Flintshire Early Years and Childcare please click [here](#) or scan the QR code below:



Using Data and Power BI to Inform Evidence-Based Service Development

Since 2019, the Early Years and Family Service (EYFS) team has developed an innovative approach to performance monitoring and enhanced data collection to better support young children and their families. This work has produced a secure, Flintshire-designed database enabling accurate multi-agency data recording across EYFS services, including the Welsh Government's Flying Start programme and the administration of funded childcare. To strengthen our insight and decision-making, we now use live Power BI dashboards, a data visualisation tool providing real-time, accessible analysis of service performance.

Power BI allows us to visualise complex data on the care and development of babies and young children, spot trends, and monitor outcomes in real time. This gives leaders and frontline teams the insight to tailor interventions, deploy resources effectively, and adjust strategies as we see what is working and where improvement is needed. For example, visualising speech and language data highlighted areas requiring additional support, leading to a 15% increase in targeted provision for families. Embedding analytics into service design strengthens continuous improvement, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs.

Co-located BCUHB and Local Authority teams record information in a shared system, creating a holistic picture of each child's development, parental support, and expected outcomes such as responsive parenting, improved speech and language, and nurturing home learning environments. What began as a Welsh Government grant-monitoring tool has evolved into a comprehensive system that supports geographic, demographic, and holistic identification of families facing complex circumstances, enabling more efficient and targeted use of service resources.

The team recently showcased this work at Welsh Government events to demonstrate Flintshire's progress and support continued investment in Children and Communities Grant programmes. Future plans include expanding data collection to incorporate parental feedback and integrating predictive analytics to anticipate emerging needs. This ongoing focus on data-driven service development will help maintain high-quality, responsive support for families.

Feedback from Nesta,
Senior Analyst, Research
and Innovation Foundation, UK:

"I was delighted to see your data developments at the national event. Everyone was very impressed with your database and dashboards - I've had lots of people ask about Flintshire's database, it's seen as the gold standard of data informed decision making in the early years by many. I'm always so impressed with your innovative approaches, but also how all the advancements always hold families at the heart, ensuring Flintshire can be proactive and identify need earlier so they can improve outcomes for babies and families."

Flintshire Children's Services Improvement Check

Following the Performance Evaluation Inspection (PEI) in November 2023, Flintshire Children's Services received an Improvement Check (IC) from CIW between 14 – 16 July 2025.

The check, which focused on areas identified during the PEI inspection, found solid progress reflecting the Council's commitment to delivering high-quality support for children and families.

The report identified the need to build on momentum to further develop and embed sustained improvement, tackling specific areas to enhance and strengthen practice and service provision.

In response to the CIW's findings, Flintshire Children's Services is taking forward a series of improvements to strengthen how children, young people and families are supported, many of which have been mentioned within this report.

The actions and their status or target completion date are summarised below:

Completed

- Full-time education worker embedded in the Front Door service.

- Published a guide to help colleagues access and use data.
- Updated induction for all new colleagues, including Welsh legislation.
- Published a new induction pack.
- Promoted training and development opportunities.
- Shared updated threshold guidance with our workforce
- Updated the Performance and Quality Framework.
- Reviewed minute-taking arrangements for safeguarding meetings
- Introduced a standard Core Group template
- Improved recording of meeting invitations and attendance.
- Ensured consistent invitations to strategy meetings.
- Strengthened managerial oversight of multi-agency work.

Initial actions completed with work ongoing

- Strengthening the Reconnect Project to support placement stability.
- Improving foster carer recruitment and retention.
- Enhancing support for Special Guardianship families.
- Improving housing pathways for care leavers.
- Reviewing workforce gaps and agency arrangements.
- Reviewing the Mosaic case management system.
- Introducing performance clinics.
- Prioritising reviews for families receiving direct payments.
- Updating the annual review process for direct payments

- Standardising referrer outcome letters.
- Improving response times to initial concerns.
- Reviewing safeguarding meeting processes.
- Improving compliance with assessment timescales.
- Continuing Core Group training and audits.

Action carried forward to 2025/26

- Meeting with partners to align review processes.

May 2026

- Moving children into more suitable placements where needed.

June 2026

- Growing the Mockingbird foster care model to strengthen support networks.

September 2026

- Opening a new three-bed residential home with a partner organisation.
- Reviewing and improving respite care options.

- Rolling out Enhanced Care Planning training.
- Introducing regular workforce development days.
- Workforce involvement in Mosaic system changes.
- Expanding “Grow Your Own” routes into social work.
- Continuing recruitment to reduce reliance on agency workers.

December 2026

- Strengthening checks and training for agency workers.

March 2027

- Improving data sharing with health and education partners.

March 2030

- Expanding the number of council-run children’s homes to increase local placement options.

Strengthening Our Reablement Service to Increase Capacity and Impact

Over the past twelve months, steady progress has been made in expanding the reablement service, despite the ongoing challenges of recruiting domiciliary care workers. By refocusing how the service prioritises its work, the team has been able to support **12%** more people with their reablement needs. This improvement has had a meaningful impact, with more than **125** individuals now requiring a reduced level of care as a direct result of the support they received.

Many people have shared how valuable the service has been, with one person saying they “feel better now than they did before they went into hospital,” and another explaining that “the service helped me to regain my confidence after I had a fall and that has helped me to go out into the community again”.

While these developments are encouraging, there is still more to do. The service recognises the need to strengthen data collection to better demonstrate outcomes, and continued efforts to improve recruitment will be essential to further increase reablement capacity and reduce long-term dependency.



Working Together with NEWCIS to Improve Access for Carers

We continue to work closely with NEWCIS to ensure carers receive timely information, advice, and support. NEWCIS' new carers centre in Mold has been highly successful since opening, with around 2,000 people walking in each month. Over the summer, more than 100 events were held, including volunteer-led activities, a furniture refurbishment programme, cost-of-living support sessions with partners such as Citizens Advice, Warm Wales, Scottish Power Energy Network, and Welfare Rights, as well as Carers Week celebrations and consultation events.

Carers can access peer support groups, drop-ins, training, and well-being sessions focused on coping strategies. Strong partnerships have also developed with Social Services teams, including Occupational Therapy and Direct Payments, who now run regular drop-in sessions. These allow carers to ask questions, receive information, and be signposted to the right support without needing a formal referral, helping us deliver on our preventative approach. More than 600 event attendances have been recorded, an increase of 240%, and many previously unidentified carers are now being reached.

Feedback has been extremely positive. Carers value the welcoming environment, including the outdoor space developed by the Toyota apprentice programme, and appreciate the range of support available. The centre has also received visits from local MPs and the First Minister of Wales, who praised its impact on the community and high street.

NEWCIS has strengthened relationships with local businesses, increasing visibility of carer support, encouraging referrals, and generating additional fundraising and donations. This has improved community signposting and raised awareness of how carers can be supported locally.

The high-street location has made the centre highly accessible. Carers can drop in at a time that suits them, and a duty officer is always available, ensuring many receive the information and advice they need on the same day.

Quotes / Feedback

"The new centre is wonderful! I have met new people, made friends and created some time for myself when I visit to get involved. Great to have it here in Mold!"

"Fantastic place! What a good job you have all done in creating a special place for carers"

"So easy to pop in from work to ask questions and have a nose of what is going on, I have attended a few things and hope to get to more in future. Really fab resource for the town to have."



Improving Our Front Door Services

Our main points of access, SPoA for adults, and First Contact and Early Intervention services for families, form the ‘front door’ to support in Flintshire. They provide a single route for individuals, families and professionals to seek information, raise concerns or request help. Strengthening these access points ensures enquiries are handled consistently, people receive clear guidance from the outset, and early help is offered wherever possible to prevent issues from escalating. This also ensures that only those who need a full assessment move on to statutory services, creating a smoother and more efficient experience.

Adults

Single Point of Access (SPoA)

The SPoA team has relocated to Tŷ Dewi Sant, improving integration with other social care teams and enabling more flexible working, which has had a positive impact on colleague well-being. We continue to work closely with third-sector partners, including the Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC) hosted social prescribing team, whose knowledge of local community support plays an invaluable role in connecting people to opportunities for them to take a positive and active role in supporting their own well-being and achieving what matters to them.

