



Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012/2013

Council Name: Flintshire County Council

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

Summary

The council benefits from strong leadership and clear vision. Overall it has continued to make progress in a number of key areas. It is able to evidence a range of positive outcomes which have been delivered through its strategic transformation of services. It has signalled its intention to put people in control of the services they receive and to support more people to live independent lives. It is seeking to reduce dependency on its services by strengthening support in communities and the use of new technology.

The council is forward looking and is innovative. This has been recognised in the number of awards it has been given.

Adult services

The result of the council's emphasis on prevention has meant fewer people are now supported in residential care and more are able to lead independent lives. Its reablement service has been particularly successful in helping people regain independence with the majority of users not requiring ongoing services.

Adult safeguarding has been identified as an area which should be strengthened and the council has taken action to improve the management of risk.

There are ongoing issues in improving community health services with the council reporting that the complex decision making processes within the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) have previously not always lent themselves to joint working for shared outcomes.

Children's services

Performance against a significant range of national indicators remains amongst the best in Wales. The council provides an effective response to incoming referrals and performs well in fulfilling its responsibilities in relation to child protection and looked after children. It should consider the potential to improve placement stability.

The council has developed a range of preventative services and provides good support to young people leaving care and access to accommodation has improved.

The council's annual performance report has been restructured to reflect the key components of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill and will better lend itself to public scrutiny against the key areas of leadership, commissioning, improvement, voice for citizens, safeguarding and integrating services.

The report recognises that the current economic climate, welfare changes and demographic pressures present significant challenges for the future and is increasingly realistic about how to prepare for new demands and shifting public expectations.

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

- Sustainability of medium term financial planning.
- Continuing ability to influence locality focused strategic planning with the BCUHB.
- Securing sufficiently robust outcomes in adult safeguarding.

Response to last year's areas of development

There has been a mixed response to the key areas for development identified by CSSIW. The council recognises this and has appropriately prioritised those areas where sufficient progress has not yet been assured.

With regard to last year's specific priorities:

- The council contracts with a range of third sector organisations to support carers to a value of £435k per year – this includes specifically commissioning North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS) to undertake some carers assessments on their behalf. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of young carers known to the council, together with more being provided with support.
- More short break overnight provision for children and young people with disabilities has been secured. The new contract with Action for Children provides additional capacity and greater flexibility. Following refurbishment, a

short break unit at Arosfa has now reopened with capacity having increased from 220 nights per year to 350.

- The council is continuing to invest resources in improving adult safeguarding – the site visit revealed that, although some progress had been made, more needs to be done to secure consistently robust outcomes.
- Good progress has been made ensuring statutory visits and reviews for looked after children meet requirements.
- There has been significant progress in the timeliness of major and minor adaptations.

Good practice identified

CSSIW has identified the following areas of good practice:

- The development of a second extra care scheme that incorporates 15 purpose built dementia apartments – the first in Wales.
- Social Care Accolade finalist in the Citizens Controlling Services category for citizen directed support work.
- Social Care Accolade winner in the Better Outcomes through Working Together category for its recovery approach in providing better support for people with mental health needs.
- The allocation of up to 10 units from Flintshire housing stock each year for care leavers.
- The council was runner up in the UK Grandparents Association National Awards 2013 for its Kinship and Family Group Meeting services.
- Contract monitoring team input into adult safeguarding processes – specifically around alerting, risk assessment and taking responsibility for actions to secure positive outcomes for vulnerable people.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

CSSIW completed a programme of inspections of regulated services operating in the Flintshire area and held routine engagement meetings with senior council officers.

A site visit was conducted in January 2013 to look at the use of risk assessment in adult safeguarding processes.

There has been significant attendance at a range of safeguarding meetings in both adult and children's services.

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. This includes:

- The impact of resource investment in strengthening adult safeguarding.
- Application of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.
- Work in identifying and supporting adult carers.
- Joint working arrangements with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

In addition, CSSIW will be undertaking a national thematic inspection of looked after children and a national thematic review of commissioning of social care for older people.

