



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

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012/2013

Local Authority **Ceredigion County Council**
Name:

This report sets out the key areas of progress for the year 2012/13 in Ceredigion Social Services Department and areas for future improvement

Summary

It has been agreed that Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council will not share a Director of Social Services. Instead, certain service areas will be progressed collectively for example collaboration in areas of commissioning and workforce development. This decision will enable the council to move forward after a period of uncertainty.

The council has been completing a programme of corporate transformation. This has resulted in the reduction of departments and senior managers with the result there is now one strategic director and four heads of service in the Care, Protection and Lifestyle service. This replaces the previous social services department management structure. The heads of service have assumed operational responsibility for their respective service areas. It is too early to assess the impact of the new arrangements.

Although there have been areas of progress and innovation, the council faces significant budget pressures. It must increase the pace of change, particularly in relation to strategic commissioning, if it is to be able to respond to future demands and provide sustainable services. The capacity to do this appears to be limited which is a cause of concern.

Adults

Significant improvements in the reviewing of older people's care and support have been achieved. The development of a robust and effective adult protection committee achieved good commitment from partner agencies and has strengthened the council's adult safeguarding functions. Ongoing partnership working with health and the Mid and West Wales collaboration, together with the joint work streams with Powys County Council are all important to the future development of adult services.

Children

Progress has been made in responding to the recommendations of recent inspections, despite the absence of the head of service during the year. There is evidence of developments in relation to working with families and improvement in the recruitment of staff. A clearer sense of direction for the service is emerging.

Partnership working within the Mid and West Wales collaboration continues to provide opportunities to ensure the stability and sustainability of service provision to children and families.

The director's overview report presents an accurate and realistic picture of the achievements of the past year and the challenges that the council has faced and will face in the future

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

- The challenge overseeing and co-ordinating a variety of partnership arrangements across different boundaries, and ensuring this provides a coherent plan forward. It is also important that collaboration does not stall the need for the council to make progress in addressing immediate priorities.
- Commissioning services to meet future needs and the capacity to take this forward.
- Financial resilience in the face of significant budget pressures across both health and social care.

Response to last year's areas of development

Some progress has been made by the council in responding to last year's areas for improvement in both adults and children's services. Several areas remain ongoing and are reflected again in this year's report.

Progress has been made in the reviewing of people's needs in adult teams, the timeliness and consistency in quality of initial and core assessments for children and the timeliness of children in need reviews.

The development of suitable provision for people with dementia nursing needs, and the capacity of both the reablement and domiciliary care services, continue to require attention.

Good practice identified

CSSIW has identified the following areas of good practice:

- The COASTAL project for people with disabilities, in particular learning disability or mental health problems.
- Family support services. These play an important role and are producing good outcomes for children and families.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

CSSIW has undertaken site visits to adult and children's services, which have included the community team for people with a learning disability, learning disability day opportunities, COASTAL, contracting and commissioning, contact centre, children's assessment team, meetings with the child in need co-ordinator, the integrated family support team, the Team around the Family and Tim Teulu. Service updates were also received from the carers development officer.

CSSIW attended the council's annual council reporting framework challenge event.

Ceredigion County Council was one of the local authorities which participated in CSSIW's national review of outcomes for children in need and children looked after in 2012. Positive feedback was received in relation to a number of areas considered.

The annual programme of inspections of the council's regulated care services for adults and children has also been completed, including a recent focused inspection of its fostering service.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

A number of specific areas for improvement have been identified in the body of this report. The council's progress in relation to these will be discussed with the council during regular engagement meetings in the coming year.

- Progress with strategic commissioning and also the development of procurement and quality assurance.
- The progress of remodelling learning disability services and reviews of the care and support needs of people with a learning disability.
- Service developments for people with dementia
- Service developments for young people with disabilities in transition between adult and children's services.
- The role of scrutiny in service development.
- National thematic inspection of looked after children.
- National thematic review of commissioning of social care for older people.

PERFORMANCE

Shaping services:

Adults

The council recognises the need to develop commissioning and the need to anticipate future needs. This is particularly so in relation to older people with dementia and people with learning disabilities.

