



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

Arrangements for Adult Social Services

Powys County Council Inspection Report

August 2013

Report on the Inspection of Powys County Council's arrangements for Adult Social Services undertaken by CSSIW in March 2013.

Purpose and background to the inspection:

This was a follow up review to the inspection carried out by CSSIW in October 2011. That inspection found many aspects of service requiring significant improvement. A key recommendation required the authority to develop an action plan addressing the areas for improvement with clear objectives, outcomes and time scales. CSSIW has been monitoring the council's progress in implementing change, concluding in the inspection in March 2013. The purpose of this inspection was to assess whether the required improvements have been made and to what extent has the adult services improvement board supported this.

In order to gain a broad view on the impact of progress in adult services, the inspection examined:

- Service users' and carers' experiences
- Quality of assessment, care management and review
- Range and quality of services
- Support to and development of the workforce
- The impact of partnerships in delivering effective services and strategic vision
- Leadership at all levels

Approach and information considered:

CSSIW undertook a structured case file audit in which the circumstances of a sample of 17 service users and their carers from across the county were examined through their case files. Inspectors gained information from the electronic records system, pen pictures provided by care managers, and paper copies of the care plan and assessment. We also met with some of the service users and carers during the field work.

Inspectors spent a further four days within the authority meeting service users and carers, the staff who support them, representatives of partner agencies, lead elected members/Councillors and senior officers within the department. We observed the annual council reporting framework (ACRF) challenge day where the director of social services' draft annual report for 2012/13 was discussed.

The inspection also drew on relevant information provided by the council including:

- The most recent minutes of the monthly adult services improvement programme board which details progress in the ten priority improvement areas
- Training brochure
- Relevant business plans
- The joint functions and governance business case for collaboration with Ceredigion
- Draft joint older peoples commissioning strategy
- Draft commissioning strategy for services for adults with learning disabilities

Summary of key findings:

- There has been an overall improvement since the 2011 inspection. However, this progress is fragile and must be consolidated and sustained so that the improvements become embedded.
- We have recognised improvements in service user experience and service delivery, including better recording and assessments undertaken. Nevertheless, a number of related local and national performance indicators are below expected targets
- The commitment from management and staff is evident, with the focus now moving away from establishing processes to an increasing awareness of the need to achieve better outcomes for users. Front line staff now recognise that their role is to promote independence, not create dependency. Engagement with staff and partners will need to continue to achieve the necessary shift in culture.
- The rapid improvement process, service improvement boards and the adult social care service board have provided evidence of improved leadership and monitoring of progress. These mechanisms together with the business plan which focuses on five priorities and have driven improved service delivery to date, and increased staff confidence.
- There is evidence of partnership engagement, consultation and involvement in improving services within Powys
- A period of stability has been achieved with clear leadership from senior managers. However, key managers have been interim appointments. That is about to change as steps to achieve longer term stability take place.

There are a number of challenges remaining. These are:

- Consolidation of progress and continuing to seek improvement in the face of leadership changes and scarce resources.
- Improving communication around change ensuring all staff and partners are aware of the work taking place and changes needed.
- Sustainability as some service areas remain fragile with clear capacity issues.
- Inconsistencies in both practice and service delivery experienced by partners across the county. This is described in terms of quality, quantity of resources, access and speed of response.
- Rolling out developments across the county including the reablement service, the communication hub and other service developments without clear corporate and political support for these changes.

- Although highlighted as a priority for improvement by CSSIW in 2011, little progress has been made to address service deficiencies for younger adults with a physical disability. Consultation with people who need these services has begun, but as yet there is no clear strategic direction.
- The challenges the department faces are identified as being those of demography, and rurality, and the associated costs of delivering a service to people in their own homes. The inability to appoint senior staff because of the impact of potential merger with Ceredigion has also hindered progress.

