



Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012/2013

Local Authority Name: Gwynedd Council

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

Summary

The council has improved its structure in line with the statutory guidance and the recommendations of CSSIW's national inspection in respect of the role of the statutory director of social services.

In July 2013 the director of social services was appointed as a corporate director. The council have ensured support and professional advice for the director over the year and the council must ensure that the director has the capacity to deliver the improvements necessary for Gwynedd Social Services.

The council's overall performance was mixed. Whilst there are areas of improvement (managing children's referrals), some areas continue to need attention e.g. not reviewing looked after children. It has not delivered improvement in some important areas of performance and commissioning. Some of these will be necessary to improve the quality of services and ensure sustainability into the future.

Adult services

The first extra care housing development has been opened which is a positive achievement for the council. Other services have been developed providing intensive support, dementia day care, and support for carers.

At the present time, the council continues to run a large number of residential services for older people. In the longer term these will prove difficult to sustain. Some indicators suggest the council is not succeeding as well as it could in promoting independence for older people.

The relationship with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has restricted some areas of service development.

Children's services

Children's services have continued to improve in performance in a number of key areas, for example assessment and care management. There are a number of effective services available to support children and their families. However, its performance in relation to looked after children is patchy with poor review rates and poor support from health and education. This calls into question the extent to which the council is fulfilling its duties as a corporate parent.

The structure of the director's report was good, describing the challenges and the services provided. The content highlighted the main risks and future priorities for the council. The report had appropriate supporting evidence but did not reflect on the learning that had occurred during the year. The director's annual report will be considered by the council's cabinet and full council in September 2013.

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

- There is further delay in modernising adult services resulting in unsustainable and poor quality services in the future.
- Ability to influence locality focused strategic planning with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Response to last year's areas of development

Overall, the council made limited progress in the specific areas of improvement identified in last year's report.

The council did, however, improve the timeliness of child protection conferences and made structural changes with respect to the director of social services.

Good practice identified

CSSIW has identified the following areas of good practice:

- The council and the health board worked with Antur Waunfawr and Menter Fachwen to provide day care services for adults with learning disabilities and early onset dementia. Clinical psychologists provide staff with skills, knowledge and experience of working with dementia. The bilingual model and tools that have been developed to support staff allow for easy replication of the service. The evaluation of the intervention found evidence of an increase in staff's competency in working with dementia and, in 2012/13, the service won a Welsh Government health award for working in partnership.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

In addition to inspections of regulated services and routine engagement meetings with senior officers of the council, Gwynedd was the focus for a site inspection as part of CSSIW's national review of the role of the statutory director of social services (published June 2013).

There was also a site visit to Y Derewn, a service for disabled and frail children and their families. This was found to be a good service, clearly valued by those accessing it.

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.

- Support and professional advice for the director of social services.
- Implementation of the corporate safeguarding policy.
- Implementation of the council's commissioning plans in adult services.
- Council's approach to discharging corporate parenting responsibilities towards looked after children.
- National thematic inspection of looked after children.
- National thematic review of commissioning of social care for older people.

PERFORMANCE

Shaping services:

The council is implementing a strategic approach to meet its long-term objectives. The strategy, known as Ffordd Gwynedd, puts increased emphasis on understanding customers needs, removing barriers and diverting the demand for services. The council's strategic plan 2013 to 2017 identifies areas that will be developed within social services.

Adults

Timely implementation of commissioning plans was identified as an area for improvement for the council in the 2011/12 performance evaluation report.

Although there are areas of progress, the council has not consistently delivered on its commissioning plans.

In some areas, new services are now being developed or have become established. These initiatives have often been in partnership with other organisations. In other areas, the council's progress has stalled and the council is having to take account of feedback before moving forward.

Examples of achievements include:

- Building work which has begun on an extra care development in the Bangor area in partnership with North Wales Housing. This will provide an additional 55 beds for older people.
- A six bedded unit which was opened in 2012/13 in Penygroes for older people needing intensive support and, of those who received support, more than half have returned to their own home.
- A day care dementia service which has been successfully established in Plas Hedd in partnership with the health board and this service now operates on a Wednesday and Saturday.

The council has made progress in the modernising of learning disability services, and is currently reviewing the use of its main sites and services in Pwllheli and Caernarfon. The council hopes to develop a day care service in the Porthmadog area in 2013/14.

However the plan to redevelop older people's residential care is proving more difficult. After considering the feedback from its consultation work in 2012/13, the council is now developing alternative plans to rationalise the number of residential beds within its care homes.

The public consultation regarding the future of Hafod y Gest in Porthmadog has been followed by an assessment of the demand profile and re-establishment of the local steering group. There will be further consultation regarding this home.