The council has identified that there is a lack of provision in relation to dementia nursing placements. A review of the facilities available and models of care being used has taken place and work on a dementia strategy has now commenced

The council's approach to contracting and commissioning of services requires attention. The current contract document between the authority and the services it commissions is in need of revision and the authority is working with the sector to achieve this. A provider performance monitoring system is also in draft. Currently the national standards are being applied but these will need to be developed in partnership with the sector. There is limited monitoring of the quality of services the council has commissioned due to the current workforce capacity within the team.

Whilst the collaborative work with Powys County Council may ultimately yield benefits in devising consistent quality standards, it is reported to have led to limiting progress in developing a team structure and workforce capacity within contracting and commissioning. The Mid and West Wales collaboration is also looking at the development of consistent contracts, capacity across the region, service level agreements that are outcome focused, adult services integration and a single point of access for services. This is a demanding agenda.

The council is aware of the key role health plays in the delivery of learning disability services and the need to make further progress on developing integrated systems and processes. The council is aware of the need to scope the future demands of the service and meet changing expectations and aspirations. This is particularly in relation to education, support and accommodation needs. People returning to live within the authority will need the services to be in a position to meet these changing needs.

Children

The Families First development plan has led to more services being targeted on children and families. The success of its Integrated Family Support Services, the Team around the Family and Tim Teulu is clearly evident. The rurality of the area the council serves continues to provide a challenge.

A review of the services commissioned to provide early intervention and prevention has led to a more coherent framework covering a spectrum of needs. This has been established in conjunction with Families First.

Further work is also being undertaken regarding the role of the family centre in Aberystwyth, with a view to establishing clearer links to statutory provision such as supervised contact, parenting assessments and the integrated family support service. Plans are also underway to develop a similar approach in the south of the county in 2013/14.

Work has also been undertaken regarding the development of a joint protocol between children's social services and housing services in relation to the joint assessment of 16 and 17 year old young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness; the latter will be signposted to Team around the Family to explore any other options available to prevent them becoming homeless. The protocol will be fully implemented in 2013/14.

Areas of progress

- Strengthening links between contract monitoring and safeguarding.
- Collaborative work with Powys County Council.
- The development of Families First.

Areas for improvement

- Progress on the development of an older people's commissioning strategy, especially in the areas of dementia and models of care and accommodation.
- Progress with the development and implementation of a learning disability strategy.
- Reviewing its capacity to monitor the quality of services it has commissioned and the development of clear quality monitoring standards.

Getting help:

Adults

People access the council's social care services via a contact centre. The centre provides people with a single gateway into both adults and children's services. The work of the contact centre has been commended this year for its support to the wider community during the floods experienced in parts of the county.

People with a learning disability or their carers can access information regarding services in both English and Welsh and, currently, the council has a pilot scheme in place using alternative formats, such as, symbols and easy read. There is also a project looking to enable picture and video information to also be made available to the public on the council website. A DVD has been made by service users which gives video information regarding activities undertaken in the community support bases. This is in the process of being put on the council website.

Although the capacity to undertake reviews of the needs of people with learning disabilities is improving, this remains a challenging area for the council. The authority must consider its capacity in this area of work.

Review performance within other adult teams has seen significant improvement this year, with almost all reviews completed as required.

A regional scheme for the provision of primary care mental health services has been agreed and the Mental Health (Wales) Measure is now fully implemented.

Children

The ability of the assessment team to respond to referrals is now more robust with the team's vacancies having been filled. The council has a standing advertisement for social work posts on their internet site, and this has proved successful.

Improved performance monitoring is now in place supported by the provision of weekly reporting, and more robust staff support and supervision.

The department has reviewed its risk model in relation to social workers' caseloads. This has enabled more effective and targeted work to be carried out. A system of regular auditing of case files, however, is not yet fully implemented.

The quality assurance unit is well established. Its main focus being the work carried out with looked after children. A quality monitoring tool is used for every review, with quarterly meetings held with teams to provide feedback.

There are a number of newly qualified social workers within the childcare team This poses a challenge as they need time and support to develop experience and competence.