Recommendations:

- The development of the county wide reablement service should be successfully implemented. Corporate and political support will be vital.
- Improved performance in reviewing a persons needs is necessary.
- Consistency in carrying out and recording assessment within the 28 day target is necessary.
- Further work should be undertaken to ensure that staff are engaged with and involved in the programme of service improvement and development,
- The reablement team in Ystradgynlais is considered by the council to be an example of good practice. The council also intend to roll out this model across the other shires. Concerns surrounding the capacity and sustainability of the existing model should be considered before any decisions are made.
- Work to promote effective take-up of carers' assessments and support service needs to be established.
- The council should to continue to work to address high staff sickness levels within the department, and with some urgency review the decision not to fill staff vacancies.
- The council should ensure that there is sufficient capacity to develop and evaluate commissioning strategies, and to provide effective monitoring of commissioned services. This is for both quality and contractual purposes in order to progress the implementation of the Welsh Government's commissioning guidance.
- The council should test via their scrutiny arrangements whether the improvements already brought about have made a positive impact on people using the service.
- The council should ensure that scrutiny works effectively with both the portfolio lead and adult services management.

- The need to support the improvement plan corporately and politically will be vital in order to maintain improvement and improve outcomes for the people of Powys.

Risks identified:

- Leadership – consistent leadership is vital in transforming and maintaining service delivery. The extension of the interim head of adult services contract to September and the external advertising of the post, together with the imminent departure of the shared director is causing some considerable anxiety amongst staff. This will impact the change management process required to meet the aims of the improvement agenda.
- Consistency across the three Shires - while pilot developments have been useful for testing out the viability of developments, without evaluation and consolidation, there is a risk that citizens experience very different services from the council depending on where they live.
- Capacity and sustainability – within the implementation of the reablement model and the development and implementation of the communications hub, together with the strengthening of the commissioning and contract monitoring functions.
- Corporate and political support – in providing the necessary oversight of the implementation of developments, and ensuring that those changes are improving outcomes for the citizens of Powys

Good practice and innovation identified:

- Engagement with stakeholders through the ACRF challenge event. This clearly evidenced the commitment of the council to engage with its partners and stakeholders in the improvement of its services, and the commitment of its partners to improve service delivery in the county
- Beacons Candles is a successful social enterprise for people with a learning disability. It has become limited company, selling a range of quality products across Europe and provides valued work placements.

Areas for future follow up by CSSIW:

- Leadership changes in the appointment of a new director and head of service and how those changes maintain and develop services
- The progress of those developments in reablement, and the single point of access that the council consider to be key.
- The progress of partnership working with health and the third Sector, and the collaborative working with Ceredigion.

- The development of contracting and commissioning arrangements.

Performance:

Shaping services

Senior managers in social services have worked with elected members and partners to set a clearer direction for service improvement and development. They have engaged staff and other stakeholders to achieve this. There is recognition that commissioning and contracting requires strengthening further and that resources and capacity will be stretched to achieve all of the objectives in the business plan.

People are beginning to benefit from improved partnership working with health through more integrated working. The Ystradgynlais reablement team and planning the Builth Wells project where services users should receive integrated services are good examples.

People are receiving better services through improved commissioning arrangements. The recently introduced brokerage system for domiciliary care packages means that service providers are clearer about their responsibilities and can be monitored more effectively. However the ability of the council to continue to monitor the quality of commissioned services and the ability to ensure services are meeting the assessed needs of people remains a challenge and capacity within the contract monitoring team will need to be addressed. The post of commissioning manager is still an interim appointment, and there are still vacant posts in the contracting and commissioning team, whilst consultants continue to work on procurement. Permanent recruitment into the vacant posts is needed in order to improve and stabilise the commissioning team. The council are considering a new shared structure with Ceredigion. If agreed, both councils will need to manage change effectively and speedily to achieve robust commissioning.

Areas of progress

- Commissioning and contracting whilst still an area for development, significant progress has been made.
- Joint working with health, and
- Access to services within Radnorshire.

Priorities for improvement

- A framework agreement with service providers should be developed through a tendering process.
- The communications hub pilot is now complete and a decision as to its roll out across the county is now necessary
- The development of the county wide reablement service should be successfully implemented. Corporate and political support will be vital.
- The council should address the capacity issues within the contracts and commissioning team.
- The work on an older people's joint commissioning strategy is essential, as is the development of effective commissioning strategies across all service areas.

- Progress should be made on developing services to younger people with a physical disability and for older people with dementia. The council should ensure it has sufficient capacity to move these service areas forward.

