



Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012/2013

Local Authority **Powys County Council**
Name:

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

Summary

Whilst some progress has been made in recent years, the council has been awaiting the outcome of the decision about possible integration with Ceredigion County Council and the confirmation of the appointment of a single director. This has now been resolved. Whilst the decision has been not to proceed, it means the council should be able to increase the pace of change especially given a permanent appointment has been made to the director's post.

The challenge will be the need to respond to budget pressures without the benefit of efficiency gains a merger may have provided. However, both councils will continue to collaborate in a number of areas in order to save money and streamline activity.

The previous arrangements for sharing of the director of social services continued throughout 2012/13. There was evidence of significant attention to adult services to improve services and performance in children's services remained strong.

Adults

The need for significant improvement in adult services was identified by CSSIW in 2011/12. The council responded with action and improvement plans. A follow up inspection by the CSSIW in March 2013 confirmed that there had been progress and that the service was moving in the right direction.

Performance against national indicators has largely been maintained despite increased demand.

Children

The council recognises that the delivery of children's social services remains complex and challenging, with significant risks associated with working with very vulnerable children and their families. Children's services have sustained positive performance. This includes strength in the delivery of front door services, including the timeliness of decision making, the quality of assessments and the engagement and partnership working with other agencies. Further improvement was in evidence across a number of performance indicators in 2012/13.

The stability and visibility of senior management has kept children's services at the forefront despite competing demands for resources from adult services.

The Children and Young People's Partnership and the Local Safeguarding Children Board continue to provide a robust strategic framework for children's services to work within, alongside its partner agencies.

The director's report reflects the work needed to improve adult services and provides evidence of the ongoing work to achieve this. It also reflects the outcomes from the follow up inspection. The council has built these into its overall improvement agenda. It recognises the developments within children's services, and its significant strengths. The current and future challenges for Powys are reflected.

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

- Financial challenges and overspend in adult services; the council recognises the "volatility" in the adult services budget, and the risks associated with a reduction in health funding for learning disability services.
- Maintaining sufficient momentum in transforming adult social care especially in light of increasing collaboration.
- Ensuring effective governance and oversight of the various collaboration arrangements especially where differing boundaries in relation to health boards could cause problems.
- The regionalisation of the local safeguarding children's board functions.

Response to last year's areas of development

The council has ensured that the areas for improvement identified last year and the recommendations of the inspection of adult services in 2011 have been embedded into their overall service improvement plans. The council continues to make progress in response to these.

Good practice identified

CSSIW has identified the following areas of good practice:

- Strong partnership arrangements in children's services supported by the local resource solution panel and a robust and well developed children and young people's partnership.
- Engagement and consultation with partner agencies and the reciprocal commitment to improve services for people established through the use of challenge events.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

The council's adult social services were subject to a follow up inspection by CSSIW in March 2013. The commentary within this report reflects the findings of that inspection.

Additional site visits were undertaken in adult services to the occupational therapy service, adaptation and equipment service, observation of a service improvement board meeting, and adult services assessment and care management across all needs and across the three shire localities.

Within children's services a site visit observed a local resource solution panel. Meetings were held with the duty social worker, senior practitioner, the safeguarding manager, an independent reviewing officer, member of the children and young people's partnership and the youth justice team. Meetings with heads of service and senior managers were also held.

The annual programme of inspections of the council's regulated services for adults and children.

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 including:

- Progress with improvement following the inspections of adult services of 2011 and 2013, including contracting and commissioning, care management and review and access to services.
- Progress in reducing the number of delayed transfers of care.
- The work of the overview and scrutiny committee in overseeing and monitoring improving outcomes for people.
- Progress of collaboration with Ceredigion and the health board.

CSSIW will also 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 engagement of stakeholders, partners and consultation with staff has enabled the council to set a clear direction for delivering the service improvements.

The council has identified the pivotal role played by its contracting and commissioning function in delivering improvements. The need to create capacity within contract monitoring has, however, again been evident. The post of commissioning manager is still an interim appointment, and there are still vacant posts in the contracting and commissioning team, whilst consultants continue to work on procurement. This situation must be addressed by the council. The council's collaboration with Ceredigion in commissioning of services and the development of commissioning strategies across both councils will need to develop at pace.

Progress in the development of commissioning and contract monitoring has led to the establishment of a brokerage system for domiciliary care packages. Service providers report more clarity regarding the expectations of commissioners and users of the service.

