



Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012/2013

Local Authority Name: Vale of Glamorgan Council

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

Summary

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's key strategic plans for the social services directorate in 2012/2013 are found in the change plan 2011 to 2014 and the budget programme. The council has continued with the implementation and review of the change plan. Integration with neighbouring councils and the health board continues to be a priority.

Adult services

The council has made significant savings in the adult services directorate with the financial position steadying again, although 2013/14 is expected to be challenging. The council reports the demand for older people's services has continued to increase with a significant rise in the final performance quarter. Despite a considerable increase in the numbers of assessments undertaken and a reduction in completion times, a waiting list for assessment in the adult community care team (ACCT) has emerged.

The council's improvement plan 2013/2014 considers capacity to deliver services and sets out key objectives to improve and sustain social services. This is supported by a commissioning strategy for older people which identifies how the social care needs of older people will be met within the resources available to the council during the period 2011 to 2018.

Children's services

In children's services performance is good, with the council meeting its statutory obligations in nearly all areas. The council's fostering service inspection by CSSIW was found to be compliant and operating well. The council has continued to achieve corporate savings over the last year. However, placements for looked after children and young people continue to be a source

of budgetary pressure. The Children and Young People's Commissioning Strategy sets out how the social care needs of children, young people and their families will be met within the resources available to the council during the period 2013 to 2018.

The council has implemented its strategy to reduce its looked after children population through discharging care orders and increasing the use of special guardianship for children who are in stable placements. The number of looked after children has dropped significantly this year.

The number of children and young people whose names are included on the child protection register remained steady during 2012/13. The council continues to demonstrate strong performance in timeliness in holding child protection conferences and initial core group meetings.

The community strategy delivery plan Planning and Working Together 2011 to 2021 (prepared under the council's duty to the Local Government Act 2000) includes child poverty related outcomes and actions along with identified personnel to lead on monitoring outcomes.

A copy of the director's annual report to council was not provided to CSSIW until the late stages of this annual evaluation process. There has therefore been limited opportunity to validate all of the information contained in the report. However, the report essentially provides a high level overview of the work of the directorate during the year, highlighting achievements, challenges and the future direction for services.

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

- Services which are provided collaboratively with neighbouring councils and health boards where funding and eligibility criteria may differ. Strategic planning should continue to focus on the provision of equitable services.
- The impact of welfare reforms. The council has comprehensive information on its website regarding welfare changes.

Response to last year's areas of development

The council has made progress on a number of identified areas for development.

The improvement plan for 2013/14 includes the objective to increase in-house foster carers. This will be supported by the development of a foster carer recruitment strategy, recruitment of a fixed term registered social worker dedicated to recruitment and the development of a marketing campaign.

A wide consultation exercise has been undertaken with people using services. The outcomes have been largely positive. There is evidence of ongoing consultation with people on a range of matters including the future use of the Bryneithin site.

The council has reviewed re-referral rates in children's services and has taken steps to improve performance. The impact has been a significant reduction in the number of re-referrals.

The council has continued to progress work on reducing the numbers of people experiencing delayed transfers from hospital. This year's performance data shows a small reduction in the number of delayed discharges, although the numbers of delays still exceed the all Wales average.

The director reports that there has been an increase in the number of people with complex needs being cared for at home and a reduction in the number of people cared for in residential/nursing services.

Following a period of improved performance against targets, there has been an increase in the levels of staff absences. However, for the first time, all staff in social services have participated in an annual appraisal.

The council has a strategy to address high expenditure on residential care placements for children and young people. This includes the provision of foster carers who can respond to challenging behaviours, placements for young people involved in the criminal justice system (including on youth remand), parent and baby placements, placements for disabled children and short-term or emergency placements. The council is also reviewing the available accommodation arrangements available within the locality.

Good practice identified

CSSIW has identified the following areas of good practice:

- Strength of forward planning with clear priorities and objectives.
- Continues with the pursuit of integration, including actual and virtual arrangements.
- Leadership on a number of initiatives to develop integration with health.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

During the year CSSIW met routinely with senior officers and undertook inspections of regulated services run by the council and within the council area.

