

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2011 - 2012

Local Authority **Gwynedd Council**
Name:

This report sets out the areas of progress and areas for improvement in Gwynedd Council, Social Services Department for the year 2011- 12

Summary:

There has been year on year improvement in the performance of social services in Gwynedd and this continued 2011-12.

The council's three year plan and social services' commissioning strategies provide a vision and direction for the service. There needs to be political support to deliver on these plans. There are financial and service risks if the council does not implement its plans in a timely manner.

The Director's report for 2011-12 provides an accurate analysis of the services' performance. The council provided a good range of information and a mature analysis of its own performance.

There is good partnership working at a practice level. The relationship with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has limitations and has restricted some areas of service development.

The council has some good services for people such as for looked after children, however the council needs to continue making improvements in assessment and care management.

The Director of social services has recently changed (August 2012).

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

- The need for impetus and effective support to deliver modernised, preventative adult services combined with a lack of capacity to deliver the changes required.
- A history of weak management reporting systems resulting in a lack of effective performance management and oversight

- Continuing ability to influence locality-focused strategic planning with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Response to last year's areas for development:

The council has improved performance in the areas identified in last year's CSSIW report. This year's report identifies the areas where it is critical for the council to continue to improve its performance

Good practice indentified:

In October 2011 the council won two Care Council accolades for sharing good practice.

The first accolade was for a project that electronically monitored community care workers. It was designed by the service to meet the council's needs and combined a financial management system and mobile technology.

The second accolade was for a risk framework to assist in the assessment of significant harm to children. The framework aims to improve consistency and thresholds in decision making. The model has been adopted by other councils in England and Wales and has been presented at national and international conferences.

The First Minister Carwyn Jones presented an award to the council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board for their work in promoting cooperation between the agencies to improve specialist services for children.

Site inspections undertaken during the year:

There were no inspections evaluating the council's performance in 2011-12.

CSSIW has begun to consult with adult learning difficulty and mental health service users. This is ongoing. To date mental health service users have highlighted the need for suitable accommodation and support in developing independent living skills.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year:

- The role of the statutory Director of social services (this is part of CSSIW's national review).
- Implementation of the council's commissioning plans.
- Decision making and the quality of assessments in children's services and the reasons for re referrals.
- The support available for carers.
- Performance management arrangements

PERFORMANCE

Shaping Services:

The council's three year plan provides a clear direction for the improvement and modernisation of social services. The plan is for the period 2011-14 and has clear milestones which need to be met. The plan has been regularly reviewed by the council.

Adults

The council has published its needs assessments and commissioning strategies for learning difficulties and older people's services for 2011-16. This work contains a thorough assessment of the level of need and forecasted demand. Extensive consultation with service users, communities, providers and representative groups contributed to the needs assessments.

The council will develop commissioning plans for physical and sensory disability services during 2012-13.

The council has established systems to monitor and evaluate performance in line with these strategies. The systems will provide information in 2012-13 that will inform the council of the validity of the assumptions upon which it has based its strategies.

The council has sought external support in scrutinising the commissioning plans. This scrutiny has reassured the council that this work is being progressed in the right direction.

The council has a large number of work streams in place to transform and modernise adults' services. The council identified that it needs to improve the implementation of its strategies. In some areas the council has no detailed plans describing how it will deliver the strategies. Also it does not always have the management capacity to deliver the required change.

The community and political response to the council's older people's strategy has meant that the work has not developed as planned in 2011-12. As a result the council will have to increase the pace of change in 2012-13 if it is to deliver its planned commissioning and modernisation.

The council's contract monitoring arrangements are improving. There is good communication between CSSIW and the contract monitoring officer who coordinates visits to services and shares appropriate information.

The council states that it has developed an outcomes based system for monitoring the services commissioned from individual care homes. The system prioritises the homes with the greatest risk.

Children

The council will develop commissioning plans for children services during 2012-13. The rate of looked after children in the population is higher than in similar authorities. The council faced an increase in demand for these services in 2011-12. This may indicate that the council needs to achieve a better balance between preventative and looked after services.

