



Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services

SOCIAL SERVICES

Reporting on the Effectiveness of The
Gwynedd Social Services Department
2009/10



July 2010



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Purpose of the Report & the Process

This report has been written in order to share information about the performance and effectiveness of Gwynedd Social Services during the 2009/10 financial year and what has been agreed as the most important matters requiring attention for the next year.

The report has been prepared following a period of significant change within Social Services and where further changes are being introduced in order to improve services and make them more cost effective. This will be very important as we respond to the anticipated difficulties due to the cut backs in public services where we know that the number wanting services of a high standard is increasing.

This report will be shared with staff, members of the public and partners who work with Social Services. It is prepared in accordance with legal requirements as written in “The Role and Accountabilities of the Director of Social Services” (June 2009) and “The Annual Reporting Framework Toolkit”. Inspection services, such as Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and the Welsh Audit Office (WAO), will also use this report in order to plan their inspection programme within Gwynedd Council.

This is the first year for this report to be prepared and to be presented to the full Council. This is an overview report. It has not been possible to include the work programme in its entirety or provide detail regarding those issues contained in the report. We welcome direct contact with the Service if you require further details or to discuss the content further. Any questions or comments should be sent to our Customer Care Unit:

Customer Care Unit, Social Services Department, Gwynedd Council, Shirehall Street, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1SH, email: [gcgc@gwynedd.gov.uk](mailto:gcg@gwynedd.gov.uk) ☎: 01286 679268

The process for preparing the report has included many steps, including:

- The preparation of self-assessments providing background information and evidence behind statements and judgement made (evidence grids) by Social Services managers **(See Appendix 1)**
- A ‘challenge’ day where nearly 50 partners and service user representatives attended to share their views about the Services statements and judgement (20th April 2010)
- A ‘challenge’ day and briefing event for all Elected Members held (May 2010)
- A questionnaire sent to over 3000 service users (February 2010) seeking their views about the quality of our services.
- Development of a Business Plan to take forward the improvements identified.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those taking part in the delivery of Social Services here in Gwynedd. Within the Council, those employed by Social Services, across Adult’s and Children’s Services, have worked hard to deliver and improve services. Other Departments have also contributed to our successes such as Gwynedd’s Leisure and Provider Service. The contribution of Elected Members has been critical as policies and decisions are approved by the democratic process. However, Social Services is about more than those purely employed by the Social Services Department. It also means all of those who share the delivery of services with us from both the Third Sector and Independent Providers. Together we are responsible for the delivery of key services to people and families when they need them most.

At the end of the day our efforts must be measured by whether we make a difference to the children, adults and carers who require Social Services. It is hoped that this report will help us understand what we have achieved, what has gone well and not so well and what more needs to be done.



Gwen Carrington

Head of Social Services (Statutory Director)



Summary of Main Issues

Social Services has achieved a significant change programme but the delivery of the change process needs to be accelerated. This was due to the need to become more accountable to the expectations of our users and to make sure we get the best value for money.

Social Services provide safe services when we consider the child protection requirements and vulnerable adults and there has been an increase in our regulatory arrangements and standardisation of practice.

The Service and the Council has a committed and conscientious workforce.

Feedback from users reporting on the value of the Service indicates that the majority believe it is of good quality and timely.

The Service has achieved progress in performance despite the increased demand for services.

To improve services, the Service and the Council must:

- **continue with the improvement of data accuracy and quality**
- **improve the information available for users and partners**
- **improve commissioning arrangements to ensure faster response to user requirements and value for money**
- **implement the change program quickly in response to citizen needs and avoid significant overspend in future**

1.2 Context and Area Information

According to the 2008 mid-year estimates, Gwynedd has a population of over 118,000. This compares with an average population across all the Welsh local authorities of 136,000 and an average of 121,000 across the comparable authorities (The Local Government Data Unit Wales 2010). See **Appendix 2** for Gwynedd's full area profile.

The County covers an area of 2,548 square kilometres, with main settlements in Caernarfon, Bangor, Porthmadog and Dolgellau. It takes around 2 hours by car to reach south Gwynedd from the north, meaning a 4 hour round trip. This needs to be taken into consideration when planning and providing Services.

Gwynedd adjoins Conwy and Denbighshire counties to the east, Powys to the south east and Ceredigion to the south. The County is attached through road and rail bridges to the Isle of Anglesey to the north. Gwynedd has the longest stretch of coast of all Unitary Authorities in Wales, extending to 301 kilometres together with the Snowdonia range of mountains and lakes.