PERFORMANCE

Shaping services:

Adults

The council continues to make progress in reshaping adult services within a strategic transformation programme that aims to secure a balance between preventative approaches and supporting those who are already vulnerable. There is a clear sense that it understands the needs in the area and is more effectively planning to meet future demand.

This is evidenced by increasing numbers of people able to maintain their independence, with fewer requiring ongoing services, complimented by increasing investment in a range of services, such as specialised extra care developments which provide additional support when required.

The council recognises that citizens are central to this process, and is embedding greater control for local people in strategic decision making processes - this is increasingly generating commitment and ownership of future service development that needs to better meet changing public expectations and adapt to demographic pressures.

Better commissioning is a priority, and is increasingly being developed for the long-term - strategies for learning disability and mental health services have recently been developed that anticipate needs and demand for the next five years and beyond. The plan for older people is to follow.

The council recognises the need to develop services across boundaries which maximise the potential of regional capacity, the valuable contribution of partner agencies and the crucial roles of the independent and voluntary sectors - the latter particularly in supporting preventative work.

BCUHB has recently responded to a report by Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) by developing an action plan that aims to improve governance, leadership and management arrangements - this will require

sustained input by the council in order to ensure that local priorities have the appropriate attention.

Children

The council is continuing to invest in services for children and young people. It aims to embed a comprehensive early intervention model that underpins a commitment to prevention, with less emphasis upon acute crisis intervention.

This is demonstrated by the recent implementation of the Integrated Family Support Service that seeks to work with families in an earlier and more co-ordinated way to achieve stability and better long-term outcomes. The council has built upon lessons learned from pilot work elsewhere and believes that it is in a strong position to rapidly develop a successful local approach.

The Families First programme represents a key component of the council's response to the Welsh Government child poverty strategy, and is designed to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. It works alongside initiatives such as the Integrated Family Support Service, with particular emphasis upon working with the whole family and targeting those living in poverty.

Areas of progress

- Investment in improving commissioning in adult services.
- Reablement becoming embedded in practice.
- Early intervention approach in children's services.

Areas for improvement

- The ability to influence locality focused strategic planning with the BCUHB.

Getting help:

Adults

The council has good arrangements in place to enable people to be well informed in making choices about health and wellbeing initiatives and services.

There is a comprehensive range of increasingly electronic information that is website based and easily updatable, supported by printed leaflets in a number of key locations. In both formats, the information is accessible, easy to read and provides clear guidance about services that can be provided, although there is some recognition that this needs to be improved for people with a learning disability.

The council has continued to develop and expand contact methods and facilities in order to provide a range of options for the public to better access advice and support. The Flintshire Connects initiative is now operational at Holywell, with further hubs scheduled to open at Connah's Quay, Buckley and Flint.

Response to referrals is good, and this is reflected in key areas of activity, such as working in partnership with health colleagues in supporting appropriate and timely hospital discharges, with rates amongst the best in Wales.

There has been a shift to considering reablement as an option for all people through the establishment of Reablement and First Contact duty teams - this is an important step in embedding a culture that promotes and supports independence at an early stage.

Fewer older people required long-term support in care homes over the course of the year, and this was confirmed when reported against the census date of 31 March 2013 which measures numbers on that day compared to the same date the previous year.

This is mirrored by younger adults with a physical or sensory disability and also by those with a learning disability, although the latter experienced a small increase in numbers requiring residential care.

The number of younger adults supported in the community with mental health needs fell, with fewer requiring residential care. This has been achieved within the context of the council continuing to embed its recovery approach - the emphasis being upon enabling people to direct their own rehabilitation with less dependence upon long-term support.

Although an increasing number of older people were supported in the community, as reported at the census date, fewer were supported over the course of the year - the council explained that this is an expected outcome from increased preventative work, reduced waiting lists and more accurate data recording.

