

**Annual Report of the Gwynedd Statutory Director of
Social Services
2013-14**

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1. Opening statement by the Director

Welcome to my Annual Report for 2013-2014. Its purpose is to reflect on the performance of social services in Gwynedd during the past year and report on our priorities and intentions for 2014/15. I hope that you will find time to browse through it and see whether or not the priorities correspond with what you believe is important to you, your family and your communities. I would welcome any observations that you may have. We would particularly like to hear about ideas regarding how we can continue, together, to improve and develop the way Gwynedd residents are supported to live content, full and safe lives.

This is my second year in my role as Statutory Director of social services in Gwynedd. It is now my pleasure to announce that the Council has established two key posts to support me – and has made appointments to them – namely the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department.

The Social Services and Well-being Act has been adopted by the Government this year, which imposes new responsibilities on us as local authorities and sets a direction regarding the provision of sustainable services for the future. We are also aware of the financial challenge at a time where expectations are higher and demand for services is increasing. Through all of this, as last year, our priority as services is to safeguard and protect children, young people and the most vulnerable adults in our society, and try and continually improve services for them.

On the whole, the performance in 2013-14 is good, with several fields making progress. However, if we are to succeed in meeting our statutory responsibilities in future, our change and delivery programmes must speed up in their entirety. I believe there is a real opportunity to broaden and develop interventions that can support the most vulnerable people in our society. In order to achieve this, this important agenda must be addressed as one whole community. We must all work together and ensure that we build on the strengths of communities and individuals. In doing so, I am certain that we can respond to the challenge in a way that also offers better outcomes for individuals.

We have established a new department for children and families in Gwynedd. This means that all children and young people's services, with the exception of Education, have been brought together under the leadership of a specialist Head of Department. We have undertaken considerable research in this field and we are moving towards focussing on early interventions with an emphasis on assisting parents and giving children and young people the opportunity to develop in a supportive atmosphere.

In the Adults field, we have created a specific focus for the field again by creating the Adults, Health and Well-being Department. During the next year, our intention is to undertake a review of every aspect of the field in order to ensure that our practices are of the best standard and that we can provide evidence of value for money throughout. There is also a focus here on seeking to ensure that early interventions are in place to enable people to remain healthy for as long as possible and on improving arrangements to provide services.

There is one totally clear message by everybody and that is the need for our services and the health services to be less complex and more integrated. It is often said that it does not matter who provides, as far as the provision is of the highest standard and that it is accessible when the need arises. Simply, "the right care, at the right time, at the right cost". This is what is required and this is the agenda for us jointly with Health over the next year or two. We have already signed a formal agreement and we have a work programme to drive the agenda forward in the adults field. We have also received a one year budget to ensure that we drive the agenda, as a matter of urgency.

What is essential throughout all the necessary changes is that we keep our users, or the people of Gwynedd, as a central focus. Obviously, a vital part of this is ensuring that everyone has an opinion and that services are offered based on the needs of individuals. There are clear requirements here regarding respect, responding to language needs and ensuring that we consistently meet care principles. I am certain that we have room for improvement but I also believe that we are clear regarding what is the best care.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of our staff, providers and partners for their commitment and hard work in ensuring that children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families receive the best possible services. Also, a special thanks to everyone who cares informally all year round for a member of the family or a neighbour. I would also like to thank the Cabinet Member for Care for his tireless guidance and support throughout the year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Edwards". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'A'.

Awen Morwena Edwards
Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Services
Gwynedd Council

2. Creating Sustainable Social Services

During 2013/14, Gwynedd Council has made a substantial effort to set firm foundations to ensure that we will have viable and sustainable social services for the future and that we respond to the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act ('the Act') and the local context.

2.1 Leadership

The functions of the 'Statutory Director' have now been transferred to Corporate Director level within the Council, which ensures leadership and accountability on the appropriate level. During 2013/14, by creating new departments and two new posts at Head of Department level (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department and Head of Children and Supporting Families), the leading capacity in the Social Services field has been substantially strengthened. During 2014/15, the heads of department will draw up new structures for their departments.

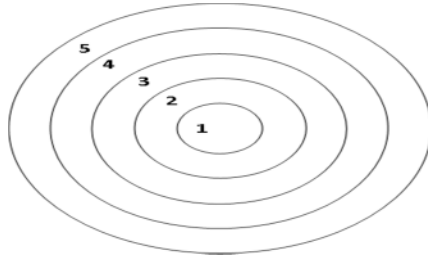
"Increasing the social services' statutory role to Corporate Director level creates more structural flexibility at the head of service level to respond to opportunities and future challenges" (Gwynedd Council Leader)

In terms of political leadership, the Cabinet Member for the Care field has remained constant which has been very beneficial in terms of offering leadership in a period of change. A key decision that was made during 2013/14 was that the Council Leader should take ownership of the need to ensure that the implications of the Act are communicated effectively to Gwynedd communities and that there is a corporate understanding of them. This indicates the status level that is now given to the field. During the past year, the valuable contribution of the Services Committee was seen. Value was added by means of the constructive challenge given, especially during the scrutiny investigation that was undertaken to examine our joint arrangements with the relevant Health Boards as Gwynedd residents left hospital.