Getting help

CSSIW's 2011 report required improvement in all areas of getting help to people who need support. The council responded and people are now able to access services, advice and support across the county more effectively. However, the arrangements vary with a range of contact points, from a piloted communications hub, to a duty officer system and contact with individual services. While there are plans to roll out the communications hub model across the council area, effective working will depend on knowledgeable and skilled staff who can offer a county wide service. The council will want to satisfy itself that information and access routes have increased service uptake and improved outcomes for people accessing care and support.

The council recognised that people need skilled social work and occupational therapy staff to undertake assessment, care planning and review. To achieve this, the interim head of service initiated a rapid improvement agenda with workshops and training for staff. Additional managerial support has been provided. A quality assurance system is in place. CSSIW's analysis of the case file sample demonstrated that the attention given to improving skills and simplifying recording has benefitted people who need services. Service users spoken with confirmed improved outcomes in their care. Where inconsistencies remain, the new casework managers have a clear role to improve practice with individual staff.

Most people receiving services considered that a good level of contact has been maintained by their social worker or occupational therapist in the initial stages, with all assessments and plans discussed and agreed with them. They felt involved and consulted within the process. Most of the service users and carers spoken with described they were happy with the outcomes from support and services. However, the council is still trying to find a balance between reducing their workers' high caseloads, and meeting the needs of service users who do not like being "closed to review." This balance continues to require attention.

Areas of progress

- Involvement of people in the assessment of their needs and the subsequent care plan,
- Recording of referral information and contacts is clear and improvements in consistency are evident,
- People's care plans are clearly derived from assessments, people were involved in the care planning process, with evidence of person centred planning, and
- Clear improvements have been made in the assessing and delivery of adaptations for people.

Priorities for improvement

- The council will need to ensure that staff who are based in the communications hub are knowledgeable and skilled enough to offer a county wide service for people wishing to access a service,
- The recording of a persons eligibility to receive a service needs to be actively considered and consistently recorded,
- Improved performance in reviewing a persons needs is necessary.,
- Improved performance in offering and recording of carers assessments is required,
- Consistency in carrying out and recording the 28 day target for assessment is necessary, and
- Improvements in the recording of adult safeguarding intervention should be made.

Range and Quality of services

People benefit from a range of innovative service developments in the south of the county, which has led to an improved range of services. While there is a base-line of services across the county, there remains some inequity of service provision.

The focus on integrated services using “reablement” and “virtual ward” models has improved the support to people in their own homes, maintaining independence. The reablement service concentrates on agreeing achievable and realistic goals for service users. This level of service is not available to everyone who could benefit from them. The lack of available health staff in the rest of the county has restricted the development of integrated services and access to reablement, and the council have experienced difficulty in recruiting appropriate staff into its reablement teams in the north of the county. This is a challenge for the council as implementation of integrated reablement is seen as essential for the future direction of adult social services within the county.

There are different terms in use to describe the service such as reablement, enablement, intermediate care, convalescent beds etc. Any developments would benefit from clarity and consistency regarding terminology, so that all stakeholders understand the exact nature of the service being designed.

There are very good examples of developing social enterprises. Third sector services and opportunities are available for very vulnerable people with learning disabilities or mental health problems. Beacons Candles is a unique social enterprise born out of the council’s review of its day services provision for people with a learning disability. It provides valued work placements for people in a real employment situation and has become with the support of the council, its own limited company, selling a range of quality products across Europe. This success has given the workforce confidence, skills and experience of being part of a valued enterprise.

The council has established partnerships with a range of service providers who provide respite and short breaks for carers in their own homes, and domiciliary care more generally. They contribute to the Powys urgent response service at home, a health initiative in the north, which is trying to help people avoid hospital admission by supporting them at home. The council’s brokerage system is providing some

challenge to providers and partners and concerns remain as to the balance between establishing an urgent package and the quality of that package.

There is a voluntary sector forum, which is chaired by Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO). Partner organisations consider that the council should make progress on improving the promotion of direct payments and the identifying of the needs of carers.

Areas of progress

- There have been positive developments around the 'virtual ward' model, and
- The reablement service concentrates on agreeing achievable and realistic goals for users and its good links with the homecare service ensures continuing good support is in place if required.