A site visit was undertaken to the older adults mental health service. The visit identified the council's compliance with the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.

CSSIW also observed the health and social care scrutiny committee at work.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

- Site visit to the FACT team providing early support to families.
- Management of delayed transfers of care.
- National thematic review of commissioning of social care for older people.

- National thematic inspection of looked after children.

PERFORMANCE

Shaping services:

The Change Plan (2011 to 2014) was developed by a corporate project group comprised of officers from across the council, with a representative from the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and from the Vale Centre for Voluntary Services. It is an overarching framework for sustained service improvement and provides a coherent direction for social services. There are seven priority areas in the plan. These include integrating health and social care services, commissioning, integrating social care for children and young people and co-production. The change plan is scrutinised regularly by scrutiny committee. Since its development, a sixth progress report has been submitted to the corporate management team.

The Vale of Glamorgan Community Strategy 2011/2021 incorporates the health, social care and wellbeing strategy and the older people's strategy and the children and young people plan. Among the 10 priority outcomes are that older people are supported to remain independent, healthy and active and receive the necessary services to meet their diverse and changing needs. It also aims to ensure health inequalities are reduced and residents are able to access the necessary services, information and advice to improve their wellbeing and quality of life.

The council is developing services based on a "whole person, whole system" model of prevention and integration of health and social care. This approach is consistent with the Welsh Government's strategic direction for social services – Sustainable Social Services for Wales – A Framework for Action.

The Local Government Measure 2009 requires councils to publish an assessment of their performance. The Wales Audit Office (WAO) reports that the council has met its duty publishing its improvement plan 2012/13 on time.

Priorities identified for 2013/2014 in the director's report include the development of a workforce planning framework for the social care sector as a whole, concluding the merger of the Cardiff and Vale LSCBs, increasing compliance with Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) by providers of social care services, increasing the uptake of assistive technologies and developing an extra care scheme for older people that will enable round the clock support and packages of community care.

Adults

The active implementation of the council's priority plan for integration can be seen in the following arrangements. There are now three senior posts within adult services that are joint appointments with Cardiff Council or the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.

A joint appointment has recently been made with Cardiff Council to manage adult learning disability services. The councils are consulting on a strategy for learning disability services.

Work has been undertaken with Cardiff Council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to develop a web based bed bureau of available care home beds in the localities.

There is a tripartite management board with the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff Council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to oversee requirements under the Mental Capacity Act and DoLS. A site visit undertaken by CSSIW to the integrated older adults mental health team indicates that the council is meeting the statutory requirements of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.

A successful joint bid with Cardiff Council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has led to the implementation of a regional collaborative fund to deliver improved service models to service users.

Children

The Children and Young People's Commissioning Strategy sets out how the social care needs of children, young people and their families will be met within the resources available to the council during the period 2013 to 2018. The strategy has four key objectives, which include supporting families to stay together, supporting those on the edge of care, providing an increase in quality and affordable placements and ensuring children have a planned journey.

Performance data indicates that placement stability for looked after children has become more problematic as decisions about permanency have been put into effect. The council has plans to consider the development of an intensive placement support team to deliver targeted interventions to prevent placement breakdowns for those looked after children with the most complex needs.

The community strategy recognises the need to set core aims for reducing the impact of poverty on children and families through, for example, the Flying Start programme. Flying Start services are currently being extended in the area of Castleland in Barry town.

Progress has been made on identified priorities in children's services including the launch of the neglect protocol in the Vale of Glamorgan and the delivery of briefings and training to staff to support the implementation of the child sexual exploitation protocol. Progress continues on the merger of the Vale of Glamorgan and the Cardiff LSCBs.

Areas of progress

- A successful joint bid with Cardiff Council has led to the implementation of a regional collaborative fund to deliver improved service models to service users.

Areas for improvement

- Placement stability for looked after children, assessing and responding to placement changes for looked after children.

Getting help:

Adults

There is a range of contact opportunities for people, this includes the provision of information through community and health based contacts. The council has a website to ensure people can access the information they need. There is an out of hours duty system and the provision of specialist and generic information packs through the council's contact centre (Contact One Vale).