2.2 Vision

During 2013/14, energy was invested to refine our vision across social services and ensure that the vision in question corresponded with the ethos of the new Act whilst also reflecting local priorities. In the past, we have talked a lot about the attempt to keep people independent but by now we can interpret our vision in a much clearer manner. We can see how there is a need for social services to have an influence beyond traditional boundaries. An earlier version of the diagram below was submitted in the previous Annual Report as a way to summarise the Director's priorities. This has now been developed into a tool to communicate our vision in its entirety.

1. Intensive, statutory services, at the right time, in the right place, for the right price
2. Assisting vulnerable people to stay at home independently and be content
3. Effective social work, when needed
4. Creating strong and resilient communities that support people in need
5. Encourage everyone's well-being and health



By moving from the outer circle (5) towards the inner circle (1), the numbers in terms of people reduce, but the cost to us and our partners increase substantially.

We simply want to broaden our horizons in terms of social services and focus on what we can achieve across Council departments, and, with our partners, do it to support people in their communities in creative, flexible and cost effective ways. At the same time, we want to improve the experiences and choices that people with intensive needs have and direct our resources to services of the highest quality. We deem the nature and suitability of a person's home as entirely central to the effectiveness of our care and the quality of life and we can now see a much tighter link between housing and accommodation considerations and care considerations. Managing demand is important to us but there is a need for us to understand the nature of current demand and interpret demographic information in more detail before we can do it effectively.

The above vision corresponds completely with the national direction that has been outlined in the Social Services and Well-being Act. When formulating priorities for 2014/15 and beyond, the Council has planned to respond to different aspects of the Act, and has mainstreamed these projects within a broader corporate improvement programme.

2.3 Financial Situation

The budget of social services in Gwynedd is currently very close to £60m, with 78% being spent on intensive, statutory services (the central circle in the above diagram). With a budget of this size, we have a key contribution to make in terms of ensuring that the Council will meet its financial strategy, which will mean significantly reducing expenditure. We are planning to save nearly £10m by the end of 2017/18, which is equivalent to 16% of our budget, and a contribution towards the total savings across the Council.

See below a summary which provides details of this:

	2014/15 Budget £	Savings to be found £	Remainder £
Children	14,479,170	-2,885,000	11,594,170
Adults	40,571,410	-6,206,000	34,365,410
Central / Business Support	4,006,070	-598,000	3,408,070
Total	59,056,650	-9,689,000	49,367,650

There is an intention to aim for savings equating to £4.3m in the Older People's field, and this will undoubtedly be the greatest challenge over the next few years as focus is provided on realising the vision noted above. At the end of 2013/14, we had overspent £498k against our Adults budgets, with a high proportion of this in the Older People's field. We know that we were buying more intensive care

packages, both for home care and nursing care, than we were a year ago, but we need to continue analysing our expenditure in detail and understand what is at the root of the trends. An underspend of £138k was seen against Children's budgets.

2.4 Integration and collaboration

Over the past year, we have gathered momentum in terms of moving towards an integrated way of working with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, and despite the instability in terms of structures and governance arrangements, we have strengthened our relationship. This has resulted in success with a number of projects to improve experiences for the patient or the service user, such as extensive day care provision for those with acute dementia, and arrangements to discharge people from hospitals on weekends.

A key development in terms of setting a strategic direction is establishing a County Forum for Gwynedd and reviewing the Local Area Management Group. These groups will provide a suitable platform to discuss and act on what we have committed to in the North Wales Statement of Intent in response to the 'Framework for Providing Integrated Health and Social Care for Older People who have Complex Needs', and the broader collaboration agenda.

By means of £1.3m revenue and £600 capital which came through the Welsh Government Intermediate Care Fund, we have created a secondment for a senior officer to drive the integrated agenda forward across the Council, Health and the Third Sector. We have an exciting programme of schemes to be implemented which will positively influence people's experiences and provide us with opportunities to experiment with innovative ideas. As well as implementing this programme, our intention is to plan to be able to continue with the integrated working agenda once the lifespan of the fund has ended.

2.5 Gwynedd's Unique Language and Culture

Gwynedd, like every other county, has its own features. Gwynedd is recognised as one of the strongholds of the Welsh language and Welsh is the Council's administrative language. This, in turn, has influenced very favourably on our ability to offer services through the medium of Welsh to our citizens. We are very proud of the fact that we have been victorious in two categories in the 'Words into Action' awards this year, and that another nomination has reached the shortlist.

The publication of the 'More than Words' strategic framework was welcomed by the Welsh Government. The Council has established a cross-departmental task group, which is chaired by the Head of the Human Resources Department and includes three elected members, in order to respond to the requirements of the framework. We have an action plan in order to ensure that we meet all expectations. The most significant development during 2013/14 was implementing the recommendations of the Language Planning Centre's detailed report, which was commissioned by us to review the contents of all our contracts, in terms of clauses which relate to what is expected of providers in terms of the language and the proactive approach. We have now reviewed clauses in a substantial portion of agreements and have strengthened our contract monitoring arrangements. All of this has been aimed at ensuring that every person who requires a service through the medium of Welsh receives it, and that it ultimately has a positive impact on his/her well-being.