More service users had their care plans reviewed, and performance is moving in the right direction of travel, with over 90% having met this standard. However, effective care management is underpinned by timely reviews for all, in order to ensure that need continues to be appropriately met and the quality of individual service is regularly monitored and tested.

The council has contracted the North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS) to support its aim of identifying and supporting more adult carers. It is currently working to ensure that data capture is improved in order to ensure that outcomes can be effectively reviewed. The fall in the number of carers known to the council is likely to be a short-term data anomaly, although it still compares relatively well against most others in North Wales.

Children

The council has good systems in place to inform children, young people and their families of services, options and choices that are available in a range of accessible formats.

Multi-agency work is increasingly effective in ensuring that preventative work is better co-ordinated and focused upon delivering better outcomes at an early stage of contact.

Reported referral numbers remain comparatively low and have fallen further during the past year - from 821 to 709. However, when all contacts to the children's services are considered, this figure increases to 7,784 - up from 5,751 the previous year. Timeliness of decision making is very good and the council has responded well to this improvement priority from last year.

Proportionally more referrals are now allocated for assessment and this suggests that screening processes are becoming more effective - this is further supported by evidence of fewer re-referrals being received. There are more looked after children, together with a significant increase in the number of children in need.

Timeliness in undertaking both initial and core assessments is very good and has improved further over the past year, with systems for escalating and de-escalating work being effective.

The council has rightly prioritised timely reviews for all children and young people receiving services and there is increasing evidence that this is being given the attention it requires as more were conducted within schedule, although this needs to be more consistently achieved for children in need in particular.

It has also signalled its intention to identify more young carers - the past year having seen the number increased, with a high proportion being provided with a service. It has responded to the Young Carers Forum and has now commissioned the Barnardo's Young Carers project to undertake assessments on its behalf.

The council has invested in the creation of a specialist transition team that is better positioned to support young people with a disability between the ages of 16 to 25 by having an integrated approach to meeting need at this crucial stage of their lives.

Areas of progress

- Fewer older people supported in residential care.
- Increasingly strong reablement focus.
- Services for young carers.

- The creation of the specialist transition team.

Areas for improvement

- All adult service users having a timely review.
- Adult carer data capture.
- Timely reviews for children in need.

Services provided:

Adults

The council is committed to supporting people to maintain their independence as much as possible and continues to develop new models of care as part of its transformation strategy.

A growing range of resource availability and choice is evidenced by the recent development of a second extra care scheme – Llys Jasmine – with the addition of 15 purpose built dementia apartments within the 61 apartment complex. This is the first of its type in Wales, and will provide more independent living options for older people with care and support needs. Two further extra care developments are planned by 2016.

There is increasing emphasis upon personal choice and control offered by the active promotion of direct payments and citizen directed support. This forms a key part of the council's transformation strategy and numbers are growing significantly, with almost 200 adults now able to decide the best way they wish to manage their independence. Significantly, the number of older people accessing direct payments has almost doubled over the past year. The council was a Social Care Accolade finalist in the Citizens Controlling Services category for citizen directed support work

The council is driving greater use of new technology and is expanding telecare use as part of its reablement strategy, with increasingly sophisticated equipment that can better monitor changes in need through sensors and detectors. This is evidenced by a reported 44% increase in people supported in their own homes by telecare systems during the past year.

The learning disability commissioning strategy has recently been developed and has a clear focus upon independence with “just enough support” to promote wellbeing and ensure safety. There is recognition that planning needs to be better and the range of support options needs to increase – particularly those that promote a choice of short breaks and accommodation options that are independence outcome focused. Of those people with a learning disability known to the council, relatively few live in a care home when compared to other areas in North Wales.

The mental health commissioning strategy is being finalised and is focused upon the promotion of independence and the recovery approach. It acknowledges the impact of the current economic climate, welfare changes and the potential for increased poverty. With an increasing emphasis upon better working with key partners and the voluntary sector, the council is looking to bolster its preventative and early intervention approach wherever possible and this is partially evidenced by the lowest care home placement rate in North Wales.