During 2011-12 the council continued to develop some support services. It has developed services for young people not in employment and training or education with the community safety partnership. It has also developed contact services across the county and a peripatetic fostering service.

The council has made a successful application to the Welsh Government to develop a school and respite care facility for children with disabilities. The council have also agreed to develop an integrated family support service with the Isle of Anglesey County Council. The council has analysed the need to develop services for formerly looked after children and will award a contract to a provider to further develop accommodation services in 2012-13.

Areas of progress

- Publishing a three year council business plan with clear milestones.
- The publication of the learning difficulties and older people's services needs assessment and plans

Area for improvement

- The timely implementation of commissioning plans.

Getting help:

The council has a website with good information and leaflets about the available services and how to contact the department.

Adults

Most adult services are accessed through the advice and assessment team. During the year the team moved location to Penrhyndeudraeth and the change has

increased the council's capacity to respond to requests for service. There are separate arrangements for access to the mental health services.

There has been a substantial reduction in the delays in the transfer of care from hospital. This was an area for improvement last year. This has largely been achieved through the establishment of more effective information systems.

The rate of older people supported in care homes has continued to fall. This is positive and brings the council's performance closer to the average in Wales. This was an area for improvement in last year's report.

The rate of older people supported in the community has fallen again significantly in 2011-12 which may signal a concern. However the council state that this is in line with the council's philosophy of supporting independence and that changes in the reporting processes. This is an area CSSIW will explore with the council in 2012-13.

The council improved the percentage of reviews of care plans over the year and this is again is part of a longer term trend of improvement that is above the average level of improvement. The council says that the increased use of internal panels has produced an internal challenge to improve the quality of decision making and consistent application of thresholds.

There is a clear improvement trend in the provision of timely assessments and performance is now closer to the average in Wales.

There were waiting lists during 2011-12 for mental health services and occupational therapy.

The council reports that reducing the waiting list for the mental health service is dependent on collaboration with Betis Cadwaladr University Health Board. The council say that the health board's restructure and regional approach has delayed progress in reducing waiting times.

Improved access to occupational therapy services was an area for improvement last year. The council reviewed the way it delivers occupational therapy during the year. It has developed more streamlined processes and improved the timeliness of the completion of minor adaptations. The council has created an additional post to deal with enquires for services and developed protocols with the local housing association that avoids duplication and provides timely adaptations. The council has also run open days across the county to promote awareness of the equipment that is available.

The council identified a relatively low number of carers. However, all those identified carers were offered an assessment. The council has been developing its information for carers, and a hospital carer's post has been established to promote

awareness of carer's issues. CSSIW will wish to explore the support offered to carers in 2012-13.

Children

Children's services have a single point of access. The council has increased the decisions made within a day and now nearly all referrals meet this timescale. This is a significant improvement on the council's performance and is better than the target set by the council.

There has been a high level of referral and re referral to children's services for many years. There was an improvement in reducing the level of re referrals in 2010-11 but this slipped again in 2011-12. Since October 2011 the council's recording systems is able different between referrals and notifications. This change half way through the year makes it difficult to evaluate performance. The council have paid attention to improving practice in assessment and report writing and this should bring longer term improvements in performance and reduce the rate of re referral. The council has also been developing the risk framework and this may also contribute to the improvement needed. The council continues to allocate a large number of cases and to undertake a high number of assessments. The high level of activity and the quality of assessment will be an area that CSSIW will follow up with the council in 2012-13.

The council performs well in aspects of care planning for looked after children. In 2011-12 as in recent years nearly all placements began with a care plan in place and by the second review there was a plan for permanence in nearly all cases.

For some years the council has performed poorly in arranging timely statutory reviews for the children that it looks after. There was an improvement in performance in 2011-12 despite an increase in the number of children looked after. This was an area for improvement in the previous annual reports and is an area where the council must continue to improve. The council also needs to continue to improve performance in arranging timely education plans, medical and dental checks.

The Gwynedd young carers charter was launched in June 2011. The charter provides young carers with information about their rights as carers and is available to young carers across the count. The young carers' service run by Action for Children provides direct support to young carers and three forums across the county.