The TeleV (a home safety package) service and GP out of hours service are co-located with Contact One Vale, providing opportunities for improved joint working between the council and health partners. The Vale Intermediate Care Service uses these systems to respond to crisis situations.

Assessment and care management for adults with learning disabilities are provided via multi-agency team arrangements. Plans continue to be implemented for increased integration of services with Cardiff council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.

A regional monitoring and support project for people with autism who do not require formal social care provision is being led by the Vale of Glamorgan Council in conjunction with three other councils. The council has also facilitated a user led socialisation group, an evening social group for adults and a monthly forum for adults to exchange views and to inform future service direction within autistic spectrum disorder services.

For people needing help with substance misuse problems, the council reports close working arrangements with the Vale Community Safety Partnership and Cardiff Council. The multi-disciplinary area planning board, which operates across the two local authority areas, has led to a significant reduction of the waiting list for services in this area.

Restructuring and improved staffing levels in occupational therapy has led to a reduction in the amount of time people have to wait for services. Plans are underway to introduce new screening models in occupational therapy by 2014.

Children

All referrals and contacts for children and young people are managed via the intake and family support team. The percentage of referrals to the council during the year on which a decision was made within one working day was higher than the national average. The proportion of referrals which did not

proceed to assessment reduced and the percentage of referrals allocated to a social worker for initial assessment has increased by nearly a third. This appears to have had a significant impact on the number of re-referrals to the council, which have significantly reduced.

Besides qualified social workers, initial assessments are undertaken by very experienced social care officers who are supervised by qualified social workers. There are currently four social care officers who are experienced having been with the council for a number of years.

The council commissions in-house and independent fostering arrangements for children and respite accommodation (with Action for Children) for children with learning disabilities.

Performance data suggests that the council is aware of a large number of young carers. All have been offered an assessment with the majority taking up this offer. There is a carers support services directory (with the Vale Centre for Voluntary Services) and the Activale summer brochure provides details of services and support for children and young people during the summer holiday period.

Areas of progress

- Vale Community Safety Partnership and Cardiff Council multi-disciplinary area planning board operates across the two local authority areas and has led to a significant reduction in the waiting list for substance misuse services.
- The reduction in the number of re-referrals to children's services.
- The implementation of a model of assessment and care planning linked to reablement. This provides a swifter provision of services.

Area for improvement

- Increase in-house fostering availability.

The services provided:

Adults

Within the integrating health and social care programme board for the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Councils, there is a specific project for mental health services. The Amy Evans community mental health team and the Hafen Dowel community mental health team (CMHT) now have a single line management arrangement for both health and social services staff. The council report similar arrangements are being put in place for the Western Vale CMHT in Cowbridge.

Following a report by the delivery and support unit on the integrated older adults mental health team (OAMHT), where a number of recommendations were made, the council suggested that CSSIW undertake a visit to the OAMHT. A two day site visit was subsequently undertaken in February 2013.

The visit provided evidence of improved performance over the year. The service had benefitted from senior management support to improve problem solving and was found to meet the timescales required by the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010. There was evidence that discharges from hospital were achieved more effectively with reduced delayed transfers of care.

Previous allocation criteria meant that the team supported a wider range of people including those newly identified by GPs and other professionals as needing help. These referrals now go to the ACCT who take on all generic or primary care referrals. Resources have not yet been transferred from the OAMHT to ACCT. This may have contributed, in part, to the emerging waiting list for ACCT.

There are still some challenges to integrating and developing services across the whole of the council. The geographical area served by the council has different boundaries to the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. Mental health services in the West are provided by Abertawe Bro Morgannwg Health Board, with in-patient facilities in Bridgend. For the social workers in the OAMHT, this means working with two sets of specialist health colleagues, one set sharing the team base, the other based on the other side of the county borough. Inevitably, this means council staff have to work to two sets of operational policies, although efforts are being made to harmonise working practices where possible. There are similar issues in the North, where some health services are provided by Cwm Taf Health Board, although this affects fewer patients.

This split has an impact on service availability and developments. In the East the OAMHT can call on the REACT health run team which responds to crises for older people with mental health problems in the community seven days a week. Nurses and social workers act as case managers and both commission services from the council's social services budget. In the West, community psychiatric nurses provide home treatment and weekend cover, but do not have the same crisis remit.