During 2014/15, we will drive ahead to act upon the requirements of the strategic framework's second year. We will also need to ensure that we respond to some conclusions that were reached as we establish a baseline in relation to our ability to respect the proactive approach in every aspect of our work.

3. Safeguarding

In last year's Annual Report, it was noted that safeguarding and protecting children and adults was one of the priorities for 2013/14, and this will definitely be a field that will continue to be a priority.

3.1 Strategic developments

Under the guidance of the Strategic Panel for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults, the safeguarding agenda has now been embedded on a corporate level. Managers' feedback confirms that there is a much broader understanding of their duty to contribute towards people's safety, rather than believing that it is something that should only be left to social workers. A copy of the Strategic Panel's Annual Report can be viewed on the Council website: www.gwynedd.gov.uk. During 2014/15, we have committed to continue with our training programme on Safeguarding, by targeting staff and external service providers and ensuring that awareness of the important issues in question extends further. This will include ensuring that everyone who requires one has an up-to-date criminal record check.

During 2013/14, Gwynedd Council's Policy and Guidelines for Safeguarding Children and Adults were adopted. Every Department drew up its own Safeguarding Policy and designated managers were appointed in every Service so that an initial point of contact is available for any member of staff who is concerned about the safety of any vulnerable individual. A training programme was introduced for staff and elected members, and a corporate e-learning model was developed to support this training.

"Looking back, if I knew what I know and understand today – I would have realised how important it was for me to have reported some of the situations that I came across in the past. I completely understand and accept that safeguarding children and adults is relevant to me and that it is not something that only the Social Services and the Education Departments deal with" (Neil Garton Jones, Senior Manager, Gwynedd Consultancy, one of Gwynedd Council's designated managers)

The operational responsibility for safeguarding Children and Adults procedures have been merged within the duties of the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department and work is in the pipeline to establish a new Safeguarding unit.

3.2 Safeguarding Children

The Risk Model that we developed a few years ago was still in use and there is continual evidence that this enables us to establish effective protection plans in order to work with families to minimise risks in a timely manner. Also during 2013/14, the service trialled the 'Graded Care Profile' assessment tool on a multi-agency basis for cases of registered negligence. We will review the pilot period at the end of 2014.

The number of children on the child protection register increased slightly, from 79 at the end of 2012/12 to 85 at the end of 2013/14. We have a local indicator to measure the 'rate of children who were discussed in supervision, where consideration was given to significant harm (and the solution was recorded)' and our performance was 100% during 2013/14. Another element that we measure is the 'percentage of risk assessments submitted to Case Conferences exhibiting quality decision making.' Our performance for 2013/14 was 95%.

During 2013/14, the main focus of the Corporate Parent Panel was to ensure that the Council took corporate ownership of the responsibility to act as a parent of looked after children and give them the best possible experiences. A strategic decision was made to keep the responsibility for this agenda on a corporate level, as it is a corporate responsibility. The Annual Report of the Corporate Parent Panel notes the desire to develop a new strategy for the future. The strategy will focus on appropriate healthcare, continuing to improve educational point scores and on offering work experience or temporary posts. By adopting a public statement that pledges support for looked after children and effective collaboration, the Panel will be able to use the strategy to have a positive influence for the benefit of looked after children. A copy of the full report can be viewed on Council's website: www.gwynedd.gov.uk

Our Local Safeguarding Board already operates across Gwynedd and Anglesey Councils and there are arrangements in the pipeline to work on a regional basis. It is expected that this will be established during 2014/15.

3.3 Safeguarding Adults

During 2013/14, we have collaborated with Anglesey County Council and have established the Gwynedd and Anglesey Safeguarding Adults Shadow Board. During 2013/14, 187 Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) referrals were received in Gwynedd, compared with 167 in the previous year. In eight cases, the individual had the mental capacity to decide whether or not to continue with the case. It was managed to respond appropriately to all of the other cases, which gives us confidence in our ability to safeguard people when risks are highlighted.

In terms of Escalating Concerns cases, we dealt with three cases in 2012/13 and two in 2013/14. We have already dealt with three cases during the first quarter of 2014/15. Over recent months, we have strengthened our collaboration procedures and processes in order to ensure the safety and sustainability of services, and a much bigger share of the Contracts Unit's time was assigned to monitor the quality of the establishments in question and to offer them support. We have collaborated with the remainder of north Wales authorities to agree on a regional Escalating Concerns procedure, and during 2014/15 we will be trialling an assessment tool which is part of that procedure.

Following Chester West's judicial verdict, the criteria to implement Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard (DOLS) regulations have been adapted. As a result, we have seen a substantial increase in the number of referrals, from seven in 2013/14 to 25 during the first 11 weeks of 2014/15. We have a number of employees who are qualified to undertake a DOLS assessment and we have arrangements in place to train more staff this year. However, meeting the substantial increase in demand will be challenging and we are reviewing practice to meet legal requirements and good practice.

There were many occasions during the past year when we were required to put our emergency planning arrangements into practice. Safeguarding vulnerable people during the extremely stormy weather meant acting very quickly and effectively with stakeholders. We are proud of our success and continue to learn lessons every time we are faced with critical circumstances.