To improve efficiency, we have mapped SPoA workflows and commissioned an external review to identify bottlenecks and

opportunities for improvement. We are also supporting partner organisations to take ownership of processes that do not need to sit within social services, for example, enabling Flintshire Food Bank to resume issuing food vouchers directly, reducing unnecessary involvement from social services and helping to remove stigma for those seeking support.

Children

Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA)

Early intervention begins as soon as a family contacts us. The IAA service provides a timely and proportionate first response within two working days, using a conversational approach to understand what is really happening for the family, including underlying issues and strengths. Many families simply need reassurance, guidance or practical information rather than a formal referral. By resolving concerns early, the IAA service prevents escalation and reduces unnecessary referrals into the Early Help Hub, protecting capacity for families who need more intensive support. When early advice is not enough, IAA officers complete more detailed assessments that feed directly into the Early Help Hub, ensuring families receive tailored support.

Children’s First Contact Team (CFCT)

CFCT is the front door to statutory children’s services, triaging all referrals and assessing whether children may be at risk of significant harm or require care and support. All referrals receive a decision within one working day, an area where Flintshire consistently achieves 100% compliance, as reported to CIW. A dedicated telephone line for education professionals

provides immediate access to social workers, strengthening safeguarding practice and improving multi-agency working. This is supported further through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, where agencies share information and make same-day decisions about children's safety and support needs.

Over the past year, significant work has been undertaken to improve processes, practice and responsiveness at the children's front door. CIW's most recent visit highlighted the wide range of early help and preventative options available, including support for children with diagnosed or suspected neurodiverse conditions. They also identified the need to improve how outcomes are communicated back to referrers, ensuring timely feedback when concerns are reported.

Improving Online Access to Information and Support

Work is progressing well to refresh the Social Services section of the Flintshire County Council website, with the first phase planned for launch in 2026. The update will allow residents to easily find clear information, advice, and signposting, helping individuals understand their options earlier, make informed decisions, and reach the right services without delay.

This work aligns closely with Flintshire County Council's wider digital priorities, which focus on improving customer experience, increasing accessibility, and making it easier for people to interact with services online. By exploring new technology and designing a site that is simple to navigate

and responsive to different needs, we are ensuring that social services information is not only consistent with the Council's broader digital transformation ambitions but supports our aims to promote independence and improve prevention and early intervention services.

Age Friendly Communities in Flintshire

Flintshire became a member of the World Health Organisation Global Network of Age Friendly Communities in 2023. An Age Friendly Community creates an environment that enables people of all ages to age well by providing opportunities to be healthy, active and get involved in community activities.

To lead the development of age friendly and inclusive communities in Flintshire, Social Services employ an Ageing Well Engagement Officer, who provides information and support to older people and community groups across Flintshire. This includes information about accessing services and supporting a 'What's On' guide for social groups and activities. Strong partnership working with the Flintshire 50+ Action Group also provides advocacy to ensure that all older citizens have a voice and can participate in community life. Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Services and Well-being, supports this work as the Age Friendly Champion for Flintshire.

As an active member of the Global, UK and Wales Networks of Age Friendly Communities, we are able to share and receive ideas to make Flintshire a more inclusive and supportive place for all citizens regardless of age.

Dementia Friendly Communities in Flintshire

Social Services work with [Outside Lives](#) to engage with people across all communities in Flintshire to improve services, support and activities for people living with dementia and to increase public awareness of dementia. This work includes the development of Dementia Friendly Communities as part of the [North Wales Dementia Friendly Communities Scheme](#). Dementia Friendly Communities support people living with dementia, their families and carers, by raising awareness of dementia to increase understanding and reduce stigma. They empower individuals living with dementia to remain an active part of their community, reducing isolation and loneliness.

2026/27 Priorities

- Support strong parent–baby/infant relationships and improve understanding of early child development and mental health.
- Build a consistent approach to reducing and managing waiting lists.
- Review and improve how people move safely and quickly from hospital into the right support.
- Invest in our in-house expertise to support reablement and recovery at home.
- Support young people to move from high-cost residential care into family-based care, including expanding fostering.
- We will explore creating a Family Hub to bring support together in communities.



Partnership and Integration



Quality Standards

- Effective partnerships are in place to commission and fully deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for people.
- People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners.

Expanding and Strengthening Children's Residential Care Services

Progress to increase in-house residential capacity is continuing at pace, with plans to develop up to two new homes per year over the next five years, depending on assessed need and available funding.

Several strands of work are already well underway, a suitable property has been identified and is currently going through the purchase process. Work is also progressing with First Choice Housing to establish a specialist home for two young people with significant and complex needs, helping to strengthen local specialist provision and reduce reliance on placements outside the county.

Alongside this, a refurbishment project with Care & Repair is moving forward to transform another property into a short-term residential home for two young people. This service will support crisis response, assessment periods, and step-down planning.

Progress with Action for Children is moving well, with plans to open a three-bed home in Flintshire within the next year. The application for Housing Capital Fund support has been completed, helping the project move forward, and construction and adaptation work on the property is close to finishing.

Action for Children planned to submit their registration application to CIW in March, with a decision likely in early summer. Recruitment planning has also begun so the service can open promptly once approval is granted.

Together, these developments show strong momentum and effective partnership working to expand high-quality, sustainable, child-centred residential options within the local area.

Partnership with Reconnect Programme

The partnership with the Reconnect Programme has strengthened Flintshire's ability to reduce out-of-county residential placements by developing local, family-based options for children with more complex needs. A targeted recruitment campaign launched in May 2025 focused on professionals from health, education and social care, recognising the value of transferable skills in supporting children who have experienced trauma. This approach has been effective, and the partnership will continue through to June 2026.

A joint multi-agency event in November 2025 further strengthened collaboration, showcasing how the partnership is improving outcomes through shared practice, clearer communication and coordinated support. Transition planning for children in Phase 3 continues to progress, with a focus on readiness for family-based care or, where appropriate, pathways to semi-independence. To date, three children have successfully moved, and a further 13 are progressing through Phase 3. Regular Review and Planning Meetings every 4–6 weeks ensure each child's plan remains responsive and outcome-focused.

North Wales Supported Employment Service for People with Learning Disabilities: Flintshire Overview

The North Wales Supported Employment Service for people with learning disabilities launched in July 2024. Delivered by specialist learning-disability teams, in partnership with third-sector providers and funded through an additional Regional Integration Fund (RIF) grant, the service operates in Flintshire and Wrexham with Hft supporting delivery.

Only 4.8% of people with learning disabilities known to social services are in paid work, despite strong interest in employment. The Supported Employment Service creates a clearer pathway by:

- Embedding supported employment within specialist learning-disability services
- Providing independent, aspirational employment advice
- Offering specialist job coaching using the evidence-based five-stage model
- Supporting employers to recruit and retain learning-disabled workers

The aim is to improve quality of life by helping people secure and sustain well-matched paid jobs.

A young woman from Flintshire who was supported into work reflected:

“I have learnt that I can succeed if I keep going and my confidence has grown... it was the best feeling ever, I love what I do.”

Role of the Employment Pathway Coordinator (EPC)

The EPC acts as a single point of referral, strengthening links between operational teams and employment support.

As of 31 March 2026 (Flintshire):

- **52** referrals to the EPC
- **24** referrals to Hft’s supported employment service
- **74%** of people referred had never had paid work
- **60%** had never looked for paid work

These figures highlight significant unmet need and the EPC’s impact in making employment a realistic option.

Progress to Date: Hft Supported Employment Service

- Open caseload of 16
- Four people have secured well-matched paid employment
- Three have secured their first non-paid outcome such as short-term work placements as stepping stones to paid work.
- Well-being data collected shows positive improvements at six and 12 months for jobseekers.

Continuous Improvement

The model includes ongoing learning through operational meetings, a regional supported-employment network, Ripple Effect Mapping workshops and independent evaluation by the University of Strathclyde.

Early findings showed many people needed more time to decide whether paid work was right for them. In response, the EPC now spends longer with individuals before referral, and job-coach caseloads have been reduced to reflect the intensive support required.

Citizen feedback supports this approach:

“People need time to think and get used to thinking about what they want. It is important to take it slow.”
(Year 1 Interim Evaluation Easy Read Report).

The following case study illustrates the partnership approach of the service and the importance of the right job match and long-term, in-work support and career development, through the five-stage supported employment model to success.

Case Study:

A young man was referred to the EPC after a review with his social worker. Although he lived in supported accommodation, he chose to meet at home with his parents and House Manager. With his support circle present, the EPC learned he was already being supported by Hft, and, with his agreement, he transferred to the supported employment service for more focused help to find paid work.