There has been a significant increase in the number of children going through transition and extra staff have been deployed in order for these cases to be managed. A model for transition now needs to be agreed and a business case produced to ensure a smooth transition for increased numbers of young people moving from children's services into adult services.

Following the restructuring of the children and families assessment team last year, the team has continued to operate with a small dedicated duty element. Continued progress has been made in relation to the performance in relation to initial decision making and assessment as a result of these arrangements. CSSIW's national review of outcomes for children in need and children looked after in November 2012 commented that there was evidence of "some good quality initial assessments but at a cost in timeliness". The council intends to continue the progress made in relation to the timeliness and quality of initial assessments during 2013/14 and also to improve on the number of children seen alone as part of the assessment.

Areas of progress

- The progress made in carrying out the reviews of people's care and support needs within the adult teams.
- Performance monitoring within children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Reviews for people with a learning disability.
- A system of regular auditing of case files.
- The development and implementation of model for transition.

The services provided:

Adults

Joint working with health continues to show benefits in a number of service areas. Integrated working in both the mental health and learning disability teams is progressing.

The demand for domiciliary care services and reablement services in some areas continues to be high. The capacity of these services to meet this demand needs to be increased. The council is experiencing difficulty in recruiting into these service areas.

The council intends to build on the work of the Alder review of services for people with learning disabilities in Pembrokeshire. This will necessitate a review of all existing care and support packages for people with a learning disability to assess the appropriateness of the current learning disability services in meeting people's needs. To support this work the council has re-established its learning disability multi-agency strategic group. This has led to workshops on respite care and short breaks having been held and working with service providers to develop information to support people in supported accommodation.

There is, however, no overarching strategic plan for learning disability services in the county. This, together with a lack of clarity and direction for day opportunities for people, has led to sporadic service development. Evidence of this can be found in the development of specialist worker posts to support people in specific areas such as autism, catering and work skills. The development of a clients council has provided users with an opportunity to shape the service being provided.

There is an identified need for service development for an ageing user group, for those with dementia and for those young people coming through transition. The council will have to balance developing and meeting the needs of younger people whilst maintaining services for existing users.

The COASTAL project has been an area of significant progress. Whilst only becoming fully operational in 2012, it has already had 267 referrals into its service and supports 213 people signed up to the project within the county. It provides people with invaluable experience and support within the workplace, whether voluntary or paid. The project workers have made numerous employer contacts and established good relations with a considerable number and range of employers.

As with other COASTAL projects, sustainability will be critical. With an end date of June 2014, working with other departments of the council will be vital and some good work has begun with the catering and cleaning functions of the council's in-house services. Further sustainability will depend on linking this work into an overall learning disability strategy, ensuring that the service provided by COASTAL becomes a mainstream service.

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Engagement and consultation with people with a learning disability in planning service development is clearly evident, and has led to the empowerment of users to make choices and influence change.

Children

The council has strengthened its engagement with partners in agreeing thresholds and improving the timeliness of reporting child protection concerns.

The department has also made good progress with the development of its Team around the Family and its Integrated Family Support Service. Good outcomes are now being achieved for children and families. Links with education are being established and strengthened through the basing of Team around the Family workers in schools.

A review of internal policies and procedures has been commissioned. However, revised documentation has still not been implemented across the department as service areas are said to be evaluating the impact of any changes in processes prior to any launch.

The work with the child and adolescent mental health service has not progressed as expected. However, partnerships and the development of better relationships are now expected to strengthen. The links with education also remain in a developmental stage following a recent restructure within education. Links with housing are improving with the new corporate restructure in place.

The council needs to remain innovative in the development of support services that would normally be available to children and families in other parts of the country. National agencies are not represented within the county and, as a consequence, the need to "grow its own" is recognised.

Links with adult services are primarily through the learning disability team, where support with court work has been provided. Transition work with adult services remains an area for development and future scoping. Generally good links are reported to exist with adult services.

A recent focused inspection of its fostering service undertaken due to serious criminal and child protection investigation of a foster carer found evidence of a serious breach of regulations, leading to the issuing of a non-compliance notice to the council. This was in relation to the completion of a fostering agreement.