4. Improving Services for Adults

4.1 Indicators

Mixed performance was seen in the Adults field in 2013/14. Of the four statutory national indicators, the performance of one was better than last year, but the other three (75%) were worse. This service has also got 29 other indicators, which are a combination of non-statutory, national and local indicators. For 24 of them, the performance can be compared with the performance in 2012/13. Of the 24, the performance of 13 of them (54%) improved, one remained consistent and ten (42%) had worsened between 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Our success in completing statutory reviews of care plans has gradually increased over the past six years. The performance is now 85.3%. Although this is encouraging, we need to aim higher as these reviews are key if we are to remain aware of people's needs and succeed in re-designing care packages so that they achieve the best possible outcomes for people in the most cost effective way.

We succeeded to perform particularly well in terms of avoiding delay when discharging patients from hospital for social care reasons, which is testament to the way we continually endeavour to collaborate on a practical level with the Health Board. Our performance for 2013/14 was 0.9 per 1,000 of the population of people over 75 years old. The figure for Wales for 2012/13 was 4.57 per 1,000 of the population.

At the end of 2013/14, our performance for the rate of people receiving support to live at home was 46.21 per 1,000 of the population of people over 65 years old, compared with a very similar figure for the previous year, namely 46.53. This is a field where there is a need for us to interpret in detail and identify the performance level that would be, in our opinion, an excellent performance. We will also continue to develop local indicators to be able to differentiate effectively between services that offer early intervention and those of a very intensive nature such as comprehensive home care packages. We are aware that home care is a growing field and that we do not understand the trend entirely. We will analyse this information in detail during 2014/15.

Figures for 2013/14 indicate that we continue to perform contrary to our vision in terms of the percentage of elderly people we support in residential and nursing homes. At the end of 2012/13, across Wales, an average of 20.63 people per 1,000 of the population of people over 65 years old were being supported in a residential or nursing home. Our corresponding figure was 24.69 for 2012/13 and 25.59 for 2013/14. When analysing figures it appears that we are placing more people in homes than we were a year ago. In addition, it appears that fewer people have left residential and nursing placements during the second half of 2013/14 compared with the previous year. We have started to analyse these trends in fine detail by considering our practice, the cleanliness of our data and demographic trends.

In accordance with our vision to increase people's independence, and provide them with more flexibility and choice, we are eager to increase the number of people who receive direct payments. The figures that were reported on note that approximately 60 people were receiving them at the end of 2012/13 and 2013/14, but following a thorough data cleansing exercise we are now aware that the figure is 106.

During 2014/15, increasing the use of direct payments and reviewing our procedure and support will be a priority for us.

4.2 Improvement Programme

2014/15 will be a period of setting firm foundations for Adult services in Gwynedd. Work is already in the pipeline to undertake an 'End to End' review, as was done in the Children's field last year. We will analyse all types of information to be able to assess where we are in comparison with our vision, the requirements of the new Act and good practices in other areas. The findings will be fed into our strategic commissioning plans. Alongside this review, we will begin a thorough exercise to review our service delivery systems to ensure focus on the user by initially concentrating on access to services.

In the meantime, while the above reviews are being completed we are proceeding with our very extensive programme of schemes to transform services, as described in the Council's Strategic Plan.

Preventative and Early Intervention Services

During 2013/14, our main and most successful efforts were in relation to services to promote independence in the Enablement and Telecare field. In 2013/14, 462 enablement packages were commenced and out of those people whose package ended during that year, it was managed to regain the independence of 58.4% of them to a degree where they did not require a care package. During 2014/15, we intend to continue with the on-going work to review, and amend as required, our procedures to provide Telecare support.

On a positive note, over 75% of people who received a service at the Lleu Unit, namely a six bed unit to recover older people's independence following a period of ill-health, had returned home after spending time there. However, we are uncertain whether or not the usage level is sufficient, with only 31 people being admitted during 2013/14. Over the coming year, we will consider further what use should be made of such temporary support, and combine this with discussions regarding the future of respite care. Another service we will continue to review is day care, by building on positive work during 2013/14 to offer more socialising opportunities for those with low level needs, and a joint provision with the Health Board for those with acute dementia. By the end of 2014/15, there is an intention to obtain clarity on the future of day care in the county for a wide range of needs.

Before implementing any substantial developments, there is a need for us to undertake more analytical work in order to find where exactly we should focus our efforts in terms of early intervention and prevention. In 2014/15, we have committed to find out the nature of the community assets that exist within the county, to try and define the nature of the necessary preventative intervention and seek an agreement on what the third sector's role and contribution should be in terms of meeting these needs. In considering the future of our services for people with relatively low level needs, our aim is to think creatively and to collaborate with partners. An example of this is work we have underway to review the support provided by Sheltered Housing wardens, so that they are able to have a wider input to positively influence on the general well-being of vulnerable residents. A simple idea, but an opportunity to have a substantial impact.

We welcome the emphasis placed in the Act on the contribution of Carers to the care agenda. It is estimated that there are approximately 14,000 unpaid carers in Gwynedd, and our work to consider our preventative services will incorporate the contribution of this vital group of people. During 2013/14, the Gwynedd Carers Partnership published the 'Are you looking after someone?' booklet which offers useful information to any individual who cares for someone. We need to refine our understanding of the contribution of carers within the county, review the way we assess our needs and re-examine the provisions that offer the best quality of life to carers and those they care for.