Priorities for improvement

- Referrals for people already known to the department should be prioritised in order to ensure a more timely response to changes to care and support packages,
- Further work to engage and update all elements of the workforce with the service improvement plans,
- The capacity and ongoing sustainability of the reablement team in Ystadgynlais and what the council consider to be an example of good practice needs to be addressed. As the council also intends to roll out this model across the other shires, this would seem to be a priority,
- Further work to promote effective take-up of carers' assessments and support service need to be established. A mandatory field for completion by call handlers may assist in the promotion of carers' assessments, and
- The council needs to make progress on the expansion of the methods by which people can access and make referrals via a single point of access.

Effect on people's lives

The council has achieved some success in promoting independence and social inclusion. Clear improvements have been made in the timeliness of assessment and delivery of adaptations for people. Clearer monitoring tools enable the timeliness and progress of work to be monitored. Communication between the occupational therapy service and the adaptations team have improved, and this is clearly improving outcomes for people.

Carers' assessments were not consistently being offered or recorded as offered, although unified assessments indicated that the views of relatives and carers were appropriately sought. To improve up-take, a specialist third sector carers' organisation has undertaken carers' assessments on behalf of the council for the past 12 months. There have been some reported problems with outcomes being agreed without care managers' knowledge. The council need to evaluate the effectiveness of its arrangements.

The council reports that there are carers' champions in every social work team across the county. However, better communication and more consistent work with

carers' organisations across the county is still required. They report inconsistencies of approach which mean that they are unsure of the response they or carers will receive. Carers' organisations acknowledged that they were involved in multi-disciplinary meetings and that the unified assessment process (UAP) and care plans are supplied when appropriate. There is a carers' partnership board, which has been chaired by a carer over the past few months.

Direct payments are available to support carers where assessed and have been used effectively to support individual service users. They have been used to provide flexible respite. Nevertheless, the council recognises that the uptake of direct payments can still be increased and the newly appointed support agency has been given this task.

The council has given priority to adult safeguarding. Where an adult protection referral was made, inspectors noted that two thirds of the sample examined showed strengths in recording, although a third was considered to need improvement. Inconsistent recording of follow up and case closure was apparent in these with little evidence of protection plans having been agreed and put in place. Some case files lacked clarity as to who led the adult protection investigation. However, strategy discussions and meetings were convened, with clear records being maintained, but not always within the expected timescales of one to two days. Strategy Meetings were held within five to ten days of the referral being made. The needs, wishes and decision making capacity of the alleged victims were considered. The council recorded that alleged victims were protected through the process. In some cases feedback was given to the person but not in all.

The occupational therapy service is delivering good outcomes for individuals. It is described as well organised, and timely. The improved links with the adaptations team have ensured that work is carried out to support people in a more effective way within set timescales. The ability to link with one worker was appreciated by users.

Areas of progress

- Direct payments been used effectively to support individuals and are available to support carers where assessed,
- Improved outcomes for people requiring care and support have been achieved by the revision to UAP forms, and
- The occupational therapy service is delivering good outcomes for individuals.

Priorities for improvement

- The council now needs to evaluate the effectiveness of its partnership arrangement with Powys Carers and its communication and consistency of with carers organisations across the county, and
- Improvements in the recording of adult protection referrals, investigations and case closure are still necessary.

Capacity:

Delivering social services

Considerable changes in service delivery have taken place, which have been supported by service development days. The pivotal post of head of adult services has not yet been permanently filled, and decisions regarding the post of director of social services had yet to be formally announced. These matters should be resolved in order to provide leadership and staff with the confidence that the improvement journey will be maintained.

Despite attention to try to reduce high caseloads and improve management support, higher staff sickness levels together with the decision not to fill social work or occupational therapy vacancies at this time continue to impact on capacity and service delivery. There is no back fill for long term sickness absence. One impact of this has been the failure to reach the expected targets on reviewing peoples care and support needs. The impact of the new UAP assessment form has been welcomed by staff, and improvements have clearly been made in the recording of peoples needs and outcomes. Safeguarding work continues to impact on the capacity of the social work teams and managers. The safeguarding team provide good support and training. It was reported that much adult protection work is carried out but cases are slow to be closed down.

