



Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Performance Evaluation Report 2013–14

Conwy County Borough Council
Social Services

October 2014

This report sets out the key areas of progress and areas for improvement in Conwy County Borough Council Social Services for the year 2013–14

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2013 - 2014

Local Authority: Conwy County Borough Council

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Summary

The council is facing up to the challenge of delivering better quality services with reducing financial resources. A greater emphasis on promoting independence in social work practice, coupled with changes to the pattern of care and support services, are seen as key factors in driving the council's objectives of achieving greater efficiency and sustainability in its services. Progress has been made and strategies are in place to achieve further improvement.

There is a greater emphasis on early intervention to help people before their needs grow and require more extensive care and support. The council recognises the need for improved links and more integrated working with the local health board and is developing a profile of people with learning disabilities with health partners, aiming to create more integrated preventative services. To develop an effective commissioning strategy, improved systems for accurately capturing the full profile of needs in the county and identifying gaps in services is essential.

There is evidence of progress in children's services, particularly in relation to timeliness of reviews of care and support for care leavers. Improving timeliness of child protection conferences is recognised by the council as a key priority. Progress in adult services is apparent although to a lesser degree. Challenges remain as social services travel through a period of change and strive for greater integrated working with partners. Where integrated working is in place there is already evidence of good outcomes for people using the services.

The council is responding to the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 through its transformation programme, the progress of which is subject to multi layered scrutiny. The director has instigated various opportunities to communicate progress to practitioners and seek feedback. This helps to ensure a shared understanding of the council's objectives.

The More Than Just Words action plan has the potential to provide a stronger framework in the delivery of equal status for English and Welsh languages.

Response to last year's areas of improvement

Area for improvement identified last year	Progress in 2013 – 14
Progress with the corporate parenting strategy. To include timescales for actions identified.	CSSIW is not aware that timescales have been applied to actions identified in the parenting strategy action plan, although evidence suggests progress has been made in key areas.
More effective response for telephone enquirers	The council's own analysis of complaints shows this is still an area for improvement.
Reviews and reassessments for older people, especially those in residential care.	This is an area that has seen considerable progress.
Timeliness of reassessments when requested by care providers.	As above.
Exploring alternative equipment to increase efficiency of hospital social workers.	CSSIW has not been updated on progress in this area. However, low rates of delayed discharge from hospital continue.
Providing more accurate information on the council website about child care services available.	The website has improved. It includes an invitation to childcare services to use the website to promote their services.
Completion and timeliness of reviews of children in need and looked after children.	Timeliness of reviews of plans for both child in need and children looked after has improved.
Improve timeliness of personal education plans for looked after children and/or explore reasons.	Progress has been made in this area with performance comparing favourably with the Wales average.
Exploring the reasons for the low uptake of carers' assessments.	It is not clear whether the council completed an analysis of take up of carers' assessments, but this figure has improved from 35.5% to 39.%.
More effective monitoring and reporting of the progress of action plans, including the use of milestones so performance	CSSIW has no information that suggests timescales or milestones have been added to action plans. However,

can be assessed.	various mechanisms for scrutiny and challenge are in place.
Ensuring statutory visits to looked after children are completed.	There has been significant progress here with an increase from 76.8% last year to 90.1% this year.
Improving outcomes for care leavers	There has been a marked reduction in numbers of looked after children who were not in education employment or training at the age of 19 yrs.
Ensuring children in residential care feel they have a voice and are listened to.	Greater effort has been made to engage with service users to seek their views. The 'Buddies' group provides valuable support to people in care who go missing.
Continued training for staff where the need for additional skills and knowledge has been identified by them.	A wide range of relevant training is provided some of which is specifically sourced to deal with specialist areas.
Succession and contingency planning on retirement of head of children's services.	The vacancy was quickly filled and the new head of service has made continued improvement in most areas during first year in post.
Ensuring members of the scrutiny committee have access to a wide range of progress and performance reports.	There is evidence of improved opportunities for scrutiny.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

CSSIW conducted a thematic inspection during the year to review safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours.