“When I first met my job coach, we talked about what I’d done before and what I wanted next. I wanted to be a porter in a hospital.” He soon discovered most hospital porter roles require a driving licence. “I realised learning to drive isn’t something I can do right now... it helped me understand my options.”



Exploring alternatives, he identified kitchen-porter roles as a good fit. He found a vacancy in a local care home but needed a Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate. His job coach arranged and supported him to complete the course. He also made contact with the employer to promote his skills, enthusiasm and suitability and put in place reasonable adjustments. “My job coach helped me prepare for the interview, how to communicate clearly and in an appropriate manner, how to present myself and was with me at the interview...later that day I got a phone call offering me the job. I felt amazing.”

Support continued as he settled into the role. “My job coach helped break the job into smaller steps when I felt overwhelmed. My confidence has grown so much.”

His employer says: “We appreciate (the young person) so much for what he brings to our company – fun, positivity, a willingness to go the extra mile, and a wonderful work ethic which shines through. Working with a supported employment provider has been smooth and not costly. The specialist support has helped both him and us.”

The young person reflects: “Having someone who listens and is honest about what’s right for me has changed everything. I’m proud of the work I do now keeping the kitchen clean and tidy, talking to the residents, and making them smile with my personality. That makes me really happy.”

He and his job coach continue to look for hospital portering roles that do not require a driving licence.

Coed y Ddraig Integrated Social Services and Health Hub

Coed y Ddraig, a new purpose-built community hub for adults with learning disabilities, autism, and mental health needs, was completed and handed over to Flintshire County Council in February 2026.

The facility in Mold is a significant milestone for the multi-million-pound project to transform day and work opportunity support in Flintshire. The new facility will bring existing services together and provide space for new ones. Hft will manage day-to-day operations, with services from Tri Ffordd in Bretton relocating in early 2026, and future plans for the hub to include the development of a new autism support service.

BCUHB will also use dedicated space within the building to continue delivering Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and other clinical interventions, with room to expand as needed.

The development, completed by MPH Construction, has been made possible thanks to £2.7m of capital funding from Flintshire County Council and £2.9m from the Welsh Government's Health and Social Care Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund.

Upon handover of the development, stakeholders and partners said:

Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Services and Well-being, said: "The upcoming handover of Coed y Ddraig marks a major milestone in this important project, which represents a significant investment in the future of support services in Flintshire. This purpose-built facility will allow us to bring services together under one roof, expand capacity and provide high-quality support for adults with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs."

Clair Johnson, Day Opportunities Manager at Hft, said: "We are proud to be operating Coed y Ddraig in partnership with Flintshire County Council and BCUHB. This purpose-built community hub represents a major step forward in providing high-quality, person-centred opportunities at Hft. By bringing services together in one modern, inclusive space, Coed y Ddraig will offer greater choice and continue to empower people to build skills, confidence and independence within their local community. Working alongside other community groups we hope to bring a valuable community resource."

Nesta McCluskey, BCUHB's East Integrated Health Community Director of Allied Health Professionals, said: "We are delighted to be Flintshire County Council's partner in the Coed y Ddraig development. This purpose-built space will allow even more collaborative working, with a range of therapies

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available to the communities we serve. Coed y Ddraig is another excellent example of the Health Board's commitment to working in partnership, to provide modern services which are fit for the future. We are looking forward to getting into the new building and welcoming our first service users to benefit from it."

Rhys Edwards, Commercial Manager at MPH Construction, said: "As a Flintshire-based contractor, we are proud to have delivered Coed y Ddraig for the local community. Working closely with Flintshire County Council and our local project partners, this has been a truly collaborative project from start to finish, built on shared goals and strong relationships. It is especially rewarding to now hand over a quality, purpose-built facility that reflects the needs of the community and will provide lasting benefits, making a real and positive difference to people's lives for years to come."

Minister for Mental Health and Well-being, Sarah Murphy, said: "It's great that the Coed y Ddraig development is about to be handed over to Flintshire Council. People with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs will be able to access a wide range of support services, therapies and clinical interventions from this purpose-built centre. The project is a fantastic example of what can be achieved when organisations work together. I'm delighted our £2.9m investment has helped secure the new, integrated models of care for Flintshire, which we are prioritising across Wales."

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Tŷ Croes Atti: Delivering High-Quality In-House Residential and Reablement Care

Tŷ Croes Atti opened its doors in November 2025, marking an important milestone for social care in Flintshire. The new facility now provides support for 56 older people, offering a modern, welcoming environment that reflects a major investment in high-quality, local care services. The building itself stands as a testament to an ambitious vision brought to life, designed to ensure that older people and those needing support can access the right care close to home.

The home supports general residential care and specialist support for people living with memory loss or dementia. It also includes provision to support 12 individuals requiring short-term reablement within the Discharge to Recover and Assess (D2RA) pathway, helping people regain independence following a hospital stay.

Since opening, Tŷ Croes Atti has quickly begun to fill, with both residents moving from the former Croes Atti site and new residents who have joined over the winter months. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. One resident shared, “I never thought I would live in something as amazing as this,” while another remarked, “The place is lovely, and it shows that we are valued.” These early impressions highlight just how much the new environment means to the people who call it home.

Building on its strong reputation, Tŷ Croes Atti is now benefiting from an enhanced partnership with BCUHB. This closer collaboration is already improving outcomes for residents, ensuring they receive coordinated, person-centred support that makes a real difference in their daily lives.



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Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Services, said: *“This new care home reflects our ongoing commitment to providing excellent care and support in Flintshire. We are proud to offer a warm and welcoming place where residents can feel at home, safe and valued.”*

Minister for Children and Social Care, Dawn Bowden, said:

“The project is a fantastic example of what can be achieved when organisations work together, and I’m delighted our funding has secured for Flintshire the sort of community capacity we need for the new, integrated models of care we are prioritising across Wales.”

BCUHB’s Chief Operating Officer, Tehmeena Ajmal, said:

“We are proud to be partners with Flintshire County Council, Welsh Government and Willmott Dixon in this important development. It underlines our commitment to our communities and working collaboratively to provide the appropriate care they need. Tŷ Croes Atti represents another vital step on the journey to providing the right care, in the right places, at the right times for the people of North Wales.”

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Trusted Assessor Model: Pilot and Current Position

The Trusted Assessor (TA) model is designed to streamline hospital assessment and discharge processes by allowing trained practitioners to carry out certain assessments that would traditionally require a social worker or occupational therapist. The aim is to reduce duplication, speed up decision-making, and support people to leave hospital safely and without unnecessary delay. In Wales, the development of this approach is being guided nationally, with Welsh Government currently shaping a framework to support consistent regional implementation.

As part of our local improvement work, we introduced a pilot model in partnership with one of our acute hospital sites. This followed the development of an organisational agreement that set out roles, responsibilities, and the scope of the model. Although the pilot has been implemented, we will look for opportunities over the next year to maximise any potential benefit available through this approach.

Notably, during the same period we have also increased social work capacity within the hospital. This additional resource has influenced the flow of assessments and may have reduced the opportunity for the TA model to demonstrate its potential benefits. Over the coming months, we will continue to monitor how the increased social work presence affects assessment delays and overall discharge performance. Once this picture is clearer, we will revisit the value and future role of a Trusted Assessor model within our local context.

This measured approach ensures that any decisions about further implementation are based on evidence, aligned with national direction, and focused on improving people's experience of moving from hospital to home.

Increasing Assessment Capacity to Support Hospital Discharge

With the support of a new Welsh Government Pathway of Care Delay Grant, we have been able to significantly increase our workforce capacity to support assessments within hospital to support discharge. The demand for support for hospital discharge continues to be a key area of challenge with there being a need to achieve both safe, as well as timely discharges from across multiple hospitals. The additional assessment capacity, alongside further capacity created within broader teams who support the process of hospital discharge, is an important development to support people to return home after a period of ill health.

Micro-Care

The Micro-Care Project has continued to make strong progress, with 23 new businesses established this year to support personal care and well-being across Flintshire. There are now 83 active Micro-Carers, with a further 20 currently onboarding. Together, they offer capacity to support up to 400 people with personalised care, delivering services ranging from personal care and dementia day support to family assistance, well-being activities, supported living, daily prompts, and emergency cover.