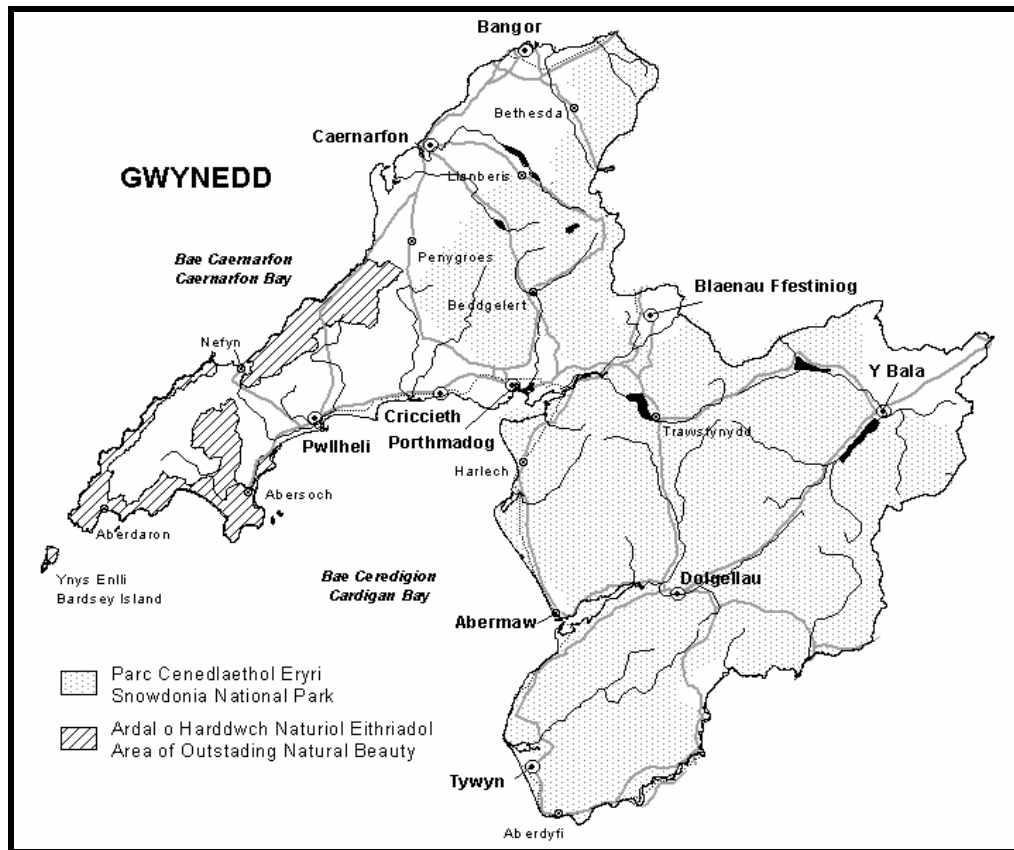


Figure 1: Gwynedd with population centres

Since 2005/06 the number of adults receiving services (community and residential) increased from 4190 (2005/06) to 5753 (2009/10) which accounts for a 37.30% growth. Trends suggest that people in Wales are living healthier and longer lives, meaning they're more likely to use some form of social care over longer periods in future. We know that the pattern of demand is likely to increase as the age of the population increases. The 2006 Local Authority projections suggest that age structure of the population will change dramatically over the next 20 years with the population of people over 75 year old increasing (Figure 2). It is forecast that the number who suffer from dementia in Gwynedd will increase by 35% between now and 2021. It is anticipated that the numbers of children and young people in Gwynedd will also rise between 2006 and 2026 from 26,186 to 27,579, however will decrease as an overall proportion as the population ages. Children and young people with complex needs are also living longer and this trend will continue, increasing the demand for services.

The number of children and young people being referred to Social Services is also increasing, 4870 in 2008/09 compared with 5,041 in 2009/10, an increase of 3.5%.

All of these factors have an immediate impact on the way we deliver and plan services. It means that families can often feel that they live a long way from services and that staff have to travel some distances.

