

No.

HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 4th March, 2025.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor J.E. Charles (Chair); Councillor N.C. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors C.A. Cave, A.M. Collins, C.M. Cowpe, R.E. Godfrey, S. Lloyd-Selby, J. Lynch-Wilson, J.M. Norman and C. Stallard.

Also present: Councillors W.A. Hennessy, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors G.M. Ball and I.R. Buckley.

MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 4th February, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby declared an interest in Agenda Item 4 – Support for Unpaid Carers in the Vale of Glamorgan. The nature of the interest was Personal as Councillor Lloyd-Selby was an unpaid carer for an elderly relative. Councillor Lloyd-Selby remained in the meeting for the item.

SUPPORT FOR UNPAID CARERS IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN (DSS) –

The Operational Manager for Safeguarding and Service Outcomes presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of the current services and

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support available to unpaid carers in the Vale of Glamorgan and a link to the Annual Health and Social Care Unpaid Carers Report 2024 (as an appended SWAY report).

In referring to the hyperlinked Annual Report, the Officer apprised the Committee on how the Council was meeting the four Welsh Government priorities for Unpaid Carers of 'Identifying and valuing Unpaid Carers', 'Providing information, advice and assistance', 'Supporting life alongside caring', and 'Supporting Unpaid Carers in education and the workplace' through various initiatives.

Working with partners on a regional footprint, enabled the sharing of knowledge, experience and resources. This enabled the Council to work together to improve the essential support to those who provided a care giving role within its communities. Respite continued to be one of the main requests made by carers for support and the Council had been able to meet a wide range of needs by continuing to make funding available. Practitioners were actively encouraged to be creative and innovative in finding solutions to meet the individual needs of unpaid carers.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, Councillor Cave noted that it was often the case that an individual's need to engage with services would increase over time as the health of the cared for person declined and also that the mental health of carers was equally as important as the health of the individual requiring support. Councillor Cave also noted that the report stated a call for practitioners to be actively innovating and that respite was the number one request received, and therefore queried whether the officer could provide any examples of innovation taking place as well as whether there was the relevant funding available to meet the demand for respite. Councillor Cave also queried if officers were able to confirm the overall picture of carers' mental health. In response the Operational Manager for Safeguarding and Service Outcomes confirmed that respite was always welcomed and often taken up by unpaid carers, however respite meant different things for different people and could be a range of different offers based on the individual circumstances. Therefore respite could be offered at a point of crisis or in less urgent circumstances. In terms of Councillor Cave's query as to innovation, the officer advised that the Carers' Trust recognised the need for innovation as being a priority in relation to information they were collating and that the Council's unpaid carers hub had a valuable range of information available.

Councillor Cave then referred to the Council's One Stop Shop and queried whether the types of requests being raised by unpaid carers were being recorded and also how the Council was meeting said requests. Otherwise, there was a concern that a report as presented was just blanket information without evidence. The Chair of the Committee echoed Councillor Cave's comments and also noted that the quality of care provided was also important and needed to be reflected within reporting. In reply, the officer advised that the Council's unpaid carers hub did state categorised support for unpaid carers to take up and also that the categories of support were collated via the Local Authority.

The Vice-Chair of the Committee then referred to the reference within the presented report to the Ombudsman's report which included details of the results of the Ombudsman's survey which stated "an inconsistency on identifying carers" therefore, the Councillor questioned what the Council was doing in this particular

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area. In response the Operational Manager for Safeguarding and Service Outcomes acknowledged that there were different reporting practices in play across Wales. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was originally under reporting on its efforts and success around identifying carers so since the last version of the report officers had put more emphasis on efforts to identify unpaid carers.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby then raised concerns over the reference within the report to it being the last year of funding available for short term respite and sought further information in relation to that point as well as information related to future funding streams. In response, the Operational Manager for Safeguarding and Service Outcomes advised that the Council currently received Welsh Government funding for short term respite via the Regional Partnership Board and through support from Third Sector organisations. Confirmation had been received that the current funding stream would be coming to an end, however the Council had also been informed of a different fund being available but the remit for which the funding could be used would be enhanced. Therefore, funding was currently committed for the 2025/26 financial year as well as for the 2026/27 financial year. However, funding streams were unclear at the current time from 2027 onwards.

Councillor Collins then queried how well the Council's unpaid carer support was publicised because there were often lots of carers who did not even realise that they would be categorised as an unpaid carer. The officer advised that one of the Council's commitments was building recognition and awareness and making sure that an individual could identify as an unpaid carer. Significant efforts were placed on news bulletins, through GP practice surgeries, as well as via Third Sector organisations. The Council wished to reach the widest audience that it could generally, but also would tailor communications on specific categories of carers such as the young carers programmes via schools' liaison officers. The Council was always expanding and welcomed any suggestions for improving publication of services available.