CSSIW has completed all inspections of regulated services in Conwy including the services provided by Conwy County Borough Council. Generally, inspections of the council's own services identified progress and positive outcomes for service users. However, earlier in the year breaches of the regulations were identified in T'ir Na Nog children's home, raising concerns around the application of child protection procedures. The service is now compliant. Recommendations were also made to improve Conwy's Adoption service.

Meetings have taken place throughout the year with the director and other senior social services officers to review social services performance.

CSSIW attends safeguarding meetings and those held under the escalating concerns procedures in relation to adult services on a regular basis.

CSSIW visited Conwy's training department early in the year to seek further clarification on training data provided last year. Evidence was provided of a high level and wide range of training provided to staff.

A visit to the Conwy Connect group was undertaken in March to learn about the benefits of the forum for people who use it. CSSIW met with four people who were clearly motivated and excited about their involvement in up and coming projects. Each had a role to perform and was eager to share what they had learned.

The Welsh Audit Office undertook a full corporate assessment of the council and concluded it to be 'generally a well run council'.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

Priority areas for improvement have been identified within this report and are listed below. Progress in relation to these will be monitored through scheduled engagement meetings during the year.

- Strategic plans for developing Community services for people with dementia.
- More timely and or comprehensive reviews of care arrangements for adults in residential care.
- Profile the needs of LAC looking for accommodation and enable a shared understanding of the issues.
- Timeliness of initial child protection conferences.
- Analysis of commissioning activity and development of commissioning strategy.
- Ongoing progress in developing relationships with BCUHB.
- CSSIW will be contributing to a review by WAO examining whether councils are effectively supporting older people to live independently, including through joined up working across health and social care.

Performance

Shaping services

Adults

The Local Strategic Board 'One Conwy' plan for 2012-2015 expects that by 2025 the number of people over the age of 65 will increase by 30% and of people over 85 by 60%. Conwy has not yet developed a commissioning strategy that takes this into account although information supplied shows a market position statement is being planned. Conwy's current data system – PARIS - does not effectively capture unmet need and this makes forward planning more difficult. CSSIW noted during the year that there was no system in place to keep track of occupancy levels in local residential and nursing care homes. This makes it difficult to assess capacity in the county. Improved mechanisms for capturing need and profiling the services available is needed.

The council recognises its ageing population as a key factor in planning services for the future and acknowledges the need for commissioning strategies that promote integrated working with health and the third sector, and a move towards more flexible and creative care in the community. This year has seen a rise from 81.2 to 84.5 % in clients over the age of 65 yrs receiving services in the community whereas the numbers supported in residential care remains approximately the same.

Considerable investment has been made in the council's dementia care residential service Llys Elian with proposals to change the facility into a more homely model. This follows research by Dementia Care Matters and the expert advice of its founder David Sheard which Conwy commissioned. Some progress has already been made in relation to the premises and staff training and CSSIW's last inspection of the service was very positive. However, in 2012 CSSIW recommended a need for further development of community based services for people with dementia and we are not aware of any developments subsequently. This remains a critical area for development.

In line with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the council has begun to reshape services so as to enhance wellbeing of people with learning disabilities and become more outcome focussed. A Prevention Strategy that promotes independence and enablement is being developed, and a more incremental approach to service provision is being adopted following an outcome focused assessment of need.

In 2012-2013 Conwy developed a forward work plan for 2013-2014 to facilitate partnership working with health and made a commitment to monitor this through the year. The council report progress, but recognise the need for further

development in this area; particularly in planning for a prevention strategy. The Conwy disability network is one joint initiative that will help the council assess the extent of need in relation to people with learning disabilities, including those who do not receive social services.