The council continues to develop commissioning plans for physical and sensory disability services. The conclusions from the feedback questionnaires regarding the physical disability strategy have been considered by the council's scrutiny committee.

Children

The council plans to review its commissioning of children's services and is planning to undertake a new strategic approach to its work.

The Gwynedd Children and Young People's Partnership Parenting and Family Support Strategy 2012 to 2017 was published in August 2012. The council has now published its children and families commissioning plan for 2012 to 2017. The children and families commissioning plan includes a needs assessment and identifies future plans in response.

One piece of future work identified in the council's strategic plan 2013 to 2017 is an end-to-end review of children's services to identify ways of providing better value for money. The council has noted that Gwynedd children's services spends significantly more than comparative councils.

In May 2013 the Gwynedd and Anglesey partnership group met and began establishing its priorities and a future work programme. It is crucial that the director of social services has a clear line of sight on these developments. It will

be important for the council to ensure that it is able to maintain core services whilst trying to develop preventative services.

The council recognises its responsibilities in respect of equality and diversity, and is ensuring that equality issues are addressed on the basis of a thorough assessment. The council has made it a strategic priority to promote wider social equality by equalising opportunities and reducing the effects of poverty and disadvantage. In particular, the council is planning to increase preventative work and target inequalities in health, promote equal opportunities for vulnerable groups of children, young people and families.

Areas of progress

- Continued development of extra care services.

Areas for improvement

- Maintaining momentum in reshaping older people's residential services.

Getting help:

Adults

The council has accessible care pathways. This is largely because of an effective advice and assessment team which increased its capacity in 2012/13. There are areas of good practice such as the accessibility of support for carers.

The council says that during 2012/13 the reporting processes were tightened resulting in fewer than expected carers assessments being recorded. The actual number of carers assessed and provided with a service by the council has remained steady for the last few years. The council has worked with Carers Outreach and during 2012/13 a carer's officer has been based in the hospital in Bangor. This resulted in timely support for a significant number of carers.

The council has continued to improve its performance in reviewing adult care plans. The percentage of care plans reviewed has improved year-on-year and is now approaching the Welsh average.

The council did not effectively forecast the demand for domiciliary care services. The demand was not as was anticipated in the council's targets for home care and the rate of people supported in the community. The council had to increase the provision of home care during the year although its plan had been to reduce it.

Children

The council has improved performance in the key areas of assessment and care management of children's services. Some areas of performance are

dependent on support from health and there are areas of performance where the council appears unable to bring about important improvements.

The council's performance in the assessing children's needs has improved. The council now distinguishes between notifications and referrals; this has reduced the number of referrals and re-referrals. The council has improved performance in decision making, assessing and allocating a higher percentage of referrals to social workers. There is improved timeliness of initial and core assessments and a reduction in the re-referral rate.

Areas of progress

- Outreach support to carers in Bangor.
- Improved and more meaningful recording and monitoring of referrals in children's services with the consequent reduction on recorded rates of re-referral.

Areas for improvement

- Demand forecasting for community support.

The services provided:

Adults

The council runs a large number of residential services for older people, and these services have begun to use person centred planning and best practice in dementia care. The council still needs to improve the management of the services that it provides, and has had difficulties recruiting and retaining managers with the appropriate experience and qualifications. There are plans currently being progressed for establishing appropriate managers in all of the homes and the council needs to make arrangements, such as succession, planning to ensure that it can continue to provide appropriate management when required.

An extra care housing scheme became operational during the year in Bala and this has provided 30 extra care residential beds, and has provided the opportunity for health, housing and social services to work together. Age Cymru have established an Age Well centre in Nefyn together with a range of activities for older people in Bala.

The council has increased the number of nights of respite care it provides and is planning to establish a pilot respite scheme in 2013/14. The council has maintained good performance in avoiding delays in the transfer of people from hospital and the co-ordination of unscheduled care.

The adult learning difficulty service has completed an end-to-end review of the service and is planning to develop an outcome based progressive model of support.

The council has been effective in modernising some services. There has been a fall in the use of general day care and an increase in the use of reablement and the provision of equipment. The council has exceeded its targets for the number of people receiving intensive enablement packages.