There is evidence of good partnership working with health and this has led to improved outcomes for people using the existing reablement service. The new development in Builth Wells will provide the potential to realise further benefits from integrated working.

The need to develop services for young people with disabilities and for older people with dementia remains.

Children

As part of the council's collaboration with Ceredigion, the whole commissioning and procurement agenda has been reviewed. The models established under the children and young people's partnership are to remain in place, reflecting the value of integration with existing partners.

The Families First plan has been progressed through the children and young people's partnership. This has enabled the council to future scope population outcomes, performance measures and commissioning priorities.

The council is carrying out a review of its recommissioning for early intervention and prevention services. The aim is to assess the council's capacity and workforce skills in relation to commissioning and procurement with a view to establishing a stable and capable market both internally and externally.

Powys continues to work with the Children's Commissioning Consortia Cymru for finding specialist placements.

Areas of progress

- Significant progress has been made with commissioning and contracting adult services although this remains an area for development.

Areas for improvement

- Progressing the older people's joint commissioning strategy.
- Development of the county wide reablement service. Corporate and political support will be vital to achieve this.
- Capacity issues within the contracts and commissioning team.
- Progress on developing services to younger people with a physical disability and for older people with dementia. The council should ensure it has sufficient capacity to move these service areas forward.

Getting help:

Adults

People are able to access council services via a range of contact points including a communications hub which has been piloted, a duty officer system and direct contact with individual services. The council intends to roll out the communications hub model across the whole council area. Effective implementation and delivery will depend on knowledgeable and skilled staff who can offer a county wide service. The council will want to satisfy itself that investment into revised information and access systems will achieve an increase in service uptake and improve outcomes for people.

The council is showing continuing good performance in the number of assessments being carried out within timescale. However, the active consideration and subsequent recording of a person's eligibility to receive a service needs to be more consistent. There has been some year-on-year improvement in completion of reviews bringing the council in line with the Wales average. Further improvement should be sought.

The council reported ongoing poor performance in the number of people with delayed transfers of care from hospital. However, there is a significant

improvement in the number of people now being supported in the community. Progress in the number of people supported with direct payments, supported by the reablement service and an increase in the provision of home care, day care and supported accommodation are all reported.

Improvement in offering and recording of carers assessments remains an area for development.

Children

All referrals from the public come through the duty workers where initial advice and signposting take places. Individuals can access children's services via e-mail, letter or telephone. The referral and allocation process is well established with decisions being made within one day and callers being updated as required. All assessments are undertaken by social workers and the council demonstrates good performance in the timeliness of initial and core assessments. The re-referral rate is in line with the Wales average. These performance figures indicate good management of assessments and referrals.

Joint work with adult services is being developed, services are reported to work well together when crisis intervention is required.

A number of referrals are considered at the local resource solution panel. There is a monthly multi-disciplinary meeting which includes representatives from a wide range of partner agencies. New referrals are presented to the panel and existing cases are monitored to ensure that follow up actions have been carried out in order to ensure that families and children continue to have the support necessary. The involvement of parents is encouraged.

The multi-disciplinary structure of the panel is important in enabling the identification of a wide range of local resources and developments. This not only provides families and children with good access to support but also ensures that all agencies are kept up-to-date with local resource development. There is a clear commitment from partner agencies to attend this meeting.

Areas of progress

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

- Local resource solution panel in children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Roll-out of the communications hub across the county following the pilot study, ensuring that staff who are based in the communications hub are knowledgeable and skilled enough to offer a county wide service for people wishing to access a service.
- Consistency of recording of a people's eligibility to receive a service.
- Performance in offering and recording of carers' assessments.
- Progress in reducing delayed transfers of care.

The services provided:

Adults

The council has developed a number of innovative services mainly in the south of the county. The existing reablement and virtual ward models of care and support developed with health, whilst providing good outcomes for people being supported at home, is facing challenges due to its capacity.

These models are not developed in other areas of the council due to difficulties in recruitment across both health and social care. This has led to some inequity of provision and access to that provision, across the council area. This presents as a significant challenge for the council as integrated reablement is seen as pivotal for the future of service provision.

Referrals for people already known to the department are still subject to a common referral recording process, thereby impacting on the timeliness of a response to changing need.

Service innovation is evidenced by the development of social enterprises. Beacons Candles is an award winning small business which was initially part of the council day care service for people with a learning disability. Following a review of Powys' day opportunity provision in 2009, Beacons Candles was established and provides valued work placements for people in a real employment situation.