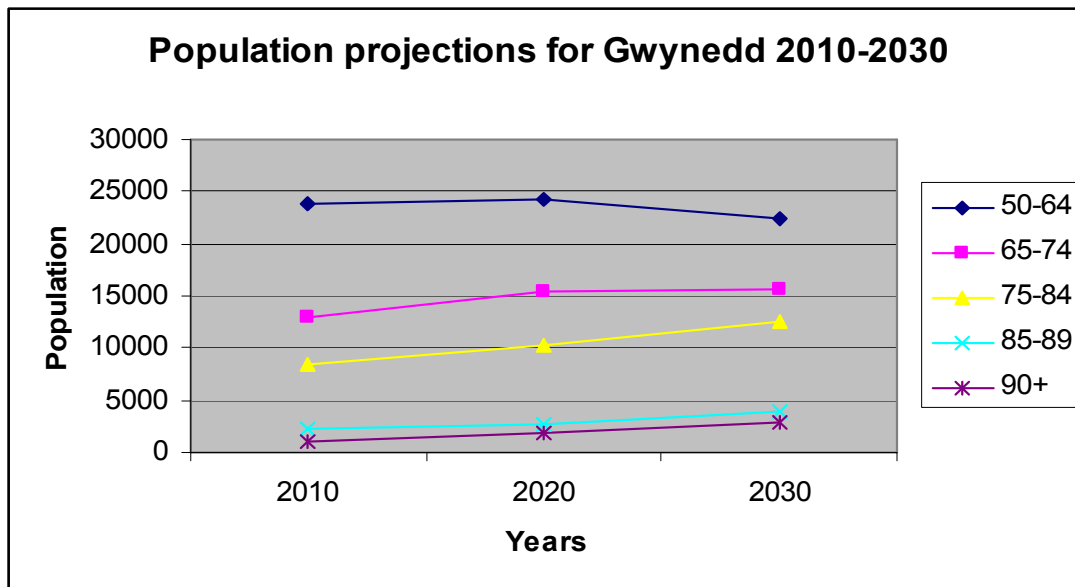


Figure 2: Population Projections for Gwynedd

(Source: Office of National Statistics Projections).

The vision for Social Care, as agreed by the Council in December 2008 remains:

*“Our Purpose is to address disadvantage, to safeguard and to build on People’s strengths.
Our ambition for 2010/11 is to be serving all people well with high quality outcomes and to have excellent prospects for the future.
Our value emphasis will be on fairness, raising expectations, empowerment, independence and being person-centered.
Our organisational emphasis will be on effective leadership & communication within a forward looking, transformational, joined up and business-like (without being over-bureaucratic) environment.”*

The challenge is to make sure that staff, partners and families know what this means. We need to be clearer about what we mean by providing a “quality” service and how we know that services received in Tywyn for example will be the same or consistent with those in Bangor. “Quality” also has to include whether what we do is what is “needed” by families and individuals as well as how much it costs. A great deal of what has been done by Social Services over the last year has been about trying to get a better understanding of how services are delivered, at what cost and by whom. This has involved staff from inside the Council, partners as well as consulting with those who receive services. Regarding consulting and engaging service users, we have the following examples:

- We recently consulted with over 3,000 individuals from adult’s services who are receiving Services. (March 2010)
- The Children and Families Service holds quarterly speak out sessions with looked after children and young people.
- Consultation meetings were held with over 170 members of the public (mainly in Communities First areas) on their views about health and social care services and future needs.
- The Specialist Children’s Service held a Celebrating Family Day (January 2010)
- Older People’s Council who we consult with (mixture of service users and citizens).

Examples of comments received about Services and during activities are included throughout the report.

For 2010/11 there is already a commitment to broaden the way we engage and seek the views of those who receive and deliver services in Gwynedd and to receive views from them that will influence our plans.

Gwynedd Social Services believes that it's the results that matter when evaluating services. We should be measuring our successes by deciding whether what we do delivers the outcomes that people wanted in the first place. When

measuring performance it's not only figures or data that count but also experiences. This is behind our intention of introducing the "Result Based Accountability" tool – which is a method of ensuring that the outcomes identified by users and providers set our priorities (see Appendix 5 - Improving Services: Provision for Carers).

"I am very pleased with how the conference went. I was given an opportunity to express my wishes. Thank you for everyone who was present."

"happy, but a little boring. Nice to get out of school. Interesting to see what was going on."

(Questionnaire to Children and Families - Child Protection Conferences 2009/10)

"I think it went well and I had a chance to say what I wanted. I felt really comfortable at ease through it all and now am fine about coming to the next meeting. PS. I would like to say thanks to everyone who came to support me and thought about my safety. Thanks xx"

(Questionnaire to Children and Families - Child Protection Conferences 2009/10)

1.3 Joint Review Improvement Programme

The improvement programme following the Joint Review Inspection (2008) continued throughout 2009/10. This programme included several individual projects and further inspections by the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). These inspections came to a view that social work practice here in Gwynedd was safe for both Adult and Children's Services. The Joint Review noted that services were "inconsistent". However it was reported during the last year that improvements had been made and that good practice is being seen across work areas. There is no room to be complacent and further improvements are needed. Gwynedd Council and the inspectors are in agreement that our services need to be more flexible and quicker to respond to changing demands as recognised by the public and their families. Without this ability we will continue to provide too many services that people do not want. This will be too costly and also mean that we cannot free up the money to provide what people really want.

"If able to help carers more, they can provide more care for family and friends and not become burnt out themselves. So, investing in voluntary (not paid) carers can keep people independent for longer. But need investment in better and more flexible respite services (including sitting services and weekend breaks)."

(Community Consultation Event – Future Social Care Needs, 2009/10)

By the end of March 2009 it was agreed that the "Joint Review Improvement Programme" had reached a point where it was appropriate to close the programme and mainstream activities within the Council's planning process. This means that the key priorities identified has now been included in Gwynedd Council's Three Year Planning Process and that other key activities are managed by the Social Services Management Team. The

Director of Social Services chairs the Programme Board within this structure. In order to make sure that the Council does deliver on the changes planned, the work programme is scrutinised by Task Group of Elected Member's which reports to the Council.