More people are using the recovery approach to achieve positive outcomes. For example, 12 were supported over the past year to secure employment through Next Steps – up from five the previous year. This is an important programme that enables access to education, training, voluntary work and employment. Feedback from service users provides assurance that the recovery emphasis is well understood and valued.

The council has recently won an award at the Social Care Accolades in the Better Outcomes through Working Together category for its recovery approach in providing better support for people with mental health needs.

There is a strong quality assurance drive within the council's approach to contract monitoring and this is actively used to improve standards and tackle poor practice in commissioned services. It is a significant component within the safeguarding process, frequently alerting concerns and well as a playing a key role in monitoring residual risks.

Children

The council works well with partner agencies and there are long standing arrangements that plan services within a joint strategic needs analysis framework, primarily within the context of the current children and young people's partnership plan.

The children's services forum meets quarterly and is a key driver for service improvements for looked after children and care leavers. It is attended by the chief executive, senior council officers, elected members and two young people from the Speaking Out for Children in Care group and the Care Leavers Support network.

The volunteer mentor project has consolidated progress over the past year with over 50% of volunteers having been involved for over 12 months – this ensures some consistency and growth of experience. The emphasis is upon supporting looked after children, children in need and care leavers to develop personal, social and independent living skills.

The fostering service has been subject to an internal review over the past year and is currently considering a number of options for further development. The pool of

in-house foster carers has increased and now stands at 100 approved carers. A foster carer secure website has been developed and this enables better communication, with a facility to book training and events, with a chat forum to follow.

The council was runner up in the UK Grandparents Association National Awards 2013 for its Kinship and Family Group Meeting Services. This is a significant achievement as it represents recognition of its value not just within Wales, but in the UK as a whole.

The proportion of looked after children who experienced three or more placements has increased over the past year and the council needs to prioritise improvement in order to reduce the impact this can have.

The council is committed to ensuring that care leavers have access to suitable accommodation, with all achieving this over the past year. In addition, executive agreement has recently been secured for the allocation of up to 10 units from Flintshire housing stock each year specifically for this purpose.

Areas of progress

- The development of a second extra care scheme that incorporates 15 purpose built dementia apartments.
- Social Care Accolade finalist in the Citizens Controlling Services category for citizen directed support work.
- Social Care Accolade winner in the Better Outcomes through Working Together category for its recovery approach in providing better support for people with mental health needs.
- Increasing use and application of technology in supporting independence in adult services.
- The volunteer mentoring project.
- The council was runner up in the UK Grandparents Association National Awards 2013 for its Kinship and Family Group Meeting Services.
- Accommodation for care leavers.

Areas for improvement

- Stability of placements for looked after children.

Effect on people's lives:

Adults

There is increasing output evidence that the council's strategic shift towards the promotion of prevention, short-term intervention and supporting independence is securing targeted outcomes – this most demonstrated by fewer people requiring

residential care and more people being supported to live independently in their own homes.

More people are accessing reablement services with the council reporting that 62% did not require any further home care support compared to 54% the previous year – this despite an increase in numbers, up from 605 to 759 over the same period. Feedback from service users has been positive and provides anecdotal evidence that this approach is making a positive difference to people's lives.

More equipment is being issued and adaptations arranged, both of which are significant factors in supporting people in their own homes for as long as possible.

Response is increasingly co-ordinated on an integrated basis within a locality model of service delivery. The council is committed to moving towards a co-located team approach with health colleagues, whereby social workers, occupational therapists and community nursing staff work together in three geographical areas that are co-terminus with health boundaries.

The council has signalled its intention to develop more robust adult safeguarding practice and has recently remodelled its approach with the appointment of additional staff. Safeguarding referrals have increased significantly in recent years.

A site visit was conducted in early 2013 to primarily assess risk assessment practice and its impact, but also looked at some general safeguarding practice.