Work has commenced in the Learning Disabilities field to incorporate the principles of the 'Moving Forward' model in every aspect of services offered. In essence, the vision is to ensure that every individual achieves to the best of his/her ability and is always encouraged to aim higher and nurture new skills and experiences. There is an intention to continue with the work commenced during 2013/14, to review individual packages and to re-examine care plans to reflect the expected outcomes for the service users. We will consider undertaking such reviews across every service field, particularly in the Mental Health field. In some fields, we are aware that there is a need to transform care packages by changing to packages that provide more focus on the expected outcomes for every individual. We have work to manage expectations and to change the way of thinking as we move towards a new way of working.

Intensive provisions

In terms of the number of users and expenditure, we know that our performance indicates a very high level of dependency on day care, residential and nursing care services. We already mentioned our intentions to analyse and interpret our practices. One field we are evaluating to see whether or not we can extend it is the Adult Placement Scheme, where carers who are called connecting lives enablers support people to develop life skills and provide emotional support, amongst other things. This service has received praise from the CSSIW and has won three national awards.

"The best thing about being a connecting lives enabler is witnessing the change in people who come to live with us. We have adults coming to us with no confidence at all. Some of them have spent most of their lives being overprotected and it is nice to see them developing as independent people. Some people will ultimately move on to live in their own homes" (Connecting Lives Enabler)

We have established a project team to review the models of home care provided to people and to consider whether or not there are some alternative methods that could be adopted such as making use of technology, of support workers or volunteers for fairly simple aspects of the care package. A key part of the work will involve reviewing our cost efficiency and the ability of the internal and external market to sufficiently meet the level of demand, with emphasis on the south of the county.

Since the beginning of this financial year, construction work has commenced on the Pant yr Eithin site, in Harlech, to develop seven units to accommodate eight people with learning disabilities. The development should be open before the end of 2014/15, and it will be a modern, purpose-built resource on the site of the former residential home that was decommissioned in 2013. Engagement work has been undertaken with regards to another residential home, namely Frondeg in Caernarfon. During summer 2014, we will prepare a feasibility study on the potential to provide new accommodation for

people with very intensive learning disabilities. We will have clarity regarding the way forward by the end of 2014/15.

During the past year, a discussion was opened with Cabinet members as well as members of the Services Committee (scrutiny committee) regarding the future direction in terms of our residential care. We have a higher percentage of internal residential beds than any other authority in Wales, but unlike the situation a year ago, we now provide services that are fairly competitive in terms of price. Having said this, we must consider our lack of capital in developing and modernising, our vision to reduce the use of traditional residential beds and the external market in the county before recommending a future direction.

By the end of 2014/15, we will be publishing the Older People Accommodation Strategy which will incorporate residential and nursing care. This will establish a direction in terms of the future of our residential homes. It will also facilitate the work of having an influence on the Local Development Plan and on private providers and some third sector providers that could be interested in collaborating with us to develop the best possible range of accommodation opportunities for older people.

Whilst this strategy is being formulated, work on individual sites has been on-going in close partnership with Housing Associations. Within the next few months, the Cae Garnedd Extra Care Housing development in Bangor will have opened and a planning application for Extra Care Housing on the site of the former Hafod y Gest residential home in Porthmadog will have been submitted.

5. Improving Services for Children

5.1 Indicators

A very encouraging performance was seen in the Children's field in 2013/14. Of the eight national indicators, the performance of five was better than last year, and the performance of one had remained consistent (75% as good as, or better than 2012/13). This service has also 72 other indicators, which are a mixture of non-statutory national and local indicators. With 56 of them, the performance can be compared with the performance in 2012/13. Of the 56, the performance of 41 of them (73%) had improved or remained consistent between 2012/13 and 2013/14.

The performance in 2012/13, the latest year where we have comparative data, was among the best in Wales for the number of indicators, which provides us with certainty that there is a positive impact on children's lives. Specific reference can be made to looked after children's placement stability, educational results and rate of case reviews. In addition, performance was particularly good in terms of responding to referrals to the service in a timely manner, with a decision made on 99.3% of them within 24 hours. A substantial improvement was seen in the field of completing statutory reviews for looked after children on time, with the result improving from 75.4% in 2012/13 to 94.3% in 2013/14.

A field which is moving in the right direction, but still requires improvement, is the number of statutory visits for looked after children. Thus far, we have reached a performance of 83.7%. We are confident in our ability to target underperformance effectively, as was done in the case of the indicator ensuring that every looked after child has a Personal Education Plan. By collaborating and offering guidance to the appropriate staff, it arose from 50.9% in 2012/13 to 87.5% in 2013/14.

One issue that concerns us is the fact that it was only managed to secure a health assessment for 46% of the looked after children in 2013/14. This compares with an average performance of 80.3% across Wales in 2012/13. We will continue our discussions with Health in order to find resolutions to the situation. A small reduction was seen in the performance of the percentage of initial assessments that were completed within seven working days, with an achievement of 67.1% in 2013/14 against a target of 75%. As a means of improving the performance, we have now created an additional post within the Referrals Team.