The Inspectorate has noted clearly the improvements in planning and delivering services, and the associated reporting frameworks, need to be maintained and delivered more quickly. As a result of this, the Chief Executive chairs a Commissioning Board which is attended by the Lead Member, Portfolio Leader for Social Services and Senior Portfolio Leader for Care. This commissioning group confirms ownership of the change programme at the highest level and ensures progress and direction.

1.4 The Financial Context

It is clear that here in Gwynedd, as the rest of Wales, the number requiring services has increased. It is also clear that many have more complex needs which can mean more expensive services. The Council's overall budget during 2009/10 was £353m and Social Services accounting for £69m (20%). Expenditure on Social Services in Gwynedd has increased by £13.7m over the last 5 years.

"A good scheme (Telecare). My father had a lot of help through this scheme. He used to get in touch if there was any difficulty and there was a key holder who always went to help. It's a very good idea"

"Definitely this scheme can work (Telecare). I know someone who has it and she's fine and back home now.)"

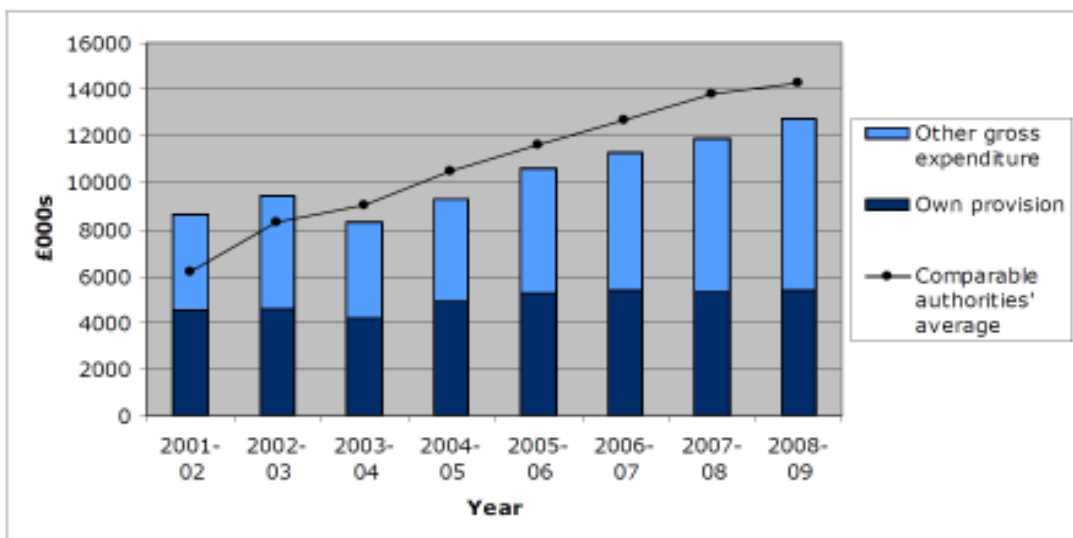
(Community Consultation Event – Future Social Care Needs, 2009/10)

For 2009/10 Social Services expenditure was within the allocated budget but the expenditure patterns are worrying. Within Children's Services there has been a marked improvement in our ability to manage expenditure on children's placements. Since 2005/06 the Service has reduced the overspend on the Placements budget from £841,000 to £65,000. The Leaving Care budget was also overspent. Work is going on at the moment to understand

what can be done to try and improve this but it is clear that an increase in young people requiring services is a major factor. There is also pressure on the Specialist Children’s Service which also overspent during the year. Further work is needed to make sure that we fully understand the impact this has on the availability and quality of services.

Although Adult Services were within budget this year there are real concerns about Learning Disability Services. There is a review taking place during the beginning of this financial year to understand this better. Figure 3 shows how our expenditure on Learning Disability Services has increased over recent years but that expenditure is still below that of comparable authorities.

Figure 3: Gwynedd’s gross expenditure on adults aged 18-64 with learning disabilities proportionately split between its own and other provision.



Source: Welsh Assembly Government

We know that many of the individuals needing services have very complex needs and require specialist placements. Many other adults with Learning Disabilities need more help to live independently and opportunities for work. We know that if we carry on doing the same thing this year in Learning Disability Services we will be overspent by some £450,000. This is not acceptable to the Service or Council and urgent steps are being taken to avoid this and ensure services that are safe and consistent when needed.

“Very happy with the service. If my worker is away there is someone else always available to help.”

“I would like to see the travelling allowance being allocated fairly to carers.”

(Questionnaire to foster carers Nov 2009)

Like all Council departments, Social Services will have to cut back and reduce the amount it spends on services. By 2013 we will have to save £3.18m from our 2009/10 budget level. Every effort is being made to make sure that this will not mean stopping services but that we change the way we do things. The Council approved its savings agenda during 2009. The service is now busy making sure that we can deliver on these savings. Although this task will not be easy, and will mean that a great deal of staff will have to change how they do things, they do provide exciting opportunities for desirable change.