We are also seeing organic growth in small clusters of

Micro-Care groups in rural areas, reaching some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Micro-Carers are increasingly working together to extend their reach and provide more consistent support.

Two Micro-Care enterprises now deliver day services five days a week for people in the early to middle stages of dementia. These services provide meaningful community engagement, including participation in local singing and dance groups, as well as regular lunches and special occasion outings. Both services continue to thrive and have increased the number of commissioned care packages.

New opportunities are emerging to support children and young people. Creative, commissioned approaches are enabling tailored, person-centred support through small cluster groups, ensuring continuity and consistency of care. One recent example involves a young man with ADHD and autism who requires bespoke support. This model enables his family to access respite while helping him achieve the outcomes that matter most to him.

Flexible, community-based Micro-Care continues to fill gaps where traditional services struggle, including supporting timely hospital discharge through consistent, local carers. It strengthens the workforce through flexible opportunities and provides more choice, collaboration, and cost-effective care in rural and hard to reach areas.

The number of Micro-Carers completing the Quality Framework and contracting with the Council has also increased, with 18 approved providers now delivering commissioned care. In one case, a Micro-Carer undertook bespoke training to meet an individual's specialist needs, support that traditional services could not provide, allowing the person to remain at home with personalised care.

Looking ahead, Micro-Care is expected to play an increasingly important role in the future care landscape, offering flexible, relationship-focused support that complements traditional services and helps ease workforce pressures.

To find out more about Micro-Care please click [here](#).

Progress for Providers update

Progress for Providers is an accreditation programme designed to support residential, domiciliary, and extra care services in Flintshire to deliver truly individualised care. By using person-centred tools and practices, the programme helps teams rethink how they support people, strengthen relationships with families, and focus on what matters most to each individual. This approach not only promotes workforce development but also increases choice and control for people receiving care and support.

To date, 24 providers have successfully embedded these practices into their service delivery and achieved accreditation, with 10 awarded Gold, 9 Silver, and 5 Bronze. Interest in the programme continues to grow, with several providers currently working towards accreditation and three new providers recently expressing their intention to begin the journey. Providers are also showing real enthusiasm for integrating person-centred approaches into their electronic systems, and we are seeing strong examples of meaningful, person-centred work emerging across services.

Spotlight on Rural Health and Social Care in Wales

Llais Cymru has gathered extensive feedback from residents across Wales to understand both the strengths and challenges in accessing health and social care for citizens living in rural areas. The report 'Spotlight on Rural Health and Care in Wales' highlights the pressures facing rural communities and calls for meaningful change to make services fairer and easier to access. Over the next 12 months, Flintshire will be taking forward work that responds directly to these findings.

We have already made progress on several of the challenges highlighted in Llais Cymru's report and remain committed to delivering services that reflect the strongest practice across Wales. We continue to take part in regional and national

events to share learning and explore new approaches, and we work closely with partners to ensure the voices of people living in rural areas shape the development of integrated services.

The third sector remains a vital partner in delivering local support, and we continue to advocate for long-term, sustainable funding to help these organisations plan and deliver services with confidence. We are committed to maintaining strong partnerships across sectors so that together we can strengthen services and improve the experience of residents across our rural communities.

Our work includes contributing to the development of the Integrated Community Care System (ICCS) model and taking part in the national Connected Care digital programme, which aims to improve how health and social care systems work together.

In the year ahead, we will focus on:

- Building a clearer understanding of the needs and experiences of rural communities.
- Working closely with health, care and voluntary sector partners to explore practical solutions.
- Developing an action plan that responds to the issues raised in Llais Cymru's report, including digital inclusion and workforce challenges.
- Strengthening local, community-based services wherever possible.
- Improving communication and engagement so residents can stay involved as plans progress.

This work marks the start of a longer-term commitment to improving rural health and care. As an authority, we are committed to listening, learning, and taking forward changes that reflect the realities of rural life.

Embedding Net Zero into Commissioning Practice

Flintshire County Council has committed to achieving net zero carbon by 2030, in line with both its own Climate Change Strategy and the Welsh Government's requirement for the public sector to become carbon neutral by the same date. This commitment is now a core corporate priority, shaping how the organisation plans, delivers services, and manages its responsibilities across all departments.

As part of this work, Social Services is integrating net zero carbon considerations directly into its commissioning activity. All procurement processes within the service will incorporate the Council's corporate requirements for reducing carbon emissions, ensuring that commissioned services and providers contribute to the wider organisational goal of achieving net zero. This approach strengthens the link between climate objectives and commissioning decisions, embedding sustainability into everyday practice and supporting the Council's long-term transition to a net zero carbon future.

During 2025/26, two new facilities have opened that reflect this commitment. Tŷ Croes Atti Care Home in Flint has been designed as a net-zero-carbon building, and Coed y Ddraig in Mold has been developed with sustainability at its core to achieve net zero carbon in operation (NZCiO). These facilities demonstrate how new developments can lead the way in reducing emissions while delivering high-quality services for residents.

For more information on climate change and reducing our carbon footprint please click [here](#).

Developing Fair Pricing Through CareCubed

CareCubed is a digital costing tool that supports councils and providers to establish fair, transparent, and needs-based prices for specialist care. Its structured methodology aligns with Standard 7: Understanding the costs of care, and Standard 8: Setting fair and sustainable fees within the National Commissioning Standards Code of Practice, which requires local authorities to use evidence-based approaches to ensure fees are consistent, justifiable, and proportionate to individual need.

The system is now fully operational and being used across adults' and children's specialist placements to develop fair prices for care. Alongside this local implementation, regional work is progressing across North Wales to agree consistent annual inflationary uplifts for specialist placements. Using the CareCubed methodology as a shared framework ensures that these uplifts are equitable, well-reasoned, and aligned with national expectations for fair pricing.

Demand Forecasting for Service Planning

Welsh Government has updated its population data and projections following the 2021 Census, providing a refreshed baseline for understanding demographic change. Building on this, forecasting models are being developed to estimate future demand for services, including residential and nursing care placements through to 2034. These models will guide service development, shape in-house provision, and strengthen commissioning decisions by giving earlier visibility of emerging pressures. This work directly supports Standard 3: Using data to deliver outcomes within the National Commissioning Standards Code of Practice by turning robust demographic evidence into actionable insight, enabling more targeted resource use, proactive planning, and better outcomes for people who rely on our services.

The National Framework for the Commissioning of Care and Support in Wales: Code of Practice

The Code sets out the seven principles and ten standards detailing how care and support services must be commissioned in Wales. The Code is part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) and came into effect in 2024. It provides a nationally consistent approach to commissioning so that individuals receiving care experience high-quality, person-centred, and outcomes-focused support across Wales.

The ten standards for commissioning care and support are intended to enable the rebalancing of care and support, by moving commissioning practices:

- a) Away from (process) complexity. Towards simplification.
- b) Away from price. Towards quality and social value.
- c) Away from reactive commissioning. Towards managing the market.
- d) Away from task-based practice. Towards an outcome-based practice.
- e) Away from an organisational focus. Towards more effective partnership working.

The seven principles of consistent, ethical, effective and transformative commissioning are:

- 1. Relationships matter** - Caring, compassionate, and equitable relationships come from inclusive co-production between care and support providers, citizens, commissioners, people in need of care and support, carers in need of support and representative bodies as appropriate.
- 2. Effective leadership is inclusive, transparent and honest** - Leaders and commissioners are to be accountable for creating positive, learning-focused cultures. Decisions should be evidence-informed, and leaders should seek to continuously improve and develop digital, technological and human learning systems required to collect, share and understand evidence.
- 3. Collaboration: Share risks, resources and assets** - Leaders and commissioners must foster a shared understanding of risk, and positive risk enablement, involving communities and all available assets.
- 4. Value is “what matters”** - Value is more than cost; it is good quality, safe, care and support that delivers outcomes that matter to people and enhances social value.
- 5. Sustainable care and support is built on fair work and fair pricing** - Commissioning practices must support employers to improve the status, well-being and working conditions of health and social care workers.

6. Plan for current need and future generations -

Commissioning for better outcomes is a medium-to-long-term activity; planning requires forecasting, and delivery should focus on prevention and sustainability.

7. Evidence what works through stories and numbers -

Commissioners should collect evidence from people in need of care and support, and carers in need of support, about what matters to them and what helps them to achieve a good life, and use this to inform service outcomes.