5.2 Improvement Programme

Preventative and Early Intervention Services

For some time, the Council has committed to try to ensure an appropriate intervention to try to keep children and young people out of statutory social services. To this end, the input of the Lead Director for Children and Young People has been critical and his role has contributed extensively towards the development of this agenda.

In accordance with our vision for social services, efforts continued during 2013/14 to develop and disseminate the Gyda'n Gilydd scheme, in order to offer effective preventative service for families, before they reached a level of need where they required the input of the teams of social workers. Thus far, over 250 families have received support by a specialist team of people within the Council and from

external agencies, and the support varies from parenting classes to practical help to find employment. By the end of 2014/15, our target is that 400 vulnerable families will have had access to preventative services by means of support funded through the Families First grant, and that 80 other families will have received integrated support from the Gyda'n Gilydd team.

A strong element of our vision is that people should be equipped and empowered to help themselves. In this respect, an example of a recent development by us is a scheme where intensive work is undertaken with the families of disabled children where there is a need to develop communication skills between the family and the child, which is done through play. Also, advice is provided when there is a need to change the child's sleeping habits. The support is provided by the Assistant Psychologist and the Family Support Officer, and intensive input is provided for a relatively short period.

During 2013/14, the 'End to End' review, that had been commenced in the Children's field, was completed. Its main conclusion was that there was a need to reduce the number of looked after children, as well as the costs that derive from this. Most of the work programme for the Children and Supporting Families Department for 2014/15 is based on the recommendations made in light of the review.

The priority is establishing an edge of care team that will provide intensive support for vulnerable families to try to prevent children from becoming looked after children, as well as working with families so that children who are already looked after can return home. We hope that we will be operational by the beginning of 2015. It is an exciting scheme which is full of potential and reflects our aim to help people, however vulnerable they may be, to try to remedy and improve their situation.

Intensive provisions

It is inevitable that there will be situations where we cannot prevent children from becoming looked after children in the interest of their long-term safety and well-being. For those children, the stability of their care is one of the criteria when measuring success. An effort was made with this as one of the main fields for improvement during the past year, and as noted above, our performance is encouraging. A permanent policy and planning guidance were developed for children and we are confident that we are developing our workforce to implement them effectively. Evidence can already be seen that this system of scrutinising cases in detail when making decisions demonstrates success in the field of care planning.

Praise was received from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) for our fostering service during 2013, and a review of the adoption service which has been established across north Wales was also very positive. Our target is assessing and registering 20 new fostering units on an annual basis, and we are very successful. We believe that the support provided to foster carers in their day-to-day work after we recruit them is a core element of our success.

"The children and young people who are placed with foster carers can be certain that the fostering service will promote their safety and well-being and endeavour to ensure that the placement can satisfy their needs and we felt that the children have a voice and that they are provided with opportunities to express their opinions, and that they can influence the way a service is provided ... children and young people experience well-being and a sense of

achievement as the service promotes participation in leisure and social activities and educational attainment.”
(CSSIW Fostering Inspection Report 2013)

The aim of the Welsh Government was that the Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) would be operational in all parts of Wales by 2013. The main purpose of the service is to focus on families where alcohol, drugs or both are problems amongst the parents, in order to safeguard the children who are in their care. The multi-agency IFSS team on a joint basis with Anglesey is now operational.

When the time comes for a young person to leave care and face the world as an adult, the support he/she receives in order to face this change and to adjust is key in terms of the individual's well-being and quality of life. During 2013/14, Gwynedd Council, together with Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf councils, were part of the 'When I am Ready' pilot scheme. It is a scheme that encourages young people to extend the duration of their placement and help them to take advantage of opportunities to train or gain qualifications, without having to face moving out to live entirely independently. In addition, with the support of the Corporate Parent Panel, the Council collaborated with the careers service to try to secure work placements for young people who are looked after or about to leave care.

6. Governance

There are a number of supportive functions that need to be achieved effectively across the fields of Children and Adults in order to set foundations that will enable us to maintain standards.

6.1 Performance and Quality

During 2013/14, our ability to report correctly on performance and submit managerial information on time visually has continued to develop. This was beneficial as we supported the 'End to End' review in the Children's field, to prepare for a similar review in the Adults field and analyse our over expenditure during the second half of the year.

It was also managed to strengthen our risk management arrangements during the year, and the risk register for social services is now regularly updated and is the basis of managerial decisions. However, there is a scope to improve the relationship between risk management and the way we prioritise work and direct our capacity and skills.

In response to feedback from providers and carers, work is in the pipeline to review all our contract monitoring processes. We aim to provide a much clearer focus on outcomes. To this end, we are collaborating with the third sector to consider using volunteers to strengthen the monitoring process, and are reviewing the skills we have to see whether or not input from those with a background in social work is required for some monitoring aspects.