"Excellent friendly staff always respecting my own ability to assess things. "

"We had a rather long wait to find the result of financial assessment, however probably due to the wait for information from banks etc. "

**(Annual Questionnaire Adults Services
March 2010)**

2. OUR PRIORITIES & WHAT WE NEED TO IMPROVE

During the last few months the service has been looking back on what has been achieved during 2009/10 and deciding what are the most important things we need to improve. These priorities have been presented to Members to decide whether they should be included in the Council's priority programme for the next year. This means that the following work areas will receive the full weight of the Council as Social Services commits itself to continued progress as agreed within the Joint Review process. This next part will be presented in two parts. All of these work areas form part of the work programme for Social Services in Gwynedd.

PART 1 – CORE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

SAFEGUARDING AND KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

The most important task for Social Services is to make sure that the most vulnerable are safe. This includes children coming within the child protection process and vulnerable adults. Both services have received favourable inspections following the national inspection by CSSIW following the Baby P tragedy and its programme for vulnerable adults (POVA) Additional inspections have been completed during the year for Children in Care, Youth Justice Service, Children's Specialist Services, and the Adult Placement Service. These inspections have noted improved practice and complimented the commitment and responsiveness of staff delivering services.

Delivering safe practice is dependent on having good assessment processes and responding at the right time – and not when services are too late. Adult services have improved its performance with the completion of assessment and reviews during the year. Within Children's services performance with the completion of initial assessments has remained good but, whilst the actual number of core assessment has increased this has decreased as a percentage target. This is a worrying trend and is receiving attention by the service.

Children's Services have been improving the way they assess and review children in need. . We know from the information available to us that once contact has been made with the service that users are positive about the services they receive.

Alongside this we have a responsibility towards those in need of help, when they need it. Again this is valid for both adult and children's services. The main priority is making sure that children and vulnerable adults are safe. The Children and Families Service do not operate a waiting list and all new referrals are allocated within the intake and referral team. Decision making on referrals has greatly improved, with performance being 99.7% during 2009/10. Following completion of an initial assessment, all referrals that require ongoing work are transferred to the area office for allocation. Initial assessments completed within the statutory timescales (7 working days) during 2009/10 were 54.8%. This is a slight deterioration from 2008/9 which is due to an increase in the overall number of referrals (increase from 3,927 in 2008/9 to 4,205 in 2009/10). Services are offered to children and families following identification of specific needs following an assessment. Unfortunately, we do have a waiting list for those wanting Occupational Therapy services and the provision of aids and adaptations. During the last year we have tried to reduce the waiting times by bringing in extra staff but demand has again been greater than our ability to respond. Two equipment exhibition centres have recently been commissioned and will be operational during 2010 to help support the reduction in people waiting.

TRANSITION SERVICES

Social Services has continued to build on the progress noted last year with the development of transitional services for those young people requiring services as young adults. Our responsibilities are to make sure that this happens as smoothly as possible. There are now plans in place for those who transfer to adult services. However, all children in need don't qualify for services as adults and this can be very difficult for all concerned. During the year we have been able to extend our services due to the new Vulnerable Adults Social Worker post introduced last year. The purpose of this post is to support those young people who are not eligible for support from Adult's Services. The post has ensured that 6 young people with complex needs, including Asperger's Syndrome have received a comprehensive support service that would not otherwise have been available to them.

CARERS

During this last year the service and Carers' Partnership has benefited from the input of the part time dedicated Carers Support Officer post. This is a new post established during 2008/9. This has underpinned and improved the co-ordination of activities within Social Services and Partnerships. Carers have reported that improved information is one of the key issues for them. An information booklet for carers was published during Summer 2009 and officially launched at the National Eisteddfod during August 2009. Adult services (through continuing healthcare funding), in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is currently identifying the respite services available. This work will influence how we plan and extend respite services during 2010/11 and the first mapping phase and comprehensive report is planned for July 2010.

In Children's Services Social Services has continued to strengthen its ability to identify and respond to the needs of young carers with a further increase in the number being supported. However, this work has identified the need to work more closely with education services and to strengthen the support offered to young carers in schools.

Officers are concerned that they are not able to respond as they would like, to requests for help following assessment. This is especially so for disabled children and children who are ill. Given the financial challenges facing all services, making sure that we are able to target preventive and supportive services for the most needy will become an increasing priority for Social Services and Gwynedd Council.

LEADERSHIP

During April 2009 Children's Services were returned to be directly line managed by the Statutory Director of Social Services. The aim was to strengthen accountability arrangement within social care. The Social Services Management Team is now established and consists of the Director of Social Services, Senior Managers for both Adult and Children's Services, the Senior Business Manager and Head of Provider and Leisure Services. Whilst the Head of Provider and Leisure Services is not line managed by the Head of Social Services attendance at management meetings has meant that we have been able to make sure that the Social Services functions and responsibilities are considered together. This has been beneficial.

The Senior Business Manager post is new and has been operational since October 2009. The Business Service is leading on Data and Performance, Commissioning and Contracting, Workforce Development, Administration and Customer Care. We are already seeing the

benefit of this new Service. Bringing staff together, and establishing some new posts, have meant that we can improve the information we have about the business considerations of social care as well as providing essential back room support for front line services.