Area of progress

- An improvement trend in access and care management in adult's services.

Areas for improvement

- The council needs to continue to improve performance in arranging timely education plans, medical and dental checks for looked after children.
- Continue improving the timeliness of reviews for looked after children.

Services provided:

Adults

The council has acknowledges that there is an overdependence on traditional, council run residential services. In addition the council must continue to improve the management of the services that it provides. The council has an ongoing difficulty maintaining managers with the appropriate experience and qualifications within its care homes.

The council's first extra care housing scheme will open in October 2012, this will improve the range of services available.

The council has made progress in the modernising the residential provision for adults with learning disabilities. The council has closed one home and is planning to improve the quality of the remaining services and developing dwellings with a housing association to support independent living.

The council states that the enablement service has been integrated and is now available across adult services. The council reports that specialised enablement officers have been trained and this has produced efficiencies. All new referrals apart from people with profound dementia or terminal illness begin with an enablement package. In 2011-12 for over half the cases that received enablement required no further support or a reduced package of support following enablement. The council provided considerably more enablement packages than its target and has raised the target again for 2012-13.

Increasing support in the community was a recommendation in last year's report. Age Cymru has extended its informal support to older people across the county. The council has developed its use of dementia day care services. There has been an increase of the use of telecare particularly in complex cases.

The council has developed a number of initiatives that contribute to increasing the range of service in the community. These have started or are scheduled to start in 2012-13. These developments include the day care service for adults with learning difficulties in Arfon that promotes independence through focused group work on issues and skills.

The specialist dementia care day centre did not start its operation in 2011-12 due to delays in the provision of key staff by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

The council needs to continue in its work in developing and extending the range of range of services in the community.

Children

There is a limited range of family support services. These are to be developed as part of the council's commissioning plans for children services during 2012-13.

The CISSW inspection of the council's fostering service found continued effective management of the service in 2011-12. The inspector also reported that the service did well in undertaking thorough assessment of kinship carers, supporting to carers, and having robust panel to assess applicants. The council reports that the service met its target of twenty new registrations in the year. The CSSIW inspector reported innovative recruitment approaches being adopted by the service. The growth and quality of work indicate that the service is making a significant contribution to looked after children and young people in Gwynedd.

The council commissions Action for Children to manage a children's home for the council. The annual CSSIW inspection focused on the experience of the people using the service. The inspector spoke with all the young people who lived in the home. Very positive comments were made regarding the quality of care and support provided by staff – young people reported that staff invest time, show interest in them and treat them with respect. The inspector's judgement was that the home was providing a very good standard of care for the young people living there.

The council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board work in partnership to deliver an integrated service for children with disabilities. In 2011-12 the arrangements were formally agreed.

Area of progress

- The support to looked after children provided by the council's fostering service and by the residential home commissioned by the council.

Areas for improvement

- Developing the range of services in the community within adult and children's services.

Effect on people's lives:

Adults

There was significant improvement in performance in 2011-12 in adult protection cases where the risk was managed; this had been an area for improvement. The improved performance was the result of the council's reconsideration of the definition of risk being managed and an examination of individual files. The council found that in some situations where risks were not managed this was because the vulnerable adult had refused the help offered.

In 2011-12 CSSIW's experience of the council was that it communicated well and implemented the procedures to protect vulnerable adults effectively. CSSIW also found that escalating concerns meetings were called appropriately and clear decisions were made.

The council received no requests for assessment under the deprivation of liberty safeguards in 2011-12. The council facilitated training in the area of work before and during 2011-12. This will be an area for CSSIW to explore with the council in 2012-13.

CSSIW will wish to clarify the drop in the number of mental health service use of residential care and the rise in learning disability use of care homes.

Children

There is a continued improvement in the performance indicators for children's services.

There has been an improvement in the timeliness of child protection conferences. The council needs to continue with improving the timeliness of initial child protection conferences.

The council's good care planning over the past few years and the quality of the services available have resulted in some good outcomes for children looked after by Gwynedd.