Areas of progress

- The COASTAL project.
- User engagement and consultation.
- Team Around the Family and the Integrated Family Support Service.

Areas for improvement

- The implementation of the reviewed, and revised, policies and procedures within children's services.
- Improving links with education services
- Improved recording of reviews for children in need.

Effect on people's lives:

Adults

Identification of carers has improved with the introduction of a new process within adult services teams. All new carers are offered a carer's assessment by the contact centre at the point of referral. Social workers now record when a carer is offered an assessment and whether that offer is accepted or declined. Work is underway to consider the approach used when offering assessments to encourage take up. Joint work is also taking place across services for older people, physical and learning disabilities to introduce the same systems across all services.

Improvement in performance for carers continues to rise. There has been an increase in the number of carers who were offered an assessment from 295 in 2011/12 to 462 this year, a 56% increase.

The regional carer's measure strategy and implementation plan have been approved by Welsh Government. The initial review of the process and framework has commenced with completion expected in 2013/14.

The adult protection training plan has been reviewed this year and a programme of ongoing training has been developed and agreed by the area adult protection committee. The effectiveness and the development of this committee throughout the year has been significant, raising the profile of safeguarding within the council and its partner agencies. During this year the council has begun to anticipate the move to a Regional Safeguarding Board with their neighbouring authorities. This work is in its infancy and will continue to develop over the next year.

Regulatory inspectors confirm that links between CSSIW and the adult protection team are in place and that the contract monitoring team are playing an important role in responding to concerns.

The council reports an improvement in timescales from point of referral to strategy meeting. Regulatory inspectors confirm that there is a timely response

to safeguarding alerts and there is multi-agency commitment. The council has responded well to the implementation of safeguarding plans and investigations, in both commissioned and in-house services.

Children

The use of a multi-agency child protection referral form, together with multi-agency child protection training, has improved links between partner agencies and consequently improved responses to child protection referrals. The role of the senior practitioner has also improved consistency in assessing thresholds and building links with partners. The council needs to ensure that awareness and consistency in this area is now shared across the senior practitioners within the department.

Safeguarding is given a high priority within the council, with five serious case reviews having been published this year. An action plan to improve partnership working has been produced which is being monitored by the local safeguarding children's board.

The number of children on the child protection register has remained constant during the year and child protection plans have continued to be monitored via core groups, consisting of families and relevant agencies working in partnership.

Case conferences and core group meetings are timely and all children on the register are allocated a qualified social worker.

The Children in Need and Looked After Children review highlighted that good communication and working relationships existed between professionals and external partners. This, together with social worker continuity and positive relationships with service users, has promoted good outcomes. The quality and timeliness of assessments were found to be variable. It was noted that social workers made good use of the limited range of services available.

The focused inspection of the council's fostering service, undertaken due to serious criminal and child protection investigation of a foster carer found that in one case children had been placed without a fostering agreement being completed. This is an important safeguard and a non-compliance notice was therefore issued.

Areas of progress

- The Area Adult Protection Committee.
- Multi-agency child protection work.

Areas for improvement

- To complete the review of the carers' services from the point of offering an assessment to the take up of a service.

- Ensure senior practitioners across children's services to share a consistent approach to setting thresholds within child protection

CAPACITY

Delivering Social Services:

Adults

The work to establish an integrated single point of access and integrated community resource teams is progressing. However, the impact of the current financial challenges for both the council and Hywel Dda Health Board cannot be underestimated.

A lack of a consistent response is reported within the integrated learning disability team in both recruitment and staff training by partners. Current workforce capacity is also hindering service development and the service's ability to respond more effectively to increasing safeguarding referrals.

In 2012/13 performance across adult services has continued to improve across a range of indicators. Maintaining and building on last year's performance has been challenging, however, in some areas the targets set have been significantly exceeded. The delayed transfers of care rate target was not achieved although performance has been good. Unfortunately, delayed transfers of care did increase following the change of use by the health board of the community hospitals and a lack of capacity within the domiciliary care sector.

The council, together with the health board and Powys County Council, has obtained social services improvement agency demonstrator site status for work around its modernisation of adult services. The council is now ready to move into taking this forward.