The council's commitment to support the development of staff has been demonstrated by a number of individual's career progression. Good training opportunities are available although access to them can be difficult due to workload capacity. Social workers wishing to be an approved mental health professional (AMHP) undergo appropriate training and shadowing prior to undertaking the role. However, ongoing supervision is not being carried out, nor is the provision of specialist training.

Staff are aware that the tightening up of the eligibility criteria for access to services has led to improvements and a change in culture. A new way of thinking has developed in promoting independence and moving away from creating dependence. Staff are cognisant of a need to further change culture, and attitude and embed a positive approach to working practice.

Areas of progress

- The impact of the new UAP assessment form has been welcomed by staff, and improvements have clearly been made in the recording of peoples needs and outcomes,
- Staff report that performance has noticeably improved, in the areas of assessment, work practice and user focus, and
- The increased integrated working with health is felt to have made a 'huge' difference in service delivery, with GP's having a much greater understanding of the role of social workers.

Priorities for improvement

- The council should continue to address high staff sickness levels within the department, and review the decision not to fill staff vacancies,
- Ongoing supervision for AMHP's needs to be put in place as does the provision of specialist training,
- Better feedback from the work streams and workgroups to staff would be welcomed,
- The council should carry out further work to ensure staff are able to see the link between meeting the departments top ten objectives and improved service delivery for users, and
- Greater management oversight and guidance to individual staff should be put in place as the benefits felt by those staff who have reviewed their caseloads is apparent and has led to those cases receiving a more timely and consistent response.

Providing direction

Staff acknowledge that changes to both culture and attitude and thereby working practice have begun to improve since the arrangement to share the director of social services role with Ceredigion was made and the subsequent appointment of the interim head of adult services,. These changes to culture are at the heart of sustaining any improvements made. Consistent, clear communication, together with improved leadership has led to better staff engagement, although further work is necessary. The three shires are beginning to work together more effectively, although inconsistencies are still apparent. Better communication now exists between the business performance unit and the service areas, with performance data being provided to the head of service on a monthly basis.

The council has very recently decided to recruit to the post of director of social services permanently, bringing to an end the current shared arrangements with Ceredigion. It has also decided to extend the interim head of adult services contract while at the same time advertising the post externally. These decisions have caused staff and partners some anxiety in case new appointees change the direction of travel or impede the sustainability of the improvement.

The council still needs to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to develop and evaluate commissioning strategies and provide effective monitoring of commissioned services for both quality and contractual purposes. This is in order to progress the implementation of the Welsh Government's commissioning guidance.

There is a recognised need for the council's scrutiny functions to be more robust and challenging. Through the scrutiny arrangements, the council should establish whether the improvements already achieved have made a positive impact on people using social services. Both corporate and political support is necessary for improvements to be sustained. There are clear political tensions regarding the speed and cost of improvements with key areas of development being questioned, such as the reablement service and a single point of access.

The improvement priorities and consequent resource implications need to be re-affirmed once these tensions have been resolved. The scrutiny committee must

work effectively with both the portfolio lead and adult services. There are risks associated with not recognising the progress made by staff to date, and failing to agree an improvement plan supported by sufficient financial, corporate and political support. The need to establish that the planned improvements will achieve better outcomes for people is clear. Not doing so will impact on people who need or use social services.

Areas of progress

- Leadership and improvement to staff culture and attitude,
- Consistent, clear communication. Staff are more fully engaged at all levels, and
- Better communication between the business performance unit and the service areas, with performance data available on a monthly basis.

Priorities for improvement

- The council should ensure that there is sufficient capacity to develop and evaluate commissioning strategies, and to provide effective monitoring of commissioned services for both quality and contractual purposes in order to progress the implementation of the Welsh Governments commissioning guidance,
- Inconsistencies in the services provided to people need to be addressed.,
- The council need to test via their scrutiny arrangements whether the improvements already brought in have made a positive impact on people using the service,
- The council needs to ensure that scrutiny work effectively with both the portfolio lead and adult services, and
- The need to support the improvement plan corporately and politically will be vital in order to maintain improvement and improve outcomes for the people of Powys.