Following the cessation of the previous partnership agreement for mental health services in July 2013, a Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up with health colleagues to help ensure continued clarity of aims and expectations. This service area has received relatively little focus over the last 12 months.

Children

Issues in relation to risk and vulnerability of young people are discussed across partner agencies in the Strategic Multi Agency Panel. However, the council does not routinely capture a profile of the needs of its looked after children (LAC) and care leaving populations; this is essential if the authority is to evaluate the effectiveness of its placement, permanency and prevention strategies and to predict future resource needs.

It was noted last year that the council had not set timescales in its Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan. Whilst CSSIW has not received an updated version of the plan, performance indicators show improvement in some key areas of responsibility. Looked after children have experienced greater placement stability with a reduction from 10.4% to 6.1% of children having had three or more placements during the year, this against a Wales average of 8.3%. There has also been an increase from 85.7% to 91.4% of looked after children whose second review was due in the year having a plan for permanence in place, but this remains below the Wales average of 93.4%. The number of children starting their first placements with a care plan in place has increased from 84.8% to 91.2%. This is just above the Wales average of 90.9%, however some authorities are striving for and attaining 100% in this area.

In relation to health; more looked after children saw a dentist this year an increase from 95.0% to 99.2%. Less positively, fewer children than last year had health assessments or were registered with a GP. These are areas for the corporate parenting group's continued monitoring.

In education there was a slight increase to 8.7% of looked after children who experienced one of more changes of school which were not down to transitional arrangements, but this is still in the upper quartile against a Wales average of 13.8%. The percentage of looked after children with a personal education plan in place within 20 school days of commencing school has improved from 85.7% to 92.6%.

The looked after children inspection found a good range of strategies and initiatives in place geared towards improving outcomes for children and young people. A more seamless transition into adult services has been possible with the development of a Transition team. This means young people have continuous support from people who know them.

Good progress has been made in reducing the numbers of looked after children who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). 75% of these young people are engaged in education, employment or training at the age of 19, up from 50% last year. The New Work Connections project has helped to achieve this aim and the remit of the NEET panel should help ensure continued progress and new initiatives in this area.

The use of personal advisors to support and advocate young people through the transition phase has received very positive reviews. 98.3% of looked after children have been allocated a personal advisor. An arrangement which young people described as a great source of information, guidance and support.

Despite the recent development of a Youth Accommodation Strategy and a Youth Homelessness Strategy, progress in implementing these remains slow. The housing department does not yet have a clear overview of the numbers of care leavers and their potential needs. A stronger link with Housing needs to be established to ensure success of any forward planning in this area.

Areas of progress

- Key areas of responsibility to Looked After Children.
- Better transition for young people into adult services.
- Young people looked after accessing education, employment or training.

Areas for improvement

- Strategic plans for developing Community services for people with dementia.
- Profiling the needs of looked after children and care leaving populations.
- Improve links with Housing department to improve outcomes for care leavers.

Getting help

Adults

There is a good range of information available online and the council's website is easy to navigate. Leaflets are produced bilingually and available in the council's main reception areas.

Last year the council acknowledged the need to improve timeliness of reviews, particularly for people living in residential care. Performance indicators show improvement in this area with 95.8% of reviews of care plans having been completed. However, there have been examples of where more timely reviews may have prevented crises for some service users. Some reviews, triggered by the PoVA or escalating concerns procedures, have concluded that some people are living in care homes that no longer meet their needs. In one care home seven service users had to be moved following reviews that found unmet needs and heightened risks for the individuals concerned. This would suggest the need for earlier and/or more comprehensive reviews of the care plans of people living in residential care.

Just over 86% of carers of adults were offered an assessment – just under the Wales average. 39.4% accepted the offer – equal to the Wales average. However, only 30.2% were provided with a service, against a Wales average of 63.8%. It is important that the council understand and address this low rate of service provision.