The WYN campaign represents collective work of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff Council, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, voluntary sector representatives and service users. WYN is a model of care that seeks to provide a seamless service through the agencies, moving away from medical models and providing speedy time limited interventions.

There is a small but specialist service for people with sensory impairment, which is provided via the adult community care and occupational therapy teams. Specialist assessments are undertaken for reablement for visual impairment and equipment services to meet the needs of adults with sensory loss. A reduction of 50% in the numbers of people waiting for specific input from the rehabilitation officer for visual impairment has been reported by the council.

For carers of people with mental health problems, there is a specific carers support officer in post. A third sector agency Hafal is commissioned to provide a service supporting individual carers and operating carers support and activity groups.

Third sector groups such as Crossroads in the Vale provide specialist dementia care support to carers. Packages of care include domiciliary care in service users' own homes, community support groups for carers and service users plus specialist advice and counselling.

Children

The council provides Flying Start services and last year rolled out this provision in one of its wards. Flying Start targets the most disadvantaged areas in Wales according to the measures of relative disadvantage including the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. Performance data for 2012/2013 shows that over 800 children in the Vale benefited from the Flying Start initiative, with the number of children meeting or exceeding their milestones for age three years being just below the all Wales average.

The council has a Families First project based on the Team Around the Family (TAF) model, it is known as Families Achieving Change Together (FACT) team. The objectives of the project are to identify if a service is needed at an early stage to prevent families requiring statutory services. Referrals are made by agencies for children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years, where there is concern about a child or young person's progress or wellbeing and the needs of the family cannot be addressed by one service only.

Under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010), councils and health boards have a statutory responsibility for delivering joint programmes to ensure the delivery of Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS). The council, in partnership with the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and Cardiff Council has, since February 2012, had an operational IFSS.

There has been the transfer of the Youth Offending Services (YOS) from the chief executive's office back to the Children and Families Division. The YOS provides parenting support to those families of children and young people assessed as "at risk of offending". YOS also offers eligible parents access to 1:1 or group work programmes.

The Vale of Glamorgan fostering service was inspected by CSSIW in 2013. At that time the service had 76 approved foster carers. The previous data collection indicates that there had been 95 approved foster carers. Although recruitment continues, it is inevitable that some foster carers may retire or move on, and it remains a challenge to increase the active cohort of carers.

One of the priorities in the children and young people's commissioning strategy is to recruit new foster carers and to retain those already approved. The plan is to increase the capacity of the service by at least 30 placements over the next four years.

The 2013 inspection identified that the fostering service is effectively managed, is child centred, has good systems for consultation, provides good support and guidance to foster carers and has good systems to inform placement making and matching. The fostering team is an experienced one with good staff retention and low sickness levels to support stability and continuity in the delivery of the service.

Fostering social workers and social workers from the fieldwork teams said that communication between them is good and that it has improved since the fostering service was relocated. A designated social worker with significant case management and child protection experience has responsibility for the promotion and development of kinship care within the fostering team.

Residential services for children are commissioned through voluntary or independent providers such as Action for Children or Barnardo's. The Ty Robin Goch children's home provides respite services for children with learning disabilities.

Areas of progress

- The establishment of the FACT team although the service is yet to be reviewed.

Areas for improvement

- Harmonising policies for older adults integrated with mental health services across two health boards.

Effect on people's lives:

Adults

There is a consultation strategy in place within the council. People receiving services were subject to a consultation process in 2012 regarding the quality of the services provided. A survey for people receiving direct payments, for example, showed nearly all respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

The Vale community resource service is co-located with the Vale intermediate care services and Vale University Health Board resource service now under one umbrella service. The aim is to promote independence through reablement, reduce delayed transfers of care and provide a single point of contact for reablement. A service user satisfaction survey was undertaken by the council in October 2012 for these services with the outcomes largely positive.

Council surveys have also been undertaken for adult residential services, adult respite services, adult placement, safeguarding and the contact centre, Contact One Vale. There were some limitations to the surveys in terms of numbers of respondents, however, responses received were encouraging.

