



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

Performance Evaluation Report 2013–14

The City of Cardiff Council
Social Services

October 2014

**This report sets out the key areas of progress and areas
for improvement in The City of Cardiff Council Social Services
for the year 2013–14**

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2013 - 2014

Local Authority: The City of Cardiff Council

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Summary

This year has been both challenging and demanding in terms of meeting the diverse needs of a large population. The director's report reflects a mixed picture in terms of improvement and performance. There is a clear assessment of the challenges facing Cardiff in the coming years in terms of the recruitment and retention of staff in children's services and improving performance in areas such as care planning and review. The director has taken a strategic overview of services to understand areas for improvement and development. This has resulted in a more realistic approach to the allocation of resources in a climate of budget reductions. This approach will be supported by the appointment of a Assistant Director for children's services and an additional post of a operational manager strategic commissioning for adult services.

There is evidence in the director's report that the council is taking steps to prepare for the impact of the Social Services & Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014. Integrated services with the Vale of Glamorgan council and university health boards are being strengthened.

There remains strong corporate support for the delivery of social services which has seen the council strengthen the management structure and provide additional funding for the directorate. The challenge of reducing cost in providing services has been addressed by the director's report. While some areas of savings have been identified, it is not clear if these are sufficient to fully meet the savings required.

The director's report sets out the vision for the restructuring of children's services. While some performance indicators suggest improvement in 2013-14, several others describe performance below that of other comparable authorities and below the Welsh average. Due to the effect of high caseloads and social worker vacancies the council plans to procure a generic team to support 250 cases in order to relieve pressure on front line staff in children's services

There is evidence of consultation with the people of Cardiff which has informed the council's strategies for service development and highlighted areas in need of improvement.

In response to the Welsh Government's framework for delivering integrated health and social care for older people with complex needs the council has set out its plans to further develop integrated services for this group in a 'Statement of Intent'. Cardiff already has partnership arrangements in place with the university health board and Vale of Glamorgan council and this document sets out how these links will be strengthened. This is an area CSSIW will want to monitor in the coming year.

This has been a challenging year for adult social care. The appointment of a director for health and adult social care has brought about improvement in some key areas of performance. As with children's services there has been a strategic approach to reviewing the adult social care services provided by the council. This review has highlighted areas of improvement and the need to restructure teams to work more effectively.

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) continue to meet regularly with the directors and are reassured by the approach taken by the council since the new management team have taken up their posts. The appointments of a Assistant Director for children's services and operational manager of strategic commissioning are seen as key posts in driving further improvement. CSSIW will consider the benefits of these appointments in delivering improvement as demonstrated in key areas of performance in the 2014-15.

Response to last year's areas of improvement

Area for improvement identified last year	Progress in 2013 - 14
Recruitment of personal advisers.	Some posts have been filled but further recruitment needs to be undertaken to ensure the service is fully staffed to meet demand. However a permanent team manager has been appointed to lead the service. Increasing the capacity of personal advisers is an area for development in 2014/15. The percentage of children allocated a personal adviser has dropped significantly from 89.5% to 40% This fall has been attributed to improvements in the accuracy of the method of recording performance.

Recruitment of foster carers	Evidence from our inspection of Cardiff's fostering service indicated that the authority has recruited more carers.
Continue improving the availability of direct payments	The number of children using direct payments has increased by 37. The number of adults using direct payments has increased by 97
The capacity of the CAP team to process initial contacts in a timely manner	Performance indicators show further deterioration, with a drop in the percentage of decisions on referrals made within one working day and initial assessments completed within seven working days.
The quality of decision making at initial contact	Significant Improvement has been made in the number of referrals that did not proceed to initial assessment. The percentage was 1.9% which is significantly lower when compared to similar authorities and the all Wales average of 16.7%.
The increase in the number of referrals in a year	There has been a fall in the number of referrals in the past year. The total is slightly higher when compared to the all Wales average.
Thresholds for people with a sensory and physical impairment	A physical and sensory impairment strategy has been produced. The council is satisfied that thresholds have been consistently applied.
The quality and commissioning of services for people with mental health needs	The council is taking steps to address the quality and commissioning of services for people with mental health needs. Feedback from the inspections of regulated settings highlights this area as one in need of improvement.
The reviewing of children in need plans	Performance indicators show an increase of 13 percentage points to 55.1% of reviews completed in accordance with the statutory timetable. This is still significantly lower than

	similar authorities and the all Wales average of 78.8%.
Meeting the council's statutory responsibility in the fostering service	The inspection of the council's fostering services identified areas of improvement in the past year and a steady increase in the numbers of carers recruited.
Ensuring care plans are in place for looked after children at the point of admission	There has been a slight fall in the number of care plans completed at the point of admission. Performance indicators show 62.5% completion, which is significantly lower when compared with similar authorities and the Wales average.
Delayed transfers of care for social care reasons	The council has made progress in reducing the number of delayed transfer of care, while still above the Wales average it shows the council is addressing the problem.
Cost of services for people with physical and sensory impairment	The council is undertaking a review of all high cost packages of care.
Statutory reviews for looked after children	Performance indicators in the completion of statutory reviews for looked after children have decreased slightly to 92.4%.
Personal education plans for looked after children	There has been a slight improvement in ensuring Personal Education Plans are in place for looked after children. However at 23.9% this remains significantly lower when compared across similar authorities and the all Wales average of 62.7%.