The number of complaints we received remained very similar between 2012/13 and 2013/14. One investigation was undertaken by the Ombudsman during the past year, and attention was given to the way we dealt with those undertaken in the past. By now, we have much more robust arrangements to identify strategic issues that arise from individual complaints and Ombudsman investigations, and every Ombudsman issue is brought directly to the attention of the Corporate Director. We have adapted our complaints procedure in response to criticism from CSSIW, and during 2014/15 we will undertake further changes in order to meet the requirements of the Welsh Government's new guidance.

Although we gather a lot of information about our performance, we have not yet got a comprehensive quality assurance arrangement in place and we will develop procedures during 2014/15 in order to bring relevant information together from different sources. This information will include performance results, details of complaints and observations, regulators' reports and similar information.

6.2 Information Governance and our IT and Communication Strategy

Our progress towards ensuring that we work on a paper-free basis across social services was an important step during 2013/14. Our aim during 2014/15 is to disseminate the good practice to the Learning Disabilities services. Work is continuing to ensure the cleanliness of our data, and continuing examples are becoming apparent where our ability to use managerial information is hindered by uncertainty regarding the integrity of the data or information. By September 2015, we will have published an Information Booklet to provide staff with specific guidance on Governance Information issues. Over recent months, there was an increasing number of cases where data had not been effectively protected, and a broad training programme is in the pipeline to increase staff understanding

of the importance of respecting information. Since January 2014, we have a formal procedure in place to respond to cases of failure to protect data, which includes action to remedy the situation and learn lessons. Another step in the right direction is the long awaited work that is about to commence to review our electronic filing arrangements. This will set firm foundations to move towards using the EDRMS (Electronic Document and Records Management System) system which is being bought on a corporate level. It will assist us to manage our information and tighten some of our business processes.

We are playing a leading and central role in the work with Consortium Wales Systems to follow a procurement process for a community health and care management system, for when our current care management system reaches the end of its lifespan. Corporate capital and revenue funding was put aside for this development, which is to be implemented as part of our broader IT and Communication Strategy, when we will have clarity on the way we would like to review our business processes and on our future integrated working methods. For about three years, we have hoped to be able to establish an information sharing and self-referral system on the internet. With the help of the Intermediate Care Fund that was established by the Welsh Government, and national developments to try to respond to the need for better advice and information, it is now hoped that we will see this coming to fruition.

6.3 Commissioning and Procurement

Strategic Commissioning

Over the last few years, a substantial increase was seen in terms of our strategic commissioning skills and our Requirements and Resources Mapping Model has been an important development in terms of enabling us to map demographic trends, finance and activities. We have gone through a period of staff instability and some momentum was lost, but following a period of staff training and restoring skills, we are now re-commencing the work properly. We are in the process of reviewing our commissioning plans for Older People and Learning Disabilities and have commenced the work of formulating the plan for Mental Health. These three plans will be completed by 2014/15, and plans for Physical and Sensory Impairment and Children and Young People are in the pipeline. In order to communicate the contents of our commissioning plans to our providers and prospective providers we will be preparing Market Position Statements, and taking advantage of the expertise of our colleagues in the Economy and Regeneration Department.

A major step forward is that we are now starting the journey of collaboration with the Health Board on every part of the commissioning cycle. This is an enormous challenge, but it is pivotal that we succeed in order to turn our vision in terms of integrated services into a reality for people in our communities. We are in the process of reviewing all our third sector agreements on a joint basis with the Health Board, and we have already agreed on some fields where we will be merging our funding and offering one agreement across both bodies.

Developing our relationship with the third sector has generally been a field where we have reflected on the observations of our stakeholders, and realised that there is a need to strengthen our communication and move towards working on a much more joint productive basis with the sector. We now meet with the Learning Disabilities Consortium on a monthly basis, and this group has a very practical input into the Learning Disabilities Commissioning Plan. Also, social services have been represented on a much

broader level in the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group and they share information on a much more timely basis and play a more prominent part in the Health, Care and Well-being Network that this sector has. This relationship assists us as we develop our strategy for preventative and early intervention services, which are fields that were not widely included in our previous commissioning plans.

Procurement and Contracts

During 2013/14, several aspects of social services' procurement and contracts work were reviewed. We know that not all activity in this field takes place under the supervision of the Contracts Unit, which is a risk in itself as we cannot ensure quality and consistency. There are steps in the pipeline to rectify this situation. We are also aware that our working relationship with the Regional Commissioning Hub is completely effective, and we have started on the work of reviewing this. Since the beginning of 2014/15, the Council's Statutory Director has been the chair of the management board for the Commissioning Hub, which will give a regional direction to the work.

Gwynedd Council has been part of the 'Procuring 3 Counties' regional project, and in light of this work we have now committed, on a joint basis with Flintshire and Denbighshire, to move towards a system of Category Management. Within the next few months, we will play a key part in a pilot project in the field of Care procurement in Gwynedd, which will be a further opportunity for us to review our arrangements. Our priority will be to ensure that agreements exist for every location and that we extend our brokerage arrangements beyond the field of Home Care only.

6.4 Workforce Development and Training

For some time, we have identified the need to prepare a workforce development strategy that would analyse our existing workforce and plan for the future. The work of establishing a baseline is about to commence, and as work proceeds to undertake a 'Systems Thinking' review in the Adults field, the type of workforce we want to see in future will become more apparent. We know that we want to review our structures and ensure that decisions are made as closely as possible to the citizen. The aim across social services is to ensure that all staff, at every level, have the right skills to be able to ensure that our vision is realised. This includes the ability to have constructive and innovative discussions with service users and their families or carers.