The low rate of delayed discharge from hospital and indicators of safer discharges from hospital, show that progress in timeliness and quality of assessments continues. The council still has the lowest rate of delayed discharge in Wales at 0.7 per 1000.

Children

The Conwy Council website provides public information about services for children and families. The Team Around the Family provides information for people who do not meet the criteria for having services, but still need some support and guidance. The website directs enquirers and provides contact details. Information is available in Welsh and English.

There is a well-established in house support and therapeutic service which has been realigned with the development of a Family Intervention Team, affording therapeutic oversight of cases. This aims to provide a holistic response to children and their family including looked after children and carers. However, there have been concerns raised regarding young peoples timely access to the service. While there are bi monthly consultations with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service issues with the timeliness of intervention from the team is adversely impacting on care planning for young people. Further work is required to ensure the aims of the Family Intervention team come to fruition.

There have been improvements in most performance indicators for services to children. Timeliness of reviews of child in need plans has improved to 86.8% and of looked after children to 97.9% against a Wales average of 78.8% and 95.9% respectively. There has also been a marked improvement in the proportion of core

assessments completed within 35 working days, from 74.2% in 2012-13 to 89.9% in 2013-14.

There has been a slight downturn in the numbers of initial assessments carried out within 7 days although this is still well above the Wales average. Provision of a care plan to looked after children at commencement of care has risen to 91.2%, which is just over the Wales average however, with some authorities reaching 100%, this is still an area that warrants further progress. CSSIW's looked after children inspection highlighted some quality issues with care planning, with selected samples showing lack of detail on how outcomes for the young person were to be achieved. Practitioners are receiving training on 'motivational interviewing' designed to facilitate outcome based planning and the council will need to monitor the impact of this training.

The council has approached ex care leavers to become 'buddies' for young people who are looked after and are at risk of going missing, working alongside a police officer responsible for monitoring and reducing the risks for people who go missing from care. The principle of this initiative is that young people in care will feel more able to contact someone for advice and support who has had similar experiences thereby receiving practical advice and minimising risk. Buddies' have been offered the opportunity to take associated training and improve outcomes for themselves.

Areas of progress

- Increased numbers of reviews of care plans for adults.
- Timeliness of reviews of child in need and looked after children plans.
- Core assessments completed within 35 days.
- Increased and more creative support for looked after children.

Areas for improvement

- More timely and comprehensive reviews of care arrangements for adults in residential care.
- More timely intervention from the CAMHS team for young people.
- Greater focus on outcomes for children who are looked after.

The services provided

Adults

The council aims to develop services that promote independence. There are now four extra care facilities enabling older people to maintain an independent lifestyle. The council is working with Clwyd Alyn Housing association to develop a similar service for people with a learning disability.

The escalating concerns process has enabled multi agency representation so that concerns can be collated and effective corrective actions taken. The contract monitoring team have been heavily involved in the quality assurance of commissioned regulated services where there are concerns. The team has a good overview of where quality needs to be improved. Quality assurance of care provision might be further enhanced with a more proactive approach that enables early identification of warning signs and more timely intervention. The recent appointment of a quality assurance manager should help ensure that the council has a good oversight.

The complaints report shows there have been 42 complaints made in adult services this year, the same as 2012-13 of which four progressed to stage two of the process requiring an independent investigation. Less than 40% of these were dealt with within ten working days and 28% were outside the timescale by more than 20 days. The council should explore ways in which responsiveness can be improved.

The council has analysed the complaints and is implementing changes as a result of lessons learned. The report shows there were 232 compliments, mainly in relation to older people and hospital social work.

The council has implemented a strategy to address the needs of Welsh speakers and their families or carers, with the More Than Just Words action plan providing a stronger framework for detailing the practical steps taken to ensure English and Welsh languages have equal status.