Homecare provision has increased for older residents but has decreased for those under 65. The head of adult services reports that the size of care packages has increased for people with more complex needs. There has been a decrease in delayed transfers of care (DTOC) from hospital although numbers are still higher than the all Wales average. The council reports that it has worked with the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and Cardiff Council to develop an integrated discharge service for those with complex needs but further work is required to consolidate this service.

Under Part 4 of The Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010, which came into force in 2012, the right to independent advocacy for patients subject to compulsion under the Mental Health Act 1983 and voluntary in-patients has been expanded. The council reports that Advocacy Support Cymru provides this support and it has been able to offer independent advocacy to 100% of patients eligible and wanting this service.

Occupational therapy teams have made significant improvements in the waiting times for services, waiting times are less than one month. This is due to restructuring the team and improving staffing levels.

A provider performance protocol has been implemented to enable the council and its partners to deal with issues of poor performance by any commissioned provider. There is emerging evidence that this is having an impact on improving the quality of some services and will be formally reviewed during the coming year.

Performance data indicates that the council is performing well in providing assessments and reviews for adult carers.

Children

In children's services performance is good, with the council meeting its statutory obligations in nearly all areas.

Last year the council reported a need to reduce its "looked after children" population and planned to address this through planning for permanency; the use of residence orders or special guardianship orders. This year data indicates that there has been a significant decrease in the numbers of looked after children.

There has been a small increase in children whose names are on the child protection register and the number of children identified as in need. The council continues to demonstrate strong performance in timeliness in holding child protection conferences and initial core group meetings.

The council continues to demonstrate strong performance in meeting its statutory obligations to children who are looked after.

The health of looked after children was an area identified for attention in last year's evaluation. The percentage of looked after children who have received their statutory health assessment has increased but is still lower than the national average. This trend is also reflected in the number of children who have had their teeth checked by a dentist during the year. However, nearly all looked after children are registered with a general practitioner service within 10 days of placement.

Looked after children are achieving relatively well within the education system with very good Key Stage 2 outcomes and an improving picture at Key Stage 3. Young people also perform well with external qualifications, with looked after children in the Vale of Glamorgan achieving the highest average points score in Wales.

Whilst the number of looked after children has significantly decreased, the percentage of children who have experienced three or more placements during the year has almost doubled. The council reports that the increase is attributed in part to the strategy for expediting plans for permanence but also to a small number of children who are challenging to accommodate and sometimes have difficulty settling into a family environment. Developments are in progress to address the deficit of appropriate placement options for this small group of children.

A survey of placements and permanency was undertaken for children looked after in fostering arrangements and foster carers. This involved the distribution of questionnaires to carers and the facilitation of two focus groups for children looked after. The results of the survey overall were positive.

Performance data indicates that the council is in contact with 100% of young people aged 19 who were formally looked after with 100% in non-emergency accommodation. Only half are engaged in training or are employed and, although this is in line with the Wales average, the council has identified the need to improve opportunities for young people leaving care to engage in employment, education or training.

Areas of progress

- The number of looked after children receiving statutory health checks has increased.
- Improved performance of looked after children at Key Stage 3 and in scores for external qualifications.

Areas for improvement

- Improve opportunities for employment, education or training.

CAPACITY

Delivering Social Services:

Adults

Key challenges are to be found in providing effective support for a rising number of older people in the Vale and for people with increasingly complex health conditions. The council will have to be innovative in responding to reductions in income and minimising the potential impact on service delivery. There is a commissioning strategy for older people, which identifies how the council aims to meet the social care needs of older people within the resources available during the period 2011 to 2018.

The council has retendered supported accommodation contracts to further improve the quality and cost effectiveness of supported living in the Vale.

The draft interim medium term financial plan and a finalised budget programme is reported to scrutiny on a monthly basis. The council estimates a loss of £2.4m over four years as a result of the introduction of the Welsh Government £50 cap on charges for non-residential care.

The council continues to be a member of the South East Wales Improvement Collaborative (SEWIC) for social services.