Children

The council has developed effective specialist services for children. The service, known as Y Derwen, provides a specialised service for children with significant developmental delays or disorders, disabled children and children with an illness. The service is responsive to need and takes advantage of opportunities to improve the service it provides. The service provides support for carers, listening and providing a network of support through the work with Carers Outreach. Carers are represented in the management group that oversees the service, and are consulted through regular meetings and by the use of questionnaires. The close multi-agency working has resulted in improved specialist services, co-ordination of and effective working between professionals. There are significant delays in the provision of psychological and nursing services that cause delay in the support for children and their families. Health services have become more clinic based and families say that this has affected the quality and accessibility of this support. A key worker service has ceased with the end of grant funding that will result in less effective support. The fostering service supports some families effectively but other families have significant unmet needs and the council is reviewing these arrangements. The council is developing an overnight respite facility that is planned to open in 2016 providing respite care for children with disabilities.

The council provides effective services to looked after children and this is largely due to the quality of its fostering and residential services.

The fostering service continued to grow and provide a good service, and the CSSIW inspection found evidence that children can be confident that their wellbeing will be promoted and protected. The foster carers consider themselves to be well trained and supported, and are confident of receiving swift support when this is needed. There is strong and effective management of the service. However, the inspection highlighted the need for the council to develop a more effective system to evaluate the experiences of children who use their services.

The council has a children's home that is managed by Action for Children and the recent CSSIW inspection found that the service is well run by a proactive manager, and there is a strong sense of person centred care provided by competent and well trained staff.

Areas of progress

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

Areas for improvement

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

Effect on people's lives:

Adults

The council's performance shows that it is continuing to provide residential care and not promoting independent living or direct payments. During 2012/13 the population over 65 years grew by over 1,100. The number of adults supported in the community fell and the number of adults receiving residential services rose. Of the adults supported, the proportion supported in the community is one of the lowest percentages in Wales. The number of people receiving direct payments has reduced.

The council has effective arrangements for the protection of vulnerable adults, however, there is some variability in the chairing and arrangements of POVA meetings due to capacity issues. The council has worked with the Isle of Anglesey County Council in reviewing its arrangements regarding POVA and is developing a North West adult safeguarding board. This board has been establishing its role whilst also responding to strategic safeguarding issues that need attention. The performance information shows that the risk in adult protection cases was managed in all but one case.

There were no Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessments in Gwynedd in 2011/12. This caused concern that the appropriate assessments were not being made and that the safeguards were not being implemented. In 2012/13 the council reviewed some of its arrangements; raised awareness through training, leafleting and highlighting the guidance. There were four DoLS assessments in 2012/13 and, CSSIW inspectors during their inspections of care homes, did not identify any DoLS assessments that had not been undertaken where there should have been.

Children

The performance data shows that the council has achieved good educational attainment and attendance at school for its looked after children. However, it has not maintained the downward trend in reducing the number of school changes for looked after children.

The council achieved a continued improvement in the timeliness of child protection conferences. This had been identified as an area for improvement for the council in the 2011/12 performance evaluation report.

The educational outcomes for looked after children are all in the upper quartiles. The improvement seen in 2011/12 has nearly been maintained for formerly looked after children aged 19, but the measure is based on a very small cohort of young people. The council maintained contact with 14 out of 16 relevant

young people and, of these, two young people were in prison and only five were in education, training or employment. The council has, however, improved its performance in providing personal advisors and pathway plans to all former eligible looked after young people.

Estyn published "A report on the quality of local authority education services for children and young people in March 2013". The report stated that the youth service has succeeded well in increasing the number of young people who gain accredited units or qualifications, and in promoting apprenticeships, entrepreneurship and learning pathways.

The number of looked after children in Gwynedd has been growing and the proportion of children looked after in Gwynedd is slightly higher than comparable authorities.

In last year's report the timely completion of health assessments for looked after children was an area for improvement, however, in 2012/13 the performance deteriorated further. The council has made repeated representations to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board who have not assisted in improving this performance.

In last year's report the timely dental checking of teeth for looked after children was an area for improvement. However, the performance showed little improvement in 2012/13 and therefore remains an area for improvement.

The timely completion of personal educational plans for looked after children was an area for improvement in last year's report and in 2012/13 the performance deteriorated significantly. The social services department has been unable to influence the education department in assisting in the timely completion of these plans. This is an area of corporate responsibility and should be addressed as a matter of priority.

The council had a care plan in place for all children when they started to be looked after and the number of children who had three placements or more was amongst the lowest in Wales. There was a plan for permanence at all second reviews of children that were looked after.

The timelines of reviews was an area for improvement last year. However, the performance deteriorated in 2012/13 and now the council is amongst the worst performers in Wales. The council reports that the increased numbers of looked after children have contributed to this deterioration in performance. The council has agreed it needs to increase capacity in this area with the appointment of an additional independent reviewing chair for 2013/14.

The council has significantly improved the planning and provision of personal advisors for formerly looked after children.