As can be seen in many examples throughout this report, Flintshire's commissioning approach reflects the national framework and the broader SSWBA principles in practice.

Flintshire's commissioning culture is rooted in strong, person-centred relationships, seen in programmes like Progress for Providers, which emphasise understanding 'what matters' to individuals and supporting care workers to build compassionate, consistent connections. Leadership reinforces this by being open, evidence-seeking and improvement-focused, with strategies and audit responses published transparently and shaped through engagement with providers, partners and scrutiny bodies.

Collaboration is a defining feature of Flintshire's model. We work alongside care homes, domiciliary providers, health

partners and communities to share learning, risks and resources, co-developing tools and practice models rather than imposing them. This collaborative ethos supports a commissioning focus on value, where decisions are guided by individuals' lived outcomes and well-being, rather than cost alone. Sustainability is strengthened through fair pricing work, market-stability analysis and commissioning strategies that recognise the importance of a well-supported workforce. These strategies also demonstrate long-term planning, using demographic data and future-demand modelling, to shape services for both current and future generations. While Flintshire's investment in the CareCubed system demonstrates our commitment to an open, transparent, and fair fee-setting process.

Flintshire consistently blends qualitative and quantitative evidence to understand what works. Stories from residents, families and colleagues sit alongside performance data, accreditation results and external evaluations, creating a rounded picture of impact. This combination of relational practice, transparent leadership, shared responsibility, outcome-focused commissioning, fair and sustainable market shaping, long-term planning and balanced evidence, shows how our commissioning approach aligns closely with the national principles and is already embedded in day-to-day practice.

2026/27 Priorities

- Work with partners to promote a clear Framework of Support, ensuring shared understanding of thresholds for services.
- Agree a clear long-term plan for in-house services, supported by a costed model.
- We will work with children's care providers to support them in moving towards not-for-profit models in residential and foster care.
- We will strengthen how we gather and act on feedback from people and communities.



Well-being

Quality Standards

- 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.

Effective Child Protection Practice Model Implementation and Launch of the NSPCC Neglect-Graded Profile Tool (GCP2)

The Effective Child Protection (ECP) practice model centres on working with families on the child protection register to bring about sustained change. The implementation of the ECP model is progressing well following the appointment of the ECP lead, with a focus on embedding Collaborative Communication as the foundation of the ECP model. Train-the-Trainer for Collaborative Communication is complete, and in-house training is scheduled for March and April 2026. Reflective groups are due to begin from March 2026, with a pilot running in the Family Intervention Team. Managers will also receive training in Reflective Supervision and Collaborative Communication in the coming months to further embed practice.

Train-the-Trainer sessions for ECP and RISK 2 were arranged for dates in February 2026. Following this, a task and finish group will review the forms before workforce training begins in summer 2026. The plan is to launch ECP from September 2026 once the framework and processes are agreed. Consultation with partner agencies will follow, with training offered through

the existing Conference and Core Group programme, incorporating both Collaborative Communication and ECP.

To measure progress and impact on families, themed audits and Ripple Effect Mapping will be used once ECP is fully embedded. The ECP lead will also attend Conferences and Core Groups to observe practice, learn from implementation and identify any themes or areas where further support may be needed.

Once the forms have been reviewed for ECP and training has commenced, the implementation of the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) will pick up pace. The GCP2 is a tool to support families to change to prevent, safely manage and reduce child neglect. Meetings have taken place with the NSPCC and with Senior Management to move this forward, in addition to discussions internally to arrange e-learning for colleagues and inclusion of the tool within the new client information system.

Promoting Independence and Progression in Supported Living

Over the past year, we have made significant progress in ensuring that supported living services for people with a learning disability are truly aligned to individual needs. Every supported living house has now been reviewed to 'right size' the support provided, ensuring that people receive the right level of assistance at the right time. The same review process is currently under way for people supported by BCUHB through their Enhanced Community Rehabilitation Service (ECRS), where further work will take place.

This programme has focused on understanding each individual's needs in detail and ensuring support is tailored accordingly, with a strong emphasis on promoting independence through the progression model and the use of Positive Risk Management. By aligning support more closely to individual need, we have reduced unnecessary or restrictive practices and enabled people to take greater control of their daily lives. Many individuals are now developing new skills, making their own choices and gaining confidence in managing everyday tasks.

The impact of this approach has been both positive and measurable. Support is now more meaningful and person-centred, rather than driven by service routines. Through ongoing engagement with individuals, families, providers and professionals, alongside our review data, we have

seen clear evidence of reduced reliance on paid support where appropriate. This demonstrates improved outcomes for individuals while also ensuring that resources are used more effectively. Importantly, this work has contributed to efficiencies for the local authority, helping to ensure that support remains sustainable without compromising quality or outcomes.

Our strengths lie in our commitment to promoting independence, our consistent use of the progression model, and our collaborative approach with providers. By applying the Positive Risk-Taking policy, we ensure a shared and proactive approach to supporting progression. This has helped us maintain support that is flexible and responsive as people move forward.

Looking ahead, we will continue to strengthen how we measure outcomes, capturing not only reductions in support hours but also improvements in well-being, confidence and quality of life. Ongoing engagement with individuals, families and providers will remain central to identifying and supporting opportunities for progression.

This work is fundamental to our commitment to helping people with a learning disability live fulfilling, independent lives, with the right support at the right time.

Improving Mental Health Services

Since April 2025, Flintshire's Mental Health Social Workers have moved from the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) to work within Social Services alongside the Well-being and Recovery Team and Mental Health Support Services. This change has strengthened the support offered to individuals and improved morale, safe practice, and retention. It has also created more opportunities for social workers to work in a preventative, strength-based way.

The quality and impact of the work are becoming increasingly clear. Individuals using the service are experiencing positive outcomes, and the absence of waiting lists reflects both the efficiency of the new structure and the team's ability to respond promptly to need. Feedback from individuals, alongside performance data, helps to evidence the difference being made.

Progress over the past year has been significant. Operational guidance and a memorandum of understanding have been established to support effective partnership working, and substantial work has been completed around Section 117 responsibilities, with most reviews now up to date. These developments have strengthened the foundations of the service and created a more coherent and accountable framework for practice.

The team continues to build on its strengths, maintaining close working relationships with health colleagues and ensuring clear lines of communication. While the progress so far has been positive, there is a shared commitment to keep improving, refining practice, and strengthening collaboration so that individuals continue to receive the best possible support.

Supporting Older People in the Community

Flintshire continues to develop meaningful day opportunities for older people by strengthening community-based support and promoting independence. Through our Well-being Service model, individuals are encouraged and supported to access activities already available within their local communities, helping them stay connected and engaged in ways that matter to them. Alongside this, Ageing Well and Dementia Friendly initiatives play an important role in building community capacity, ensuring that local activities are inclusive, welcoming, and supportive for all. Our strengths-based social work approach further reinforces this by helping people explore how community involvement can enhance their well-being, while still offering access to more specialised day support where it is needed. Together, these approaches create a rich network of opportunities that promote independence, connection, and a sense of belonging for older people across Flintshire.

Llys Gwenffrwd: Moving Forward

Plans are now being developed to shape the long-term future of Llys Gwenffrwd, Flintshire's in-house residential care home in Holywell. This work is currently at the early planning stage, with a range of development options being explored to ensure the home continues to meet the needs of older people in the years ahead. As these proposals take shape, the focus remains on strengthening in-house residential care and identifying the most effective way to support residents both now and into the future.

Adult Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Unit plays a vital role in protecting adults who may be at risk of abuse or neglect, ensuring that statutory duties are met with care and precision. Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Local Authority must undertake relevant enquiries and determine next steps within 7 working days of receiving an adult safeguarding report. In Flintshire, this responsibility is carried out by our dedicated Adult Safeguarding Team, who lead on all adult safeguarding enquiries. Working collaboratively with partners, the team assesses risk, coordinates timely interventions, and upholds the highest standards of practice to support people to live safely and with dignity. The examples below highlight the positive difference the team makes in practice.

Referral A

A referral was received regarding concerns about a moving-and-handling technique used with a vulnerable adult and there were questions around whether professional recommendations were being followed. Through constructive discussions with the occupational therapist and the individual's representative, it was established that no unsafe practice had taken place. The inquiry highlighted positive person-centred practice: the individual's long-held preferences and home environment were fully considered, and the investigation looked at balancing rights and risk. The safeguarding process ensured the individual's voice remained central, and they continued to receive safe support aligned with their wishes.