The decision to close the council owned Bryneithin residential care home was taken in December 2009, the care home was formally closed in March 2013. A cabinet working group has since been established to consider options for the future of the site. The priority is to identify a viable option for the redevelopment of the site that meets the care and support needs of older people living in the Vale. A period of consultation with the public regarding the future use of the site is under way.

The council continues to lead on a number of initiatives with other councils and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board designed to improve services and capacity.

Children

The council reports that it has continued to achieve corporate savings in children's services over the last year. However, placements for looked after children and young people continue to be a source of financial pressure. According to performance data annual expenditure per child receiving a service continues to grow.

The council is sighted on the need to commission better value placements for looked after children. The council's commissioning strategy includes the development of the recruitment strategy for foster carers, reducing the total number of young people in mainstream residential placements, and developing the range of accommodation options for young care leavers.

The council reported that the number of young people requiring residential care has continued as last year but there has been an increase in the need for very specialist residential placements for young people with complex and challenging behaviours and disabled children. Smaller accommodation units for children having difficulty settling into foster care are planned.

The council is a member of the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's), which is a partnership of authorities across Wales who work together to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, and achieve value for money in securing independent sector placements through working together collaboratively. The success of this initiative is important for future service planning and delivery.

There is evidence that the council is investing in preventative strategies such as Flying Start and the FACT team to provide early intervention and support to vulnerable families.

The Improvement Plan for 2013/14 supports important initiatives within social services, including the need to increase in-house foster carers.

In a difficult financial climate, the council has continued to recognise its responsibilities to vulnerable adults and children and, to date, has provided some budget protection to the directorate.

The council acknowledges the importance of supporting and retaining an experienced workforce. The social services directorate reports that it has successfully recruited to permanent posts within children's services during the year, both from internal and external sources. There is no longer a heavy reliance on agency staff. Workforce stability within adult services remains good.

Areas of progress

- The council is establishing a reputation for leading on new initiatives involving key partners.
- Successful recruitment to posts in children's services, achieving a balance of internal promotion and attracting skills and experience from external candidates.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to plan ahead to meet the needs of an increasing proportion of older people in the population.

Providing direction:

There is strong corporate support for the delivery of social services and the directorate has a well established and experienced senior leadership team.

The council has agreed a cabinet system of governance with a constitution. Cabinet comprises seven councillors who make decisions on both strategic and operational issues. Councillors not in the cabinet remain active in council business through a system of scrutiny and other committees.

There is a cross-party corporate parenting panel, chaired by the cabinet member for children's services. The panel considers looked after children's care arrangements.

The scrutiny arrangements within the council work effectively and CSSIW has observed the social care and health committee at work. Members demonstrated a keen interest and engagement in the delivery of services and the anticipated challenges facing the community and the council.

The council has a service plan in place for 2013 to 2017, which provides an overview of the directorates improvement work. The key strategic plans for the social services directorate in 2012/2013 continue to be the change plan and the budget programme.

The Vale of Glamorgan Local Service Board (LSB) acts as the overarching strategic partnership responsible for community planning in the Vale of Glamorgan. The LSB is supported by five strategic partnerships, which act as the senior partnerships in respect of the strategic themes for which they are responsible. These include health, social care and wellbeing, learning and skills and children and young people.

The director of social services is the senior responsible officer for the social care and health integrated services project board. This is made up of representatives at a senior level from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff Council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. The council reports that the Board has a number of integrated services that have been initiated, especially in services for people with mental health problems and for people with problems brought about by ageing (through the WYN campaign).

The council has agreed with Cardiff Council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board that the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board will lead on a commissioning strategy for mental health services in partnership next year.

The community strategy delivery plan 2011/2021 (prepared under the council's duty to the Local Government Act 2000) includes the statement that no child or young person should be disadvantaged by poverty. Poverty related outcomes and actions are identified in the community strategy and are inextricably linked to the delivery of social care services. These include child poverty being tackled in a co-ordinated way, young carers being supported and sufficient affordable childcare being available to help parents/carers access employment.

Partnership working in the council is strong and effective. Examples of partnership working can be found in the children and young people's

partnership, the local safeguarding children's board, the community safety partnership and the LSB plan.

Areas of progress

- The council continues to provide strong leadership in social services.
- Scrutiny continues to provide a good level of challenge.