Elected members have continued to work closely with the Social Services Department on the improvement journey. The Lead Portfolio Member has been central to this process. In addition to the actions taken by the portfolio lead, additional input has been available by the members of various task groups. These include membership of the Local Forums with Building for the Future, the Learning Disability work programme, Strategic Review for Residential Services and the Joint Review Task Group. The interest and questioning demonstrated by the elected members has definitely contributed to our ability to make the right decisions and to consider the way social services will be delivered in Gwynedd in the future.

"Too much swapping of care between services – being passed around and changed causes problems. Need to reduce barriers between services and want to deal with fewer workers. The two big organizations, Health and Social Services are not working together!"

(Community Consultation Event – Future Social Care Needs, 2009/10)

Following the transfer of the Council's housing stock to "Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd" during mid April, retained housing services has been located alongside Social Services to be line managed by the Head of Social Services. From speaking with staff representatives (both Housing and Social Care) there is a shared view that real opportunities exist to improve the

"Lovely and very necessary to have bilingual workers who can talk to my husband in Welsh and to me in English."

"Being disabled since 5 years of age, I have seen many changes. During the last 5 years there have been many improvements but there is still room for much more!"

(Annual Questionnaire Adults Services March 2010)

way we do things in key areas such as youth homelessness, supporting people and adaptations. Work is now being undertaken to identify the best way of planning and delivering what needs to be done for the benefit of housing and social services. This will be included in our work programme for 2010/11.

PART 2 - KEY PRIORITY AREAS FOR 2010/11

For 2010/11 four key areas have been identified as priorities for improvement, these are:

- Commissioning and developing Services
- Workforce
- Performance and Resources
- Engagement and Partners

Along side these four key areas the Social Services Department will continue to give the proper attention to safeguarding activity. Individual work plans have been agreed for both Adult and Children's services which make sure that the improvements seen over the last year will be maintained.

This section provides highlights from the agreed work programme. It also says how we, as a service, have judged ourselves to be along with some information about our commitment for change:

PRIORITY 1 - COMMISSIONING AND DEVELOPING SERVICES

What do we mean?

Commissioning is at the very heart of providing effective social care for both children and adults. It is the process by which local authorities decide how to spend their money to get the best possible services for local people. Councillors, managers and staff at all levels, service users and carers, statutory agencies and service providers in the independent sector all contribute to this. Effective Commissioning is all about anticipating future needs and expectations rather than just reacting to present demand.

How good are we and what needs Improving?

We need to make significant improvements in this area of work, by producing commissioning strategies and the effective delivery of plans to develop services.

We know that we need to improve the way we commission services. During 2009/10 we were successful in placing important foundation stones that will serve as the basis of critical improvement programmes over the next two years. A Commissioning Framework was

agreed setting out where responsibility for delivering this programme will rest within the Council. The work done on reviewing the data made it clear that Social Services did not have sufficient capacity to deliver on the work programme properly. Additional posts were agreed by members within the planning process (January 2010). The recruitment process is not yet complete but this will mean that Social Services will have two dedicated posts looking at Commissioning arrangements for social care by July 2010.

More work is needed to make sure that we increase the pace of change. This will be done by developing and reviewing commissioning strategies for the whole of Social Care. In the first instance priority will be given to those services concerned with the Older People, Learning Disability Services and People with sensory and physical impairments. A commitment has been given to making sure that these strategies are developed and delivered in partnership with the Third Sector and Independent Providers making sure we make the most of opportunities for shared working with Gwynedd Council. We need to improve the way our spending fits in with our agreed priorities. We need to ensure that our spending is in line with our agreed priorities. This will mean strengthening our contract monitoring arrangements and making it clear who is responsible for what.

Partners have told us that this is a key area for them. We know that we need to invest in the infrastructure when considering the needs of social care for the next generation. In order to meet consumer expectations and registration requirements, we will need to improve the quality of residential homes across the sector including services to adults and learning disability. This will need significant capital investment. We must also be willing to invest revenue funding in different ways to maximize the value and suitability of provision and to ensure value for money.

The attached table provides an outline of some of main activities for 2010/11 where there are expectations of significant change in our provision arrangements. All the plans present programs that both improve value for money and promote independence on the basis of good practice.

Older People
“Building for the Future” and “Strategic Review of Residential Care” for older people – to make sure that residential provision and accommodation needs are fit for purpose and meet customer expectations
Enablement – introduction of home care arrangements that promote independence
Telecare – Maximize use of technology to promote independence
Day Care – Review arrangements and introduce support plans based on community models with the Third Sector
Ensure consistency of home care fees / establish Brokerage System – ensure consistent payments across the provider sector on a comparable basis with North Wales and transparency in our business arrangements
Learning Disabilities
Accommodation - rationalise our statutory provision that meets the expectations and good practice
Review care packages – ensure standardisation of provision
Day care arrangements – maximize work placements where suitable and standardise provision.
Children and Families
Respite care provision – recognise the need and increase provision.