Children

Progress has been made in the development of an integrated disability service. This will lead to more co-ordinated service delivery and care management with health and education being key partners.

The number of looked after children has fallen this year. Good performance is reported in care planning and review, all of which are carried out by the

independent reviewing officers, and year-on-year improvements in planning for permanence is evident.

There is a well established advocacy service. This service is seen as critical in gaining children and young people's feedback through a range of routes including the newsletter - "Boo" and the corporate parenting group.

The leaving care service continues to perform well with all care leavers having an up-to-date pathway plan and a personal advisor. A number of initiatives are in place to improve accommodation and educational achievements, alongside housing and education partners.

Areas of progress

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

Areas for improvement

- Referrals for people already known to the department should be prioritised in order to ensure a more timely response to changes to care and support packages.
- The capacity and ongoing sustainability of the reablement team in Ystadgynlais. As the council also intends to roll-out this model across the other shires, this would seem to be a priority.
- Progress in expanding the means by which people can access and make referrals via a single point of access.

Effect on people's lives:

Adults

Improvements in the timeliness of assessments and the provision of adaptations have been made with improved monitoring, oversight and communication between the occupational therapy service and the adaptations team. There is evidence of improved outcomes for people.

Carers assessments were not consistently being offered or recorded as offered, however, the unified assessments indicated that the views of relatives and carers were being appropriately sought.

Continuing improvement in the number of carers offered an assessment is reported. The changes are attributed to a conscious effort by care managers to

ensure that the appropriate questions are asked of carers at the time of assessment.

Whilst there are carers champions based in every social work team, better communication and more consistent work with carers organisations across the county is still required.

Direct payments are available to support carers and have been used effectively to support individual service users.

Improvements in the recording of safeguarding referrals, investigations and closure are still required. Regulatory inspectors report that safeguarding investigations are not always concluded in a timely way, with some remaining open for some months. Whilst this, in some cases, is attributable to partner agencies the council needs to ensure that all partners respond in a timely way.

Children

The terms of reference for the regional Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) are in place. There is now a need to have the respective governance arrangements signed off by all parties. The regionalisation of the LSCB is felt to be a risk, due to geography and distance. In response to this a "shadow" board for Powys will be in place by September, hoping to be fully operational by 1st April 2014 in order to maintain local oversight.

There is an increasing awareness of safeguarding across the council with good links having been established with education around child protection training. This, together with good interagency working and good support being received from the advocacy service, is providing a robust response to safeguarding issues.

The council is developing the increased use of IT in order to engage better with young people, to get views of children and to meet the challenge of hearing the child's voice.

Participation and engagement with children and young people is well developed. A participation strategy and action plan is in place, the existence of a junior safeguarding board, various consultation and residential events and an in-house magazine are evidence of the commitment to involve and engage children.

Areas of progress

- The use of direct payments.
- The revision of the unified assessment process forms.
- The response of the occupational therapy service.
- Consultation and engagement with children and young people.

Areas for improvement

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of its partnership arrangement with Powys Carers and its communication and consistency of with carers organisations across the county.
- The timeliness of investigations and improvements in the recording of adult protection referrals, investigations and case closure.

CAPACITY

Delivering Social Services:

Adults

During the year the council has made significant changes to service delivery. This has been supported by service development days. Greater feedback from the various work streams would be welcomed by staff.

The impact of the new unified assessment process form has been welcomed by staff, and improvements have clearly been made in the recording of people's needs and outcomes. Safeguarding work continues to impact on the capacity of the social work teams and managers. The safeguarding team provides good support and training. It was reported that whilst adult protection work is carried out but that cases are slow to be closed down.

The council reports that staff sickness levels have dropped considerably this year. Managers have made progress in the implementation of the HR policies to reduce absence levels.

Good training opportunities for staff are available although access to them can be difficult due to workload capacity. Social workers wishing to be an approved mental health professional undergo appropriate training and shadowing prior to undertaking the role. However, ongoing supervision is not being carried out, nor is the provision of specialist training.

Staff are aware that the tightening up of the eligibility criteria for access to services has led to improvements and a change in culture. A new way of thinking has developed in promoting independence and moving away from creating dependence. Staff are aware of the need for a change in culture and attitudes.

Adult services showed an overspend of £2.8m at the end of the year which is a cause for concern. In older and disabled people services the overspend is said to be due to increased demand and more complex cases, including the cost of

placements in independent residential care, the cost of independent sector and in-house home care and reablement services.