The initial response was found to be inconsistent with delays in convening some strategy meetings. Furthermore, case file analysis established a clear need for a more robust establishment of respective agency responsibilities and accountabilities - particularly with regard to clarifying investigative leads, respective roles, action timescales, tracking and review arrangements. Response to more complex scenarios needs to be better targeted, aligned and actively monitored.

Inspectors found that risk was generally a considered component of safeguarding practice although it was not always specifically recorded consistently, nor formally reviewed at the conclusion of any intervention. In particular, recordings of strategy meetings and case conferences did not always clearly detail risks, how these could potentially be minimised or eliminated, by whom, by when, and how the success of intervention would be measured. This sometimes made it difficult to determine the impact of safeguarding activity and has been prioritised by the council as an area that needs to be strengthened.

The council recognises that safeguarding investigations can only be concluded when safe outcomes are sufficiently established, recorded and reported. Although this was generally the case, inspectors found evidence that this was not

consistently demonstrated and senior managers need to be assured that this is routinely monitored and managed.

The contracts team is a particularly effective component in identifying, alerting, monitoring and reviewing safeguarding risks in care settings, but more needs to be done to strengthen the care management role in safeguarding matters.

The council has recently produced an action plan that is intended to strengthen safeguarding arrangements - commendably, it has adopted an open and transparent approach for improvement that will be validated by use of expert independent critical friends.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards have an increasing profile, but overall activity remains low. Although there has been an increase in applications and standard authorisations, the latter number remains lower than may be expected at just six – despite being the highest in North Wales. The council, as a supervisory body, has, however, invested resources in this important area and is now better positioned to ensure that vulnerable people are supported to maximise their decision making capacity before resorting to restriction or restraint with appropriate best interest safeguards.

The low level of activity generally across North Wales will be a focus for more attention next year.

Children

The council is committed to continuing to develop an effective child protection system that recognises that early help is better for children and young people. Using an increasingly child centred approach, it is demonstrably more responsive and flexible in adapting to individual need in frequently complex situations.

There are fewer children and young people on the child protection register, the number having fallen to 58, compared to 95 at the same point in the previous year, although sibling group size is likely to be a factor in this instance and numbers have since increased significantly. There has been sustained improvement in the timeliness of initial conferences, core group meetings and child protection reviews.

Reviews for looked after children are now more robustly managed and the council has responded well in prioritising improvements in this key function.

Maintaining good health is central to the needs of looked after children, primarily because of the nature of their vulnerability and its profound impact. The council has a key role to play in ensuring that partnership arrangements work well and that health needs are met in a co-ordinated and timely way. However, this is a shared responsibility with BCUHB and more needs to be done to improve performance in this important area as only 47% of looked after children had a health assessment

within timescales, with just 53% having had a dental check during the year – these represent some of the lowest proportions in Wales.

The Access to Action (A2A) card has been implemented in four secondary schools and will be rolled out to all others during the course of year.

There are signs that overall educational attainment is improving, but there is still some way to go with performance remaining amongst the lowest in Wales for 16 year old looked after children. The council needs to prioritise improvement in this area and provide the sustained attention required in order to ensure life chances for young people are maximised and performance is amongst the best in Wales.

Outcomes for young adults aged 19 who were formerly looked after are good, with nine of the identified 11 known to be engaged in education, training or employment – this represents effective work by the council

Areas of progress

- Increase in numbers of people accessing reablement services.
- Equipment issue and adaptations that support independence.
- Contracts monitoring role in adult safeguarding.
- Use of critical friends to test effectiveness of adult safeguarding.
- Reviewing the needs of looked after children.
- A2A rollout.
- Improving outcomes for care leavers.

Areas for improvement

- Securing consistently robust outcomes in adult safeguarding.
- Stronger care management role in adult safeguarding.
- Health assessments for looked after children.
- Dental checks for looked after children.
- Educational attainment for looked after children at age 16.

CAPACITY

Delivering Social Services:

The council continues to make solid progress in transforming service delivery that secures greater independence and choice for local people. It has adopted the philosophy of operating as a social business that is sustainable and secures measurable impact in improving service.