PRIORITY 2 - WORKFORCE

What do we mean?

The social care workforce is the backbone of the social care system. In order to ensure that children and adults are safe and looked after in a way that preserves their dignity and independence, it is vital that we have a workforce that is skilled, dedicated, valued and supported to do its best. The social care workforce encompasses those who work in public services that are provided, directly or commissioned, by the local authority. This includes services provided by private, independent and third sector providers.

How good are we and what needs Improving?

We are fortunate in Gwynedd as we have a good percentage of our staff that are qualified and registered with the Care Council and are bi-lingual. During the last year we have been successful with both the recruitment and retention of social workers within Social Services. From the data available this includes those employed by the Council and the care sector. The Workforce Development Plan has been successfully implemented across the care sector.

We need to improve our ability to plan for the staff needed for the future. We know that changes planned will have an impact on staff. These ranges from the plan to introduce “flexible working” where staff will not be office based but linked with libraries, GP surgeries etc to increasing the number of home care staff working with the Enablement Scheme. Their task is to make sure that people regain their skills and confidence after a fall or illness. An increasing number of these services are likely to be delivered in conjunction with health or directly employed by families themselves through direct payments. So we need to be prepared and to make sure we prepare our staff.

We also know that staff within Social Services are reporting that they are under pressure. Compared to other parts of the Council more reported that they were under stress. We know that many hours are worked beyond contractual agreements and that much of this work arises from the need to protect vulnerable children and adults. A report was commissioned by the Director of Social Services from the Human Resources Department during 2009. This has now been received and responding to this will be one of our priorities for the coming year.

Gwynedd Council has a responsibility to make sure that employees are appropriately supported but the need to recognise and respond to the unique features of social care has been recognised on an all Wales basis. The Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA), in collaboration with local authorities has developed a special training programme for managers in social care. Gwynedd Council has been a key partner in developing this programme. Six of its managers will be attending the first training course in 2010 with a further 4 to commence in 2011. This complements the Corporate Training Programme provided by Gwynedd Council.

The Social Services Department introduced a revised supervision policy during 2009. An audit completed during February 2010 showed that there was good practice but that there needs to be more consistency in the use of the agreed formats. A further audit is planned for October 2010. Given the importance of supervision in making sure that practice is safe, and that staff are supported, it is essential to make sure that practice has been embedded.

Whilst reporting that our recruitment of social workers was good we have continued to experience difficulties in recruiting home carers in the South of the County. This has meant that we have not been able to provide some care packages on time. For some, this has meant that they’ve had to stay in hospital for longer than needed.

Delivering a good service is also dependent on having good administrative support services. During 2009 Children's Services returned under the direct line management of Social Services. There have been other changes in response to office moves and rationalisation of posts. This means that we need to review our administrative systems to make sure we have more consistent cover at our reception areas and to support the work undertaken by social work staff.

PRIORITY 3 - PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES

How good are we and what needs Improving?

There is a need to strengthen the way we manage performance and resources in order to make sure that the services we provide are appropriate, of the right quality and offer value for money

When reviewing our performance the service believes that progress has been secured. The "Results Based Accountability" (RBA) (See Glossary of Terms, Appendix 4) approach has been introduced throughout the service as a way of making sure that what we are monitoring and reviewing that Services actually deliver on what we're trying to achieve. During the year we have introduced the way of working to elected members and those who work with us. During March 2010 around 70 individuals from various organisations attended a seminar to introduce this way of working. It has also been used successfully introduced with the Carers' Partnership.

The Data and Performance unit has been established within Social Services which will provide dedicated support for the social care agenda within the Council. This will mean that the information needed to monitor performance will be held in one place and will assist not only the Social Services Department but also others who need information about the services provided here in Gwynedd. Over 50% of the staff have now been appointed.

Within adult services there has been a marked improvement in the amount and quality of information available through the electronic recording system. This is very important when we want to check on the quality of services provided and to get the data necessary to plan and commission services

Inspections, in both adult and children's services, reported an improvement in the quality and consistency of front line services since the Joint Review inspection. Comments were

received which noted that the improvements reflected increased clarity about the standards expected and how things needed to be done.

We need to make sure that data is accurate across all services areas which include information about how well we are doing. In order to do this we must improve the use we make of RAISE (our electronic recording system).

Two years ago Adult's services were way behind other authorities in Wales in how they recorded information. Further resources to develop systems were directed towards Adult's services and the Service has managed to catch up. As a result, Children's services, which were previously ahead of other areas in their use of electronic recording systems (I.T), have not been able to develop so quickly due to lack of available support services. This has affected the Service ability to meet statutory requirements through implementation of the Integrated Children's System (ICS). Over the next year progress must be made across both adult and children's services.

Systems for making sure that information is available and accurate will continue to improve. Alongside this managers and staff, throughout the service, will need to make sure that they follow agreed practice within timescales for presenting information. We will only be able to evidence high quality and consistent services if both staff and the information systems work well together.