Referral B

A referral was made following a hospital admission and concerns being raised about the care a vulnerable adult had been receiving in their residential home. The safeguarding process promoted open dialogue between the care home, the individual's family, and professionals. The provider engaged proactively, responded to each concern raised, and implemented actions to reduce risk. While the family ultimately chose an alternative setting, they were reassured that the individual was safe in the meantime. The case demonstrates positive partnership working and responsiveness to concerns.



Referral C

A safeguarding referral was received after a new care provider experienced workforce difficulties, resulting in missed visits to a vulnerable person. Prompt action by the safeguarding team ensured that the individual received interim support, significantly reducing risk. Collaborative work with local services enabled continuity of care, and the provider's openness in recognising their capacity limitations led to wider learning and changes to resolve the issue. This case reflects swift risk management, strong multi-agency cooperation, and effective protection of both the individual and the wider community.

2026/27 Priorities

- Embed strong practice frameworks for working with children and families.
- Improve how we identify and respond to neglect, using proven tools.
- Act on learning from safeguarding reviews.
- We will review and strengthen the consistency of our safeguarding processes, with a particular focus on managing concerns about people in positions of trust.
- Improve how we understand and respond to the needs and experiences of carers.
- Review and improve support for people with neurodiversity.
- Expand our progression model to support independence and positive outcomes.



Inspections and Reviews

Children's Residential Homes

From June to September 2025, all four of Flintshire's children's residential homes underwent CIW inspections.

CIW inspection findings demonstrated consistently high-quality, trauma-informed and child-centred provision. Two homes, Y Dderwen and Tŷ Nyth, both achieved "Excellent" ratings across all four inspection themes, whilst Tŷ Clyd and Tŷ Seren achieved "Excellent" in three out of four themes and "Good" for Environment.

Overall, Flintshire's residential homes are delivering high-quality trauma-informed care and have been recognised by CIW for providing excellent care and support consistently across all services, which has been evidenced by strong child-centred practice, confident and well-trained colleagues and measurable positive outcomes for children and young people in care.

The four homes collectively demonstrate a high-performing residential service with:

- Strong trauma-informed, therapeutic practice
- Excellent safeguarding practices
- High-quality nurturing homes
- Skilled, reflective teams
- Robust governance
- Consistent positive outcomes for children
- Strong management and leadership

No Priority Actions or Areas for Improvement were identified by CIW in any of our homes.

Due to the potentially sensitive information included within inspection reports for this service type, the reports are not publicly available. However, a formal request can be made to CIW for a copy of the report.

Tŷ Seren

Overview:

Tŷ Seren is a children's home that can provide nurturing, trauma-informed care for up to 2 children and young people aged 8–18. The home has achieved 'Excellent' ratings for Well-being, Care & Support, and Leadership & Management, and 'Good' for Environment.

Key Strengths:

- Highly effective trauma-informed and therapeutic care, using PACE and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP).
- Children make strong progress in emotional regulation, independence, relationships, and education.
- Robust safeguarding and clear complaints processes.
- Skilled, well-supported colleagues with strong leadership oversight.

Environment:

- Homely, safe, and well-maintained accommodation with personalised spaces for children and young people.
- Health and safety compliance is strong, with responsive maintenance and risk management.

Governance:

- Structured supervision, quality assurance, and reflective practice are well established.

Tŷ Clyd

Overview:

Tŷ Clyd is a solo-placement home offering intensive, individualised care. The home has received 'Excellent' across Well-being, Care & Support, and Leadership & Management, and 'Good' for Environment.

Key Strengths:

- Strong trauma-informed practice promoting emotional resilience and relationship-building.
- Excellent progress noted in education, independence, social integration, and emotional well-being.
- Children's voices are consistently prioritised through multiple participation methods.
- Clear demonstration of the Welsh Active Offer.

Environment:

- Homely, safe environment with adaptable spaces.
- Health and safety checks are routine; specialist adaptations considered where needed.

Governance:

- Regular supervision, training, team meetings, and senior oversight.
- Robust monitoring, auditing, and engagement processes.

Tŷ Nyth

Overview:

Tŷ Nyth is an Integrated Treatment Model home that works alongside MST-FIT (Family Integrated Transitions) as a part of a two-phased intensive intervention that focuses on the reunification of children and young people, working in partnership with Wrexham Council and BCUHB. The home has achieved 'Excellent' ratings across all inspection themes.

Key Strengths:

- Strong focus on returning children to family or kinship care, teams support transitions by engaging children, young people and their adults or carers in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skills sessions to promote emotional resilience and to maintain healthy relationships.
- Embedded therapeutic models including the Integrated Treatment Model (ITM) and DBT-based approaches.
- Highly personalised planning, with children and young people fully involved in their reviews, routines, and decision-making.
- Excellent safeguarding practice, including robust responses to missing-from-care risks.

Environment:

- Spacious, well-maintained home with safe outdoor areas.
- Environment supports emotional well-being, development, and growth.

Governance:

- Reflective, ambitious leadership with strong governance frameworks.
- Comprehensive training and workforce development.

Y Dderwen

Overview:

Y Dderwen is a home that can support up to 4 children and young people. The home has achieved 'Excellent' in all inspection themes.

Key Strengths:

- Exceptionally positive outcomes across emotional well-being, education, relationships, and behaviour.
- Children feel safe, valued, and involved, with extensive opportunities to shape their care and home environment.
- Strong therapeutic ethos with consistent safeguarding practice.
- Highly effective key working, contributing to measurable well-being outcomes.

Environment:

- High-quality, child-focused, therapeutic home environment.
- Strong safety measures including secure storage, visitor management, and regular checks.

Governance:

- Strong, aspirational leadership with comprehensive oversight.

Improvement Check visit to Flintshire Children's Services

Following the Performance Evaluation Inspection (PEI) in November 2023, Flintshire Children's Services received an Improvement Check (IC) from CIW between 14 – 16 July 2025.

The check, which focused on areas identified during the PEI inspection, found solid progress reflecting the Council's commitment to delivering high-quality support for children and families.

CIW inspectors highlighted continuous improvement in leadership, safeguarding practices, workforce stability, and the quality of care and support provided to children and families. Building on a positive inspection in 2023, CIW tracked progress in specific identified areas for development and found evidence of progress in embedding practices to ensure sustained improvement.

Key highlights from the CIW report include:

- Strengthened leadership and governance, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
- Improved workforce stability, with increased recruitment and retention of skilled social workers and reduced reliance on agency workers.
- Enhanced accommodation support, contributing to a reduction in homelessness among young people leaving care.
- Early help and preventative services, including support for children with neurodiversity.

CIW commended a positive collaborative approach, noting strong multi-agency partnerships that have contributed to more holistic and effective support for children.

Looking ahead, the report identifies the need to build on momentum to further develop and embed sustained improvement, tackling specific areas to enhance and strengthen practice and service provision. Flintshire Children's Services are taking forward a series of improvements to strengthen how children, young people and families are supported and more detail on these actions has been provided in the Prevention section of this report.

The full report is available on the [CIW website](#).

Llys Gwenffrwd Residential Home

Llys Gwenffrwd is a Local Authority run residential care home in Holywell. The home received an inspection on 8th April 2025.

Llys Gwenffrwd was awarded the following ratings:

Well-being	Good
Care & Support	Good
Environment	Good
Leadership & Management	Good

The inspectors summarised their findings as follows:

“Llys Gwenffrwd is situated in the market town of Holywell, and is a short walk to the town centre, where there are a variety of shops, cafes, banks, and other local amenities. It is a spacious and homely service with access to plenty of comfortable communal areas and a secure garden.

People have choice and control over day-to-day decisions and are consulted for their views which are taken into consideration. There is a wide variety of activities on offer to suit individual tastes. Relationships with friends and family are supported and visitors are welcomed. Care staff offer care and support which meets people's needs and supports their independence. They make prompt referrals to health and social care professionals when required. The home is safe and secure, with access to specialist aids to meet people's needs. The manager knows people and staff well and is available and approachable if they have any worries or concerns. The responsible individual (RI) visits the service regularly to provide oversight of the service and ensure it is running smoothly.

This is a good service, with some notable areas of positive practice, particularly in how they are meeting people's well-being outcomes.’

The full report is available on [CIW website](#).