Within adult services the council workforce development programme and training provision is felt to be supportive. The needs of specialist staff have been recognised by the training department.

Sickness absence levels in both adult and children's services remains a challenge. This year has seen an improving picture but ongoing management monitoring is still required to achieve further reductions.

Children

Staff retention within specific service areas within children's services has been challenging. The council is actively recruiting into these posts, mainly with newly qualified social workers which has an impact on the ability of senior practitioners and team managers in providing the necessary level of support and oversight during the first year of practice. The council will need to ensure

that its frontline managers have the support and time to effectively oversee newly qualified staff.

Training opportunities provided by the council for children's services are felt to be limited in contrast to the experience within adult services. There is no longer a dedicated training officer. Staff are able to access independent organisations for specific pieces of training and updates. However, further specialised training will be required by staff within the department as the service progresses.

The awarding of an innovative social work award to one of the adoption team for the use of Theraplay to support the integration of children into adoptive placements and their attachment to adopters is noteworthy.

The staff supervision policy has been reviewed and now incorporates a model of assessing the "risk of significant harm". This two stage model is initially operated within staff supervision where cases are discussed systematically in order to identify risk followed by a more detailed assessment when risk has been identified.

An initial review of the model indicates that this is valued by staff, in particular as part of case discussions within supervision.

However, serious challenges remain as budget demands rise, with a final end of year overspend of £937k.

Areas of progress

- Improved performance indicators across a range of service areas in both adult and children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Addressing the challenges posed by the financial pressures being faced by its partners where integrated services require development and support.
- Growing capacity in the domiciliary care market.
- The provision of specialist training for staff within children's services.
- Reducing staff sickness.

Providing direction:

Adults

It is positive that the decisions both in relation to sharing a director and integration with Powys County Council have now been resolved. This means the council can now move forward after a period of uncertainty and decisions can be made. Whilst collaboration has major potential benefits, the council will need to ensure that there is a clear vision for social services in Ceredigion albeit within the broader context of regional collaboration. It is also important that the

ambitions and pace of joint work streams does not impede Ceredigion County Council from tackling immediate priorities.

In 2012/13 the council concluded its corporate transformation plan with the consequent reduction of departments and senior managers. The council now has four strategic directors and 13 heads of service. There is now one strategic director and four heads of service in the Care, Protection and Lifestyle service which replaces the previous social services department management structure.

The heads of service will now have operational responsibility for their respective service areas. It has been agreed that Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council will not share a Director of Social Services but that certain service areas will be progressed collectively. A decision by both councils to proceed with collaboration, primarily in the areas of commissioning and workforce development, has been made.

The ongoing priority of the council and its commitment to social services in past years reflects the corporate and political understanding of the budget pressures facing the service. In setting the 2012/13 budget, the council has recognised the impact of increased demands on the reablement, domiciliary care and residential care sectors together with increasing numbers of looked after children. Appropriate funding has been secured to support these crucial areas.

In the Wales Audit Office (WAO) annual improvement report for 2012/13 it concludes that the council is developing new arrangements for managing its improvement programme but the expected outcomes are unclear, raising concerns about the council's ability to secure improvement and provide a clear evaluation of the impact its actions are having upon citizens and service users. WAO also commented that due to a lack of strategic ownership and focus, the council is making variable progress delivering improvement in its priority areas. Councillors are driving the council's approach to self-evaluation and performance management, but this is not yet reflected in its annual self-assessment.

CSSIW did not examine scrutiny arrangements within the council this year.

Areas of progress

- Conclusion of the project in relation to potential integration with Powys County Council and the commitment to ongoing collaborative working the local health board and Powys County Council.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring there is clear strategic vision for Ceredigion County Council social services in the context of wider regional collaboration.
- Ensuring that the varied arrangements for partnership working deliver coherent pattern of services for the people of Ceredigion and ensuring that projects being undertaken in partnership do not impede Ceredigion County Council from addressing immediate priorities.

- Ensuring that corporate support continues in order to enable both adult and children's services to be able to meet the increasing demands on supporting people at home.