In the past, the CSSIW noted that we could strengthen our supervision arrangements. During 2013/14, our supervision policy was reviewed, and guidelines on clear principles to be followed have been shared with each team. In addition, a mechanism was established to measure performance in this field and we will establish a baseline during 2014/15. Our aim is to develop our workforce in a way that leads to services of the highest quality and safety for our most vulnerable citizens.

Extensive training was offered to our staff during the past year, in accordance with our Workforce Development Plan. In the Children's field, the main focus was on training linked with the risk model. Following a review by the 'Alder' company for those with learning disabilities, we have commenced a training programme on the principles of the Moving Forward Model, starting with managers, before moving on to staff and other stakeholders. A considerable investment was made in specialist training on specific conditions, dementia in particular, but also on multiple sclerosis and motor neurone disease.

Over the next few months, we will continue to be a part of regional work that is in the pipeline to consider potential models to provide a training service across north Wales. Ensuring a high-quality service, without losing our ability to give deserving attention to the Welsh language, will be extremely important to us.

6.5 Engagement and joint-production

When taking action to realise the requirements of the Act, we will be required to take steps to continue to improve our engagement arrangements and move further towards a joint-productive way of working. This will put the citizen or the stakeholders at the heart of any development. During the past few months, steps were taken to revive and redefine the role of some key engagement groups, such as the Providers Forum and the Learning Disabilities Service Improvement Group. Mental Health was identified as one field where our engagement activity was very poor, and we now have representatives in stakeholder groups in this field. Before the end of 2014/15, we want to establish effective arrangements in order to meet all of the necessary engagement activity which is identified as part of the Engagement Plan of every improvement programme in the Adults field.

A positive step forward during 2013/14 is the way we have turned complaints about services by service users, carers and providers into an opportunity to hold an open discussion about the way we can improve. We have also invited these people to assist us in drawing up new solutions.

7. Looking to the Future

7.1 Gwynedd Council Strategic Plan 2013-17

In order to reflect the changes seen since the publication of the original plan in a context for the Council, the Council's Strategic Plan for 2013-2017 has been reviewed for this year. Major changes were seen in the financial climate along with the publication of the report of Sir Paul Williams, involving the reorganisation of Local Government in Wales. We have welcomed the review as it provided an opportunity to ensure that the contents of the Strategic Plan reflected the work undertaken during 2013/14 to refine our vision in the social services field.

We have a huge contribution to make to realise the contents of the Strategic Plan and we have committed to formulate our improvement programme to meet the following strategic priorities:

- Safeguarding Children and Adults;
- Improving Experiences and Opportunities for Vulnerable Groups of Children, Young People and Families;
- Responding Better to the Needs of People who Require Support, Increase the Community Support Available and Ensure Sustainable Care Services;
- Reduce the Demand on Services Through Early Prevention and Intervention;
- Make More Effective Use of Resources, and Try to Reduce the Impact of Cuts on the People of Gwynedd.

In the body of this report, there are several references to what we intend to do during 2014/15 to improve our services. They are things that have been planned in the context of the abovementioned priorities and contents of the Strategic Plan. A copy of the Plan, which includes details regarding all projects, outcomes and individual indicators per priority, can be viewed on the Council's website by following the link <http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk> (a full link required).

7.2 Ensuring success

The Adults, Health and Well-being Department has established a Programme Management system which includes a series of strategic programmes to keep an overview and ensure that the various projects of the Strategic Plan fully achieve their outcomes. We have reflected a lot on lessons that we have learnt from the past. We will collaborate with the corporate Project Management Unit to ensure that the members of every Programme Board or Project Board have a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The Children and Supporting Families Department will continue with robust project management arrangements which led to the completion of the 'end to end' review, in order to ensure that the review's action plan is realised in full.

7.3 Close

2013/14 has been a year of substantial changes to social services in Gwynedd. As well as responding to legislative and economic changes at a whole Wales level, significant structural and governance changes were seen within the Council and the Local Health Board. At the end of such a year, it is very encouraging that we are able to report that we have managed to maintain the safety of our residents,

have continued improving our performance in a number of key areas and made moderate, but very positive, progress in terms of our transformation programme.

What is very encouraging is that we now have very firm foundations to meet the expectations of the Social Services and Well-being Act. We have the confidence in our ability to do this whilst facing a reduction in our budgets at the same time. Our aim is to include the communities of Gwynedd in every step of the way, and produce solutions on a joint basis for the future. It is very possible that we will see different solutions for different parts of the county, and the contribution and role of our partners as a result will also vary from place to place. It is essential that the people of Gwynedd are central at all times, and this will be crucial in our new way of working.

You are welcome to offer any observations or ask questions in relation to this plan if you would like to do so. Please contact the Customer Care Unit, Adults, Health and Well-being Department, Gwynedd Council, Castle Street, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 1SH or e-mail: gccg@gwynedd.gov.uk, or phone: 01286 679268. The unit can also assist you if you would like to receive a copy of this report in a different format or language.