Children

Conwy provides nine services to children that are regulated by CSSIW, four services for children under eight years, three children's residential services an adoption service and a fostering service. Recommendations were made to improve the adoption service with regard to support to adopters and non compliance notices were issued in relation to child protection, medication and staffing levels at Ti'r Na Nog children's home. The council has taken steps to address the issues and the service is now compliant. Inspections of all other services were very positive with strong evidence of good quality care provision. The quality assurance of these services has improved from last year, with more consultation taking place with service users.

CSSIW inspection of the looked after children service found care leavers were generally positive about the support they received particularly from their personal advisors who they also saw as their advocate. However, case load pressures and turn over of staff meant that some young people had experienced delays in allocation of personal advisor or had several changes of worker. This service

helps to prevent crisis for young people leaving care and its flexibility allows for an outcome focussed approach. As young people value this service it would be prudent to develop the service further.

Support is provided to help care leavers into further education or employment with eight young care leavers going to university in the last year and a further two were expected to go this year. Personal advisors reported excellent links with Careers Wales.

While the council report 100% of its care leavers are in non emergency accommodation at the age of 19, there are problems for some care leavers securing accommodation immediately after they are 18. It is particularly problematic where, through their behaviour, people have become 'intentionally homeless'. Personal advisor's report that eviction is not always negotiable and sometimes the period of notice can be as little as 24 hours. Personal advisors are a great source of knowledge about the issues effecting young people seeking suitable accommodation and are well placed to share valuable knowledge and assist in building a profile of the needs.

The looked after children inspection found the range of placements available was not sufficient to meet the complex needs of some young people. Staff acknowledged that 'matching' needs to foster carers skills did not always take place. Although the authority has been working to increase the range of in house foster carers this remains a significant challenge.

This year Conwy's complaints report indicates 19 statutory complaints were received by Childrens Services and only 57.1% of these were resolved within timescale. The duty and assessment team were the subject of most of the complaints and the council have analysed these. Training is to be arranged to help in some areas, but it is unclear how the council will ensure a better response rate to duty calls - a source of frustration for enquirers and an issue identified for action last year.

Areas of progress

- Increasing range of community living facilities to support adults to maintain their independence.
- Stability of placements for looked after children.
- More young people and families consulted about the quality of the residential services provided.

Areas for improvement

- Timescales in processing complaints in both adult and children's services.

- Profile the needs of looked after children looking for accommodation and enable a shared understanding of the issues.
- Increase the number of in house foster carers.
- Effectiveness of initial responses to enquirers in children's services.

Effect on people's lives

Adults

The Adult Protection annual report shows PoVA activity has increased from 245 referrals to 354 in the last year. This could be due to public heightened awareness from various media, but also in response to local events about safeguarding. There are also links on the Council website for those wishing to raise a concern and leaflets in reception areas. Conwy's data shows 65% of these referrals were for people aged 65 years and over and 165 (47%) are related to people living in care homes. While this is useful data for analysis and planning there are inaccuracies which suggest a review of the way information is captured is needed. The council have identified increased joint working with BCUHB and the police as key achievements this year and CSSIW has attended many meetings where effective joint work has been demonstrated.

The current PoVA procedure does not require the council to inform accused persons of the outcome. This has led to two complaints to the council, from people who had experienced distress and financial hardship in not knowing the final decision. The council may wish to review its process to ensure this action is taken in the future. PoVA and other related training continues to be provided to internal staff and those working for external providers.

The council's data suggests it has received 19 referrals under the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards in the last year, none of which were assessed as requiring authorisation from the Court of Protection. The PoVA annual report confirms the county expects a higher number referrals this year, following the recent ruling that changed the definition of those deemed to be deprived of liberty. This will require the additional training of professionals to complete the specialist assessments and develop a larger team of best interest assessors.

Children

Statutory visits to looked after children form an important part of the process of safeguarding and promoting welfare. There has been great progress here with an increase from 76.8% to 90.1% in 2013-14, providing more children with an opportunity to raise issues where necessary. Pathway plans are central to providing young people with opportunities to express their wishes and aspirations

for the future – and how they can be supported in meeting them. The council has improved its performance in this area to 97.4%.