In learning disability services, the overspend is mainly due to the costs of placements in independent residential care, direct payments and those of other providers.

The Powys Teaching Health Board's funding of learning disabilities is at risk as the council has been notified of a reduction of approximately £200,000 in 2012/13 and £400,000 in 2013/14, which will need to be met from the council's corporate reserves in the short-term.

However, the council states that this is not sustainable from 2014/15 onwards. Mental health services overspend is mainly due to independent residential care as a result of increased demand.

The council recognises the "volatility" of the adult services budget and it is hoped, through improved data collection and forecasting, this will be addressed. This will be a corporate priority with the aim being to have in place more accurate forecasting of ongoing financial pressures.

Children

Workforce development for social work staff is felt to be good. The development and growth of the workforce is seen as vital for succession planning. However, managers would welcome a specific HR link for children's services in order to ensure consistency of support and advice. Legal advice and support is said to have improved with better support for social workers in court work.

An external review into the quality and direction of the service has been commissioned. This follows recognition that whilst the service is seen to be performing well, an external view would confirm this and/or suggest further areas for development. Good evidence of internal quality assurance and peer review is in place.

Consistency of service provision across the county is being achieved through a range of management meetings, quarterly staff roadshows, peer supervision and the use of standards in processes and procedures.

The children and young people's partnership is felt to have developed as far as it can at present; it now needs a more strategic overview and direction. However, the partnership is well developed. It is delivering change, and is seen as an active and vital forum, very much in the mainstream of provision.

Areas of progress

- The impact of the new UAP assessment form has been welcomed by staff, and improvements have clearly been made in the recording of people's needs and outcomes.
- The increased integrated working with health is felt to have made a "huge" difference in service delivery, with GPs having a much greater understanding of the role of social workers.

Areas for improvement

- The council should continue to address high staff sickness levels within the department, and review the decision not to fill staff vacancies.
- Ongoing supervision for AMHPs needs to be put in place as does the provision of specialist training.
- Better feedback from the work teams and work groups to staff would be welcomed.
- The council should carry out further work to ensure staff are able to see the link between meeting the department's top 10 objectives and improved service delivery for users.
- Greater management oversight and guidance to individual staff should be put in place as the benefits felt by those staff who have reviewed their caseloads is apparent and has led to those cases receiving a more timely and consistent response.

Providing direction:

The post of head of adult services has now been appointed to and a new director of social services has now been formally announced.

Staff acknowledge that culture and working practices began to improve when the joint director with Ceredigion was appointed. It is hoped that with the appointment of a sole director for Powys changes will become further embedded.

Changing the culture, especially in adult services, is at the heart of sustaining improvement. Consistent, clear communication, together with improved leadership, has led to better staff engagement although further work is necessary. The three shires are beginning to work together more effectively, although inconsistencies are still apparent.

Better communication now exists between the business performance unit and the service areas, with performance data being provided to the head of service on a monthly basis.

Evidence of more robust scrutiny is clear. The remit of the overview and scrutiny committees has been broadened, and a specific review and report has been carried out. This report concurred with the findings of the CSSIW follow up inspection. Through these arrangements, the council should establish whether the improvements already achieved have made a positive impact on people using social services. Both corporate and political support continues to be necessary for improvements to be sustained.

A decision by both Powys and Ceredigion to proceed with collaboration primarily in the areas of commissioning and workforce development was made in early April 2013. This did not necessitate the further development of a joint senior management and governance structure. Powys has appointed a strategic director for people to fulfil the statutory role of director of social services. Their role will be important in developing regional working through the Mid and West Wales Health and Social Services collaborative.

The Wales Audit Office's annual improvement report for 2012/13 concludes that the councils planning for improvement and its arrangements to support improvement are appropriate in some areas, and it is responsive in further developing its arrangements where issues are identified by external review, but key challenges remain if it is to achieve the necessary improvement.

Areas of progress

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

Areas for improvement

- The council needs to test, via their scrutiny arrangements, whether the improvements already brought in have made a positive impact on people using the service.
- The council needs to ensure that scrutiny work effectively with both the portfolio lead and adult services.
- Ensuring strong political and corporate support to deliver the improvement plan corporately and to maintain improvement.
- Improved performance management information.
- Ensuring partnership and joint commissioning arrangements have effective governance and controls and deliver at the pace required by Powys in light severe budget constraints.