There has been a year on year improvement in reducing the number of changes of school for looked after children. There has been good performance in providing stability in placements. In 2011-12 the council had the best performance in Wales in having the lowest percentage of children who had three or more placements during the year. The levels of looked after children's school attendance are with the highest in Wales. The average external qualifications for looked after children was significantly higher than any other county in Wales.

Improving the outcomes for formerly looked after children has been an area for improvement for the council. In 2011-12 there was an improvement in this area of work. The council maintained contact with all but one relevant young people and all were in appropriate accommodation. There has been a consistent improvement

over the past years in the percentage of relevant young people who are known to be in education, training and employment.

Area of progress

- Stability of care placements for looked after children.

Area for improvement

- Continued improvement in the timeliness of child protection conferences.

Capacity

Delivering social services:

The council plans to save 1.8 million pounds within the service over the three years starting 2011. Social services have managed its expenditure in 2011-12 and kept within its budget of £60,863,000.

An initial capacity assessment has been undertaken by the council. The analysis recognises that there are areas of work that are not being progressed because of a lack of capacity. These include the transformation of services. The council needs to provide sufficient capacity to manage the risks associated with failing to deliver on its planned modernisation of services.

The council has identified that capacity is an issue in meeting its core statutory functions especially in relation to convening child protection conferences and reviewing the care arrangements of the children it looks after. The council has improved performance in these areas and needs to ensure that a lack of capacity does not hinder the further improvement that is needed.

Staff are supported and play an important part in the improvement of services. These activities include an annual staff survey, twice yearly staff consultation meetings and a process for suggesting improvements. The Director's annual report was informed by staff consultation events allowing them to contribute to evaluating the service's performance.

The council reports that the performance management system has been embedded and there is a programme for audits within the services. The council reports that it has greater accuracy in its data collection and performance management information in adults and children's services.

The regular and consistent supervision of staff has previously been identified by CSSIW as an area for improvement for council. The council has developed a data

base that will provide the appropriate performance information and is yet to complete an audit of the quality of the supervision.

The council has developed a programme of priorities in line with the needs of the service. The council have developed “report cards” which provide a good evaluation of performance.

The council are leading on the development of information technology systems with Anglesey.

The council shows evidence of continued progress in the governance of information. The council's established work programme continued in 2011-12 with further staff training, development of the information governance group. The council identified that it needs to improve its ability to have secure external e-mail communication and further develop.

There is evidence of good working relationships with the health board within services at a local level. The relationship at a more senior level have not fully matured following the establishment of Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and this has resulted in delays and difficulties in the planning and delivery of services. The council states that there is now increased collaboration and the confirmation of key appointments within the health board has been a step forward.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring sufficient capacity to deliver core functions and necessary improvements.
- Ensuring the regular and consistent supervision of staff.

Providing direction:

The council has appointed a new portfolio leader who has experience in social care. The new portfolio leader will be a member of the council's cabinet and this may contribute to providing social services with a higher corporate profile. The council's new cabinet structure may result in decision making allowing for the timely implementation of plans such as the council's commissioning and modernisation strategies.

The council has established a three year plan. The plan gives direction to the development in services within social services.

The council has established relationships with its providers. The council has made considerable progress in developing its engagement with service users. The engagement strategy includes holding conferences, road shows, using questionnaires and making use of the advocacy services. There is an engagement

plan now for each significant development this is evidenced in the commissioning strategies the council produced in 2011-12.

The council's annual report states that there has been tireless support from the portfolio leader in supporting the council's plans. The report identifies that there is an increasing need to make arrangements for the appropriate provision of social care within the current financial climate. The report identifies that delay in making the arrangements increases the risks to the council of not being able to provide sustainable services and not meeting its own financial plans.

The new Director of social services has experience in running some, but not all, frontline social services. There is a risk that a new Director could be unsighted in areas of significant risk; the ongoing training, mentoring and support the Council has put in place will be critical to ensure that the statutory duties of the Director are fulfilled.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring the timely implementation of commissioning plans.
- Ensuring the statutory duties of the Director are fulfilled.