Domiciliary Care Service – Flintshire

Flintshire’s domiciliary care service provides support for people living in their own homes. This includes home care in the community across the county, Extra Care housing across four schemes, and for people with learning disabilities in Flintshire’s eighteen supported living houses.

The service received an inspection between 11 June 2025 and 19 June 2025.

The service was awarded the following ratings:

Well-being	Good
Care & Support	Good
Leadership & Management	Good

No Priority Actions or Areas for Improvement were identified by CIW during this inspection.

The inspectors summarised their findings as follows:

“At this inspection we found people’s well-being is good as their support outcomes are met. People’s care and support is also good as people have control over their daily lives. People are provided with flexible support, where possible, by a small team of support staff whom they know. People participate in developing their personal plans which are detailed and up to date, and their outcomes are being met. Support staff understand people’s needs and preferences.

Leadership and management is also good, with effective oversight in place by both the Responsible Individual (RI) and managers. Quality assurance, monitoring, and auditing systems are in place to make improvements to service delivery. People are supported by support workers who are robustly recruited and trained to meet their needs. Comprehensive processes are in place in regard to safeguarding individuals and the administration of people’s medication.”

The full report is available on [CIW website](#).

Woodlee

Woodlee is a short-term respite care home for adults with learning disabilities in Buckley. Woodlee was inspected on 9th February 2026.

Woodlee was awarded the following ratings:

Well-being	Good
Care & Support	Good
Environment	Good
Leadership & Management	Good

No Priority Actions or Areas for Improvement were identified by CIW during this inspection.

The inspectors summarised their findings as follows:

“Woodlee is a short-term respite service for people with a learning disability situated in Buckley. It is a bungalow adapted for the needs of people with mobility issues in a quiet residential area. It is within walking distance of the town centre, in which there are shops, cafes and public houses. The service is homely and comfortable throughout, providing a ‘home from home’ feeling for people during their stays.

People are treated with dignity and respect by support staff who know them well. They know people’s routines and preferences and people can enjoy good well-being outcomes during their stay. A good level of care and support is delivered by skilled and qualified support staff. The team is supported by a manager and deputy manager, who visit the services regularly and provide good oversight.”

The full report is available on [CIW website](#).

Improvement Check visit to Flintshire Adults' Services

Following the Performance Evaluation Inspection (PEI) in November 2023, Flintshire Adults' Services received an Improvement Check (IC) from CIW between 9 – 13 March 2026.

The check focused on the areas for improvement identified in the PEI inspection.

As the CIW report is due in Summer 2026, we will include the details in the 2026/27 Director of Social Services' Annual Report.

Complaints and Representations

Complaints and representations between 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Flintshire Social Services, as endorsed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, has a robust complaints procedure in place. We welcome complaints and want to ensure service users, carers, and families are listened to, their views acted upon, and they receive a timely and open response. We work hard to resolve problems as soon as they arise and advocacy is actively promoted. Individuals are supported to complain via:

- Llais, the Citizen Voice Body for Health and Social Care in Wales.
- Advocacy Service North-East Wales, who support adults, older people, younger people with dementia and carers.
- Tros Gynnal Plant/TGP Cymru, who support children and young people who may be going through a challenging time in their lives.

Complaints across Social Services for Adults and Children are relatively consistent year on year. However, this year has seen a fluctuation in the numbers of complaints received across service areas: a decrease in Adults' Services, an increase in Children's Services, and an overall increase in independent complaint investigations across both service areas. Given the range and types of services provided by social services,

complaints are broad in their themes but can be categorised as follows:

- **Dignity** - Where there are concerns about an individual's personal care and appearance and the possible impacts any shortcomings may have upon that individual.
- **Communication** - The way in which we keep service users and families involved, informed and updated about our work.
- **Quality of care** - Issues regarding an individual's care, be it residential, domiciliary, respite or foster care.
- **Timeliness** - Our decision-making in terms of offering and providing care and support, and the length of time taken to source packages of care.
- **Disagreements** - When service users and families challenge or appeal our decisions or involvement, or they believe there is a lack of action about issues they are raising.
- **Financial charges** - Disputes involving how we have reached decisions to charge for care and support, and the amounts applied.
- **Process** - Where we haven't adhered to process or our paperwork may be missing important information.
- **Workforce** - Whereby our involvement or interactions have been misperceived or misunderstood, or questions raised about our professional conduct with people.

- **Contact** - Issues regarding child and family contact arrangements as ordered by the Court.

Complaints regarding Adults' Services are mainly made by adult siblings of a person receiving care and support, whilst complaints regarding Children's Services are mainly made by parents whose children are looked after or receive care and support. Most complaints are made via email. Recorded complaints are not linked to a protected characteristic as information about the complainant is limited. Our focus is on listening to their experience and what may be going wrong and putting things right, where appropriate, in a timely way.

All complaints made are scrutinised and used to improve services as part of a 'lessons learned' process. In terms of learning we have:

- Reviewed our direct payment process to ensure direct debits/ credits are ceased with immediate effect if a direct payment is stopped. This is also referenced in direct payments training sessions for practitioners.

And we are in the process of:

- Reviewing our respite toolkit to ensure it is in line with the principles of the Act.
- Developing a joint working protocol between Social Services and the Community Resource Team.

- Reviewing our mental capacity practice and recording where a formal Mental Capacity Assessment is not undertaken, ensuring that decision-making is explicitly evidenced within case records and we are clear, timely and sensitive in our explanations to families.

In terms of the statutory complaints procedure and recommendations made in the Human Rights Commission's report, 'Challenging adult social care decisions in England and Wales':

- Complaints information is available bilingually, including online and hard copy, and adjustments can be made in other formats.
- Complaints information references national and local organisations who can be approached for further advice and assistance.

The Council's annual complaints and compliments reports are submitted to the Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the September following the end of the reporting year. Reports and minutes are available for the public to view [here](#).

Referencing Other Sources of Information

Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

Social Care Legislation & Information Links:

[The Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)

[Regulation and Inspection of Social Care \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)

[The Well-being of Future Generations](#)

[North Wales Regional Partnership Board](#)

[North Wales Safeguarding Board](#)

[Regulations and National Minimum Standards: Childcare and play services](#)

[The Childcare Act](#)

Flintshire County Council's Key Strategies

[Flintshire County Council - Council Plan](#)

[Flintshire Public Services Board - Well-Being Plan](#)

[Digital Strategy](#)

[Climate Change Strategy](#)



Planning for the Future and Sustainability

In addition to all the work highlighted in this report, we are continuing to look ahead over the next 5 to 10 years to ensure our social services remain resilient, sustainable, and able to meet future demand. This includes a number of key pieces of work to better understand and plan for changing needs, such as a Residential Care Review which has considered future demand for residential services up to 2034, and a similar review is underway for domiciliary care. Alongside this, we are developing demand forecasting models based on demographic trends and emerging need, to strengthen our ability to plan ahead and respond proactively to future pressures.

We are also developing a 5-to-10-year strategy for our in-house Provider Services to modernise and future proof provision, ensuring it can respond to increasing and changing demand. The strategy will focus on promoting independence and measurable progression for individuals, while reducing the need for long-term support and associated costs. It will also aim to strengthen workforce capability and flexibility, develop clear career pathways, and ensure alignment with national policy. Central to our approach will be our ability to

demonstrate measurable outcomes that support improved independence and reduced long-term demand, ensuring services remain effective and sustainable for the future.

We are using key evidence and planning tools, including the Population Needs Assessment and Market Stability Report, to inform decision-making and shape our long-term priorities. These, alongside the improvement work set out in this report, support a clear direction for services that are sustainable, responsive and aligned to both local need and national priorities.

We are also investing in the foundations that will support future delivery. This includes improving access to information and advice through our website redesign, increasing use of digital tools, and strengthening our workforce through initiatives such as the Grow Our Own Social Work Programme and the development of the Flintshire Social Care Academy. Together, these actions support our improvement priorities and help ensure we continue to deliver high-quality services for our residents now and in the future.