Gyda'n Gilydd is the Team Around the Family model in Gwynedd and during the year a protocol for a step-up and step-down from and to the service has been agreed and will, in time, facilitate better services for families.

Areas of progress

- Improved timeliness of child protection conferences.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that services promote independence for older people.
- Ensuring timely reviews for looked after children in line with statutory guidance.
- Improving education planning for looked after children.
- Securing health input to looked after children.

CAPACITY

Delivering Social Services:

Ensuring the regular and consistent supervision of staff was an area for improvement identified in last year's evaluation. However, the council has made limited progress in this area. The council now plans to involve managers in developing the quality assurance and performance management systems needed for effective supervision. A quality assurance system will be developed, and an electronic document and the records management system will manage the processes in 2014/15. A pilot scheme has been operated in 2012/13 to look at the quality of children's services supervision.

The council is currently considering two critical Ombudsman's reports and is identifying the improvements it needs to make to manage complaints made against social services. Recent improvements have been made within the council's processes and the council's electronic complaint management system is now operational, and complaints are being managed more effectively. An additional officer is now dealing with complaints and this will help to reduce timescales for considering complaints and achieving timely outcomes.

There are areas where the council still needs to improve the complaints processes, and social services do not record many informal complaints and comments where the issues are dealt with quickly. The complaints guidance does not emphasise the importance of this process and the actions and learning benefits that occur at an early stage. There is a need to improve the guidance by clarifying what constitutes a complaint and what the relationships are with other processes, such as court hearings or safeguarding processes. There is a need to further improve the capacity to manage and support the complaints processes, and improve its processes to use the lessons learnt operationally, strategically and within the processes that oversee the service.

The council has identified the need for improvement in this area; it is receiving the attention of the social services management team and will be an area that CSSIW will follow up during the year.

There is clear evidence that the quality assurance officer is undertaking audits within children's services and the reports are constructively critical and make recommendations for practical steps that will improve performance. Robust evidence is yet to be seen of the development of an effective quality assurance system in adult's services. Ensuring effective quality assurance systems within the adult care homes that the council operate is an area that the council needs to further develop.

The council has made significant improvements in its recording of data and managers confirm that there is an improvement in systems, accuracy and quality of information. Some issues still remain and the council acknowledges the need for further work in this area. In 2012/13 the council made improved arrangements to use performance data and this is evidenced by the implementation of monthly service meetings that consider performance. This has resulted in the management team having an improved understanding of performance and the service performance events for staff provide the opportunity to discuss performance and its importance with regard to future improvement. The council also makes better use of its electronic system alerting workers and managers that key activities are due.

Areas for improvement

- Establishing a quality assurance system within adult services.
- Ensuring the regular and consistent supervision of staff.

Providing direction:

The director of social services in Gwynedd Council changed in August 2012 and, in October 2011, a comprehensive programme of support was agreed and this included mentoring from an experienced director of social services.

CSSIW undertook a national inspection in respect of the role of the statutory director of social services and the report was published in June 2013. Fieldwork was undertaken in seven councils, including Gwynedd in December 2012. The first recommendation of the report was that the director of social services should always be a member of the corporate management team and have direct access to the head of paid service and to councillors.

The council had identified the weaknesses in the previous corporate structure in place and recognised the position of the director of social services did not provide for sufficient authority, influence and impact and was not compliant with the statutory guidance.

The position of the statutory director of social services has now been moved up from head of services level to corporate director level and in July 2013 the council appointed to this corporate director post. The director of social services' inspection report identified the importance of the relationships, roles and protocols in relation to the statutory director. It is crucial that the arrangements

increase the management capacity and ensuring robust, effective professional advice and support.

The director's indivisible accountabilities for safeguarding are particularly important and the council is implementing its corporate safeguarding policy. The weakness in the arrangements and the need for this work was highlighted in Estyn's local authority inspection report published in March 2013. The inspection found that understanding of roles and responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding at a corporate level and between departments within the council was not clearly understood. The council developed a corporate safeguarding policy for children and adults to address this shortcoming and CSSIW will monitor the implementation of this policy.

Given the poor support in achieving education plans for looked after children, serious questions have to be asked about corporate support for social services, particularly in relation to looked after children and the discharge of the council's responsibility to act as a corporate parent.

The council's scrutiny committee identifies the areas that will be scrutinised. The committee has identified its work programme and processes.

Areas of progress

- The statutory director of social services is now at the corporate director level.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring appropriate relationships, protocols and professional advice support the statutory director.
- Implementation of the corporate safeguarding policy.
- Raise the profile of corporate parenting responsibilities with members.
- Secure corporate support for looked after children, particularly in the field of education planning.