Delivering on improved performance will also be critical when managing budgets. The service must improve its reporting on what it spends making sure it stays within agreed budgets. It must also deliver on the savings targets.

PRIORITY 4 - PARTNERSHIP WORK AND ENGAGEMENT

How good are we and what needs Improving?

We need to include our stakeholders when planning, implementing and monitoring services and continue to offer services together where this increases effectiveness and is more efficient.

During the past year, we have made sure that we've included our partners at the beginning when new work programmes are being planned. One example of this would be the groups set up to review how we provide future learning disability services.

We have changed the way we provide adult services by setting up multidisciplinary teams that are locally based. These teams include GPs, workers from the BCUHB (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board) and the Third Sector. These new teams mean that there is a seamless service. By doing this those needing services should get a quicker response which is less wasteful as staff and agencies share information and resources.

There have been other positive developments with health services where our Mental Health teams, Learning Disability teams and provision for disabled children and children who are ill are all managed and delivered on a partnership basis. Unfortunately, the re-organisation within the health community has meant that we have not been able to complete the plans we had to have formal partnership arrangements. Whilst this is disappointing on a strategic level this has necessarily affected how services are provided on a day to day basis. We are fortunate in that we have very good working relationships with our work colleagues across the social care sector.

There are also strong working relationships with other statutory partners which include the Fire and Rescue Service and North Wales Police. Within Children's services there is a very close working relationship with the Police. Work has been done recently to improve the way referrals are made to the service. This has enabled the Service to process and manage referrals from the Police in a much more efficient way allowing us to focus on and give priority to child protection and domestic violence referrals. There is a shared commitment to make sure that practices are safe ensuring that children and families can access help and support at the right time. The Fire Service has worked with Adult Services to make sure that we offer help on Fire Safety.

The Social Services Department works as a key partner within both the Health and Well Being Partnership and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Children's Services has reviewed membership during the year to make sure that the service is properly engaged with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership planning process. Our priorities have been discussed and developed within these partnerships.

Social Services also support the running of three major partnerships within Gwynedd Council. These are the Local Children's Safeguarding Board, The Youth Justice Service and the Carers Partnership. The Head of Service (Statutory Director) also chairs the Autistic Spectrum Partnership Board on behalf of the Health, Social Care and Well Being strategy. It has been a busy and successful year for all of these partnership boards.

This has been an important and busy year when considering our work with other local authorities in North Wales. The North Wales Adoption Service is now operational and will lead to increasing consistency and sharing of few resources. There is also a clear commitment to make sure that we develop other services such as Telecare and Learning Disability Services on a North Wales basis. These developments are worthwhile but require time and commitment if they are to be successful. Officers are there to make sure that Gwynedd residents' needs are properly considered and represented which includes geographical and cultural needs.

Within Social Services the Customer Care Service has been strengthened. With the appointment of another officer it is now possible to provide a dedicated worker for both adult and children's services. This means that we have been able to improve our performance when responding to complaints and requests for information from service users, their carers and other representatives such as elected members.

With this increased capacity it has been possible to improve the way we consult with our users about services they receive. During March 2010 over 3,000 users were consulted in adult services. There was a 30% return rate.

The "speak out" sessions with young people in care (supported by the Corporate Parenting Panel) have been very successful and helped staff and members understand the views of young people in care and what are the most important things for them when providing services.

As the impact of reorganisation in the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board settles we look forward to taking forward and formalising the partnership arrangements within the

services mentioned above. We are also committed to delivering more services together with health. We believe that working together will improve the chances we have of making sure that services are delivered in the communities where people live and be less confusing for many service users.

We need to modify the way we work with partners from both the Third and Independent Sector. This will be done by reviewing the effectiveness of existing meetings and deciding how we can share information earlier and rationalise the number of different meetings currently being arranged.

We know that it is likely there will be less money for partnership working over the next few years with uncertainty around the Performance Management Development Fund and the Joint Working Grant. This means that we must be very clear with our partners about the priority activities that are most important and effective when protecting and supporting the most vulnerable in our communities.

Although we have done more this year to engage with our partners and users we intend to do even more in the next year. We are committed to making sure that service users and their carers have a central part to play in the way we plan and evaluate services. One example of this will be the learning from complaints and making sure that this is used to improve practice.

3. HOW WE WILL MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS

These four priority work areas come within the responsibility of the newly established Programme Board. Progress against the 4 key improvements identified will be monitored and scrutinised by the Board on a 2 monthly basis. Other improvements identified will be included within the Departments Business Plan and monitored every month by the Departments Management Team.

4. APPENDICES

The following are provided as appendixes to the report:

1. List of completed evidence grids and how to access these
2. Gwynedd area Profile
3. Performance Against Statutory Performance Indicators 2009/10 (which the Department report on annually to the Wales Data Unit)
4. Glossary of Terms
5. Results Based Accountability : Improving Services: Provisions for Carers.