This is demonstrated by investment in smarter commissioning that will equip key staff with the modern skills necessary to secure high quality services and deliver improved financial management. Opportunities for collaboration are being

increasingly sought in order to improve productivity, service quality and collective buying power, most notably with a strong commitment to the development of the Regional Commissioning Hub.

Care provided to people in their own home is central to maintaining their independence and reducing the need for residential care. Clearly, the council is focusing upon those most in need as more staff hours are now invested in delivering more direct care to slightly fewer people over the past year.

A credible financial plan underpins ambitions to deliver a lean, efficient and effective programme of services that reduces dependency and need for ongoing support. Within the context of its medium term strategy, social services exceeded last year's savings target of £1m - this was largely achieved by improved commissioning and the promotion of more creative and flexible responses to meeting need and projected demand. This is further supported by a commitment to maximise the potential of technology to support a programme of continuous improvement.

The council is committed to developing a strong and professional workforce – it understands that this is fundamental to delivering better quality services. It is more assertively promoting its consolidation training programme for newly qualified social workers that provides credits towards the Graduate Certificate in Consolidation of Social Work Practice – the first council in Wales to support this.

Last year's report commented upon the high level of workforce absence and this was a priority for sustained attention. This has been subject to scrutiny committee attention and the council accepts that more needs to be done – there is some recent evidence that this may now be beginning to improve, but this will need to be closely monitored.

Performance management is increasingly becoming a mainstream function within the organisation and there is increasing confidence in information and its meaningful use in monitoring progress in improvement. It has invested resources in data cleansing in order to make it more accurate, and this will leave it better positioned to make informed decisions about the impact of its strategic goals.

Complaints within adult services have fallen significantly during the past year, down from 89 to 51 - the council explained that this is primarily due to a restructuring of some provider services. Four progressed to Stage two, compared to 10 the previous year. The council reports that 86% of complaints were responded to within prescribed timescales – those not within time were due to key staff not being available and agreement was obtained with complainants to delay the process.

There were 140 compliments received during the year.

Children's services received 57 complaints during the year, five of which progressed to Stage two. The council reports that 80% were responded to within prescribed timescales – as with adult services, those not within time were due to key staff not being available and agreement was obtained with complainants to delay the process.

There were 67 compliments received during the year.

Areas of progress

- Regional commitment to partnership working.
- Increasingly effective approach to performance management.
- Consolidation programme for newly qualified social workers.

Areas for improvement

- Absence management outcomes remain an outstanding area for improvement from the previous year.

Providing direction:

There is strong political and corporate support for key social services objectives and this is reflected in continued investment in the transformation programme. A new cabinet member has overseen social services since May 2012.

Leadership is strong and there is a clear sense of direction and purpose. The new head of adult services has brought fresh impetus and the pace of positive change is accelerating with the reablement approach becoming embedded in practice.

A social business culture is being cultivated that underpins all work activity and will greatly assist the council in achieving sustainable, flexible and adaptable ways of working that will be better positioned to meet the undoubted challenges ahead.

Senior managers communicate well in sharing their vision with the workforce and securing its commitment. In addition, the council is keen to recognise good practice and this is reflected within its annual Flintshire Excellence Awards that has celebrated successful work over the past year in areas such as reablement, care leaver participation and mental health service user involvement in training.

There is increasing representation and influence on a regional basis that is helping to ensure social care priorities are better aligned, goals are outcome based and accountability more clearly defined. This is evidenced by leadership on a regional level in initiatives such as the recently reconvened North Wales regional telecare programme board, where the council both leads and chairs the board.

Political scrutiny is increasingly targeted and proportionate with appropriate informed challenge being progressively more demonstrable in publically accessible reports.

Areas of progress

- Increasing regional influence and leadership.
- New head of adult services is providing strong direction and fresh impetus with transformation agenda and in securing more robust adult safeguarding services.