Summary of Social Services' Priorities for 2026/27

People: Putting people First

People are at the heart of everything we do. We will:

- Listen to what matters to people and evidence how their 'voice' informs their assessment, care, and support plan and development of personal outcomes
- Demonstrate an active offer of independent advocacy for people who need this support
- Embed the 'collaborative communications' practice model
- Develop a Choice Policy so people understand their options and what we can offer to meet their assessed eligible needs
- Build capacity and focus for timely, quality reviews including direct payments
- Invest in our workforce through a 'grow your own' approach to recruitment and development
- Review our structure to improve resilience and reduce reliance on agency staff
- Complete an anti-racism self-assessment supported by a clear action plan
- Prepare and commence the implementation of a new IT system (Mosaic), with strong training for staff
- Safely pilot and use AI tools to give staff more time to focus on working with people

Prevention and Early Help

We will act early to prevent problems from escalating. We will:

- Support strong parent–baby/infant relationships and improve understanding of early child development and mental health.
- Build a consistent approach to reducing and managing waiting lists.
- Review and improve how people move safely and quickly from hospital into the right support.
- Invest in our in-house expertise to support reablement and recovery at home.
- Support young people to move from high-cost residential care into family-based care, including expanding fostering
- We will explore creating a Family Hub to bring support together in communities

Summary of Social Services' Priorities for 2026/27

Partnership and Integration: Working Together

We will work closely with partners to deliver better outcomes.

We will:

- Work with partners to promote a clear Framework of Support, ensuring shared understanding of thresholds for services.
- Agree a clear long-term plan for in-house services, supported by a costed model.
- We will work with children's care providers to support them in moving towards not-for-profit models in residential and foster care.
- We will strengthen how we gather and act on feedback from people and communities.

Well-being: Supporting Well-being and Safety

We will work to make people safe, supported, and able to thrive. We will:

- Embed strong practice frameworks for working with children and families.
- Improve how we identify and respond to neglect, using proven tools.
- Act on learning from safeguarding reviews.
- We will review and strengthen the consistency of our safeguarding processes, with a particular focus on managing concerns about people in positions of trust.
- Improve how we understand and respond to the needs and experiences of carers.
- Review and improve support for people with neurodiversity.
- Expand our progression model to support independence and positive outcomes.

Glossary of Terms

Advocacy

Advocates in social care are independent from the local authority (local council) and the NHS. They are trained to help people understand their rights, express their views and wishes, and help make sure their voice is heard.

Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP)

A trained professional who coordinates assessments and decisions regarding the detention of individuals under the Mental Health Act, ensuring legal compliance and considering both medical and social perspectives.

Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru

The professional and strategic leadership organisation for social care services in Wales. ADSS Cymru represents the collective view of all 22 local authorities' social services departments across Wales.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

ASD is the medical name for autism.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)

BCUHB is responsible for the delivery of health care services across the six counties of North Wales (Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham).

Care Experienced Children

An umbrella term which can mean children and young people who are:

- Looked after at home through a Care Order
- Looked after away from home in a residential children's home, in a foster placement or in a kinship placement (Looked After or Non-Looked After)
- Previously looked after, where at some point in their lives they have had any of the above experiences.

The child or young person may never have been formally looked after.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

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

Care Leaver

In Wales, care leavers are individuals who have been in the care of the local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have left care on or after their 16th birthday. The support provided to care leavers is intended to be equivalent to what a child who has not been looked after might reasonably expect from their parents.

Glossary of Terms

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

An NHS service that helps children and young people with their mental health by offering assessment, support, and treatment when they're struggling emotionally or psychologically.

Children Looked After

A child is looked after by a local authority if a court has granted a Care Order to place a child in care, or a council's Children's Services department has cared for the child for more than 24 hours.

Cwmpas

A development agency in Wales that works for positive social and economic change. They focus on creating a fairer, greener economy, advancing social justice, and promoting digital inclusion.

Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU)

A support organisation in North Wales that provides confidential help, advocacy, and safety services for people affected by domestic abuse.

Direct Payments (DP)

Money from social services made available to eligible people, to enable them to arrange support and solutions that help meet assessed social care needs and agreed well-being outcomes.

Discharge to Recover and Assess (D2RA)

D2RA supports patients on discharge from hospital to receive intensive therapy led support to allow them to maximise their independence before returning home.

Early Years Pathfinder Programme

A programme designed to ensure all children have the best start in life by creating seamless, joined-up pathways across services that respond to each child's unique needs.

Extra Care

Housing designed with the needs of service users in mind that provides varying levels of support which is available on site and promotes independent living.

Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC)

The umbrella and support organisation for over 1,200 voluntary and community groups based in Flintshire.

Hft

A charity that supports people with learning disabilities to live with more independence and choice across the Flintshire area. Flintshire County Council commissions Hft to deliver day services and work opportunities for people with learning disabilities in the county.

Home Care / Domiciliary Care

Also known as "care at home", refers to a broad range of care services provided in a person's own home. It can include assistance with day-to-day living and certain health care issues.

Glossary of Terms

Housing with Care Fund (HCF)

Capital funding from Welsh Government available to provide housing and accommodation for people with care and support needs.

Housing Support Grant (HSG)

Welsh Government funding to local authorities to spend on projects aimed at preventing homelessness and helping people to live in their own homes or supported housing.

Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund (IRCF)

A programme set up to directly support the Programme for Government (PfG) commitments of developing 50 integrated health and social care hubs and to support rebalancing the residential care market.

Integrated Community Care System (ICCS)

A Welsh Government programme designed to transform how health and social care work together, with a strong focus on prevention, community-based support, and seamless coordination across services.

Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrexham

A third-sector, community-based organisation that supports and promotes the Welsh language in Flintshire and Wrexham.

Mwy Na Geiriau / More than words

A strategy and delivery plan to improve the quality of care for individuals living in a bilingual country.

North-East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS)

One of the largest providers of carer services in Wales.

North-East Wales Community Equipment Service (NEWCES)

Provides essential community equipment to support the independence of people with disabilities across North-East Wales.

North Wales Learning Disability Transformation Project (NW LD Transformation Project)

'North Wales Together: Seamless Services for People with Learning Disabilities', is one of four transformation projects in North Wales, and is also known as the LD Transformation Project.

NYTH/NEST Framework

A Wales co produced planning tool for organisations and strategic leadership to share key principles and language for mental health and well-being.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

A professional who supports individuals in improving their ability to live independently through assessments, tailored interventions, environmental adaptations, and collaboration with other care providers.

Glossary of Terms

Performance Improvement Framework

A framework designed to support local authorities to evidence their progress against the quality standards, and to inform decisions both for social services and at a corporate, organisational level.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Forms of support aimed at improving outcomes for people or preventing escalating need or risk. They are also sometimes referred to as early help or preventative services.

Reablement

A type of care that helps people relearn how to do daily activities, like cooking meals and washing. It is provided by local authorities with the aim of mitigating the need for long-term care and support.

Regional Integration Fund (RIF)

A 5-year Welsh Government programme from April 2022 to March 2027 to help integrate health and care services.

Regional Partnership Board (RPB)

The North Wales RPB was established as part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, to improve the well-being of the population and improve how health and care services are delivered. The RPB brings together health, social services, housing, the third sector and other partners to co-ordinate the continued transformation and integration of health, social care and well-being services across the region.

Residential Care Home / Nursing Home

A residential care home provides accommodation and 24-hour personal care and support to people who may find it difficult to manage daily life at home. Both a residential care home and nursing home provide care and support 24 hours a day; however, the main difference is that a nursing home is able to provide a higher level of care. Nursing homes have qualified nurses on-site around the clock to provide medical care as needed, whereas residential homes help people with personal care and support them to engage in physical activity.

Safeguarding

The process of protecting children and adults from abuse or neglect by ensuring their safety, well-being, and by helping others recognise and respond to signs of harm.

Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

An order granting overriding parental responsibility for a child over their parents or others who have parental responsibility.

Social Care Wales (SCW)

The workforce regulator for the care and support sector, responsible for registering the workforce, setting professional standards, and supporting workforce development. It also has an improvement role, sharing good practice, setting research priorities, and providing information for the public and partner organisations.

Glossary of Terms



Supported Living

A type of housing that provides personal care, support or supervision to help people live independently. The care and support are separate from the housing contract. The accommodation can be shared or single occupancy, depending on the needs and preferences of the occupants.

Unpaid Carer

A person who provides care and support to family members, friends, or neighbours who are affected by disability, physical or mental ill-health, frailty, or substance misuse. The carer does not need to be living with the person they care for.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

A Welsh Government framework that brings together policies and services aimed at preventing abuse, protecting victims, and supporting survivors of gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

Young Carer

An unpaid carer who is up to the age of 18. They may be providing care and support to parents, siblings or other family members.