The Operational Manager also took the opportunity to advise that it was important for the Council to be careful in its use of language with regard to mental health for unpaid carers and confirmed that an individual could seek mental health support via their GP at any time. A mental health assessment was very different to discussing an individual's own care or caring responsibilities. Whenever an unpaid carer's assessment was taking place, a person's wellbeing and mental health needs was always taken into account. In addition, the Head of Adult Services advised that if any person had a concern over an individual's mental health then they could dial 112 press 2 to seek support. The Council's efforts to provide respite for unpaid carers when needed was one of many methods for supporting unpaid carers to stay as healthy as possible in their own right.

In conclusion, the Chair advised that the outlook in relation to unpaid carer support was much better than it had been ten years ago and therefore great strides had been taken. In response to a subsequent question from the Chair as to whether unpaid carers were informed about the smaller services and support that could be accessed on their initial assessment, the Operational Manager for Safeguarding Service Outcomes advised that assessment practices would start straight away and that

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some support services would not always be achieved through the Local Authority but all options that were appropriate for the individual would be given.

With no further comments or questions raised, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Annual Report on Support for Unpaid Carers and work undertaken to support unpaid carers and young carers in the Vale of Glamorgan be noted.
- (2) T H A T the duties of the Council and its partners in regard to delivering services for Unpaid Carers within the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 be noted.
- (3) T H A T how the Council and its partners are meeting the Ministerial Priorities for Unpaid Carers and the regional work of the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Unpaid Carers Board be noted.
- (4) T H A T a further Report on support for Unpaid Carers in the Vale of Glamorgan be received by the Committee.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report to ensure that Members continue to exercise effective oversight of the important function undertaken by the Social Services Directorate.
- (2) That Scrutiny Members are aware of the duties outlined within legislation.
- (3) That Scrutiny Members are informed of the Ministerial Priorities set for carers and the regional work taking place for unpaid carers and facilitates support from the lead Member for Carers.
- (4) To ensure that Members continue to exercise effective oversight of the important function on an annual basis.

ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE 2024/25 (DSS) –

The purpose of the report was to present Quarter 3 (Q3) performance results for the period 1st April, 2024 to 31st December, 2024 in delivering the 2024/25 Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Director of Social Services referred to the presentation appended at Appendix A to the report which provided a summary of progress against the Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2024/25, as aligned to the remit of the Committee, and noted the positive achievements that had been made over the last year.

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The Director was pleased to report that the overall RAG status for the Annual Delivery Plan was Green and that the report contained examples of positive work taking place in both Social Services and Leisure Service areas. The Healthy Living Team had been presented with an award recognising outstanding efforts to include people with disabilities in activities and more inclusive opportunities had also been established by the Sports and Play team for women and girls.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, the Vice-Chair of the Committee noted that in relation to the Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status for the Social Services Directorate, very few items were labelled as Red and for those items that were labelled Red were in relation to cross-Directorate matters. The Vice-Chair wished to pass on their thanks to the relevant officers for producing the clear report.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby then raised two points in relation to compliance with safeguarding awareness learning for staff as well as reference to provider failure as a concern and queried whether levels of safeguarding awareness learning would be achieved in the final quarter for the year and whether provider failing was a reality or simply a preventative concern.

In response, the Director of Social Services advised that in relation to compliance with safeguarding awareness learning a module was available to all staff via its internal learning portal, i-Dev. An electronic based learning module was easier for office based staff to access than those who were more non-office based and management were targeting non-office staff to improve levels of compliance. The Director also noted that he had a very experienced safeguarding team who were being requested to undertake a very basic safeguarding training and therefore there was a requirement for multi-levelled training to be rolled out as appropriate. Each Director would be monitoring the safeguarding compliance for their individual service areas. In relation to provider failing, the Director noted that he did not have any providers in the Vale of Glamorgan who were currently failing but closure of a care home was always a concern to avoid. The market had changed considerably over a two year period and therefore there were some risks over sustainability for providers. However, the Council had regular meetings with providers to ensure they were aware of any experienced difficulties in as far in advance as possible.

Councillor Wilson then passed on their congratulations to the Healthy Living Team in relation to their recent award and noted that there had been a huge shift towards preventative measures to avoid individuals having to go into a care home setting. This was valuable and impactful work.

Councillor Stallard also commended officers for the format and detail of the report and noted that in relation to care staff using electric vehicles and bikes, funding would be ending in March 2025, and therefore queried whether this funding would continue to be available. In response, the Head of Safeguarding advised that Share Prosperity funding was currently being utilised to provide 23 electric vehicles to support staff with delivering domiciliary care. An options appraisal had been undertaken for the next financial year which would involve an asset transfer to home care providers where the pilot scheme had been very successful. However, there was no confirmation on funding at the current time.

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With no comments or questions raised, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Q3 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 commitments, as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance, and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the content of the report to ensure that the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet its performance requirements, as outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflecting the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.