In the looked after children inspection CSSIW found that children's services had invested in whole service training on a framework for analysis tool. This tool includes a scoring system that supported a shared understanding of need and risks and provides a starting point against which progress could be gauged. Staff are clear that safeguarding is a priority and have a range of training available to support them in their child protection and safeguarding practice.

There has been a worrying and considerable downturn from 96.1% to 78.3% in the number of initial child protection conferences held within 15 days of the strategy discussion. The council have an action plan in place to address the issues and this requires close monitoring.

Areas of progress

- Joint working with health partners.
- Statutory visits to looked after children.
- Pathway plans in place.

Areas for improvement

- Review of management information system to ensure accurate data.
- Review the way in which PoVA process is followed so as to ensure all people are kept informed.
- Timeliness of initial child protection conferences.

Capacity

Delivering Social Services

CSSIW visited the council's training department and saw evidence of the good range of training and development provided, including specialist subjects when identified as a developmental need. Several areas of training in subjects such as Safeguarding, the Mental Capacity Act and DoLS are regularly offered to council staff and to independent and voluntary sector colleagues. Practitioners are provided with training that supports the council's vision of promoting independence and enablement. 'Motivational interviewing' is one such course designed to ensure outcome focussed assessments of need and 'Enablement Training' has also been piloted. The council is in the process of developing a workforce strategy for the social care sector.

There has been some reduction in management capacity during 2013-14 as services have been realigned although key posts have been filled. The council has a relatively stable workforce and there is a good level of experience within teams. The council has made some progress in reducing long-term absences and this work will continue.

Practitioners in children's services report that they feel supported, through supervision and day to day contact with managers. There was evidence of secondments being offered to further people's career aspirations and of care leavers involved in the 'Buddies' group being offered training to compliment and inform their role.

The council should strengthen its systems for analysis of commissioning activity, particularly in residential and nursing placements where information about capacity in the sector is not readily available. This information will be crucial to the assessment of the market for social care.

Given the council's financial position, it is clear that further savings will be necessary. The challenge of managing a period of significant change is set to continue. The capacity of the council to deliver its aspirations will have to be closely monitored to ensure success of the transformation programme.

Areas of progress

- Frequency and range of training available.
- Satisfaction of staff in children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Analysis of commissioning activity and development of commissioning strategy.

Providing direction

The council has made progress in the last twelve months under the current leadership. There has been progress with the transformation of services and more emphasis on safeguarding, enablement and maintaining independence. Associated training programmes and staff updates help to ensure there is a shared understanding of the aims and organisational priorities. A staff forum has been established on which all sections of the workforce are represented and which provides opportunity for dialogue between the director and staff. Interviews with practitioners during inspection have shown that staff feel supported and aware of the direction of travel. There are improved relationships with BCUHB although the council acknowledge further progress is needed.

The transformation programme has led to a number of strategies and associated action plans, the progress of which are being monitored by project board attended by the council member holding the social services portfolio and a representative from the scrutiny committee. Progress of projects and programmes is considered here and fed back at monthly service manager meetings providing plenty of opportunity for challenge.

This is a challenging time for the council as it attempts to forge a new culture of social work intervention while dealing with the inevitable uncertainty and unsettling impact of change and financial constraints. Changes have been made in the management structure, and the responsibilities of senior managers, including that of the director, have expanded, suggesting a challenging year ahead for those individuals.

The council is committed to reducing operating costs and overheads and will want to ensure this does not compromise its ability to shape, develop and continue to improve the quality of services in Conwy.

Areas of progress

- Increased avenues of scrutiny to test progress of the transformation programme.
- Increased opportunities for communication of aims and direction to front line staff.

Areas for improvement

- Continued development of the relationship with BCUHB in order to deliver tangible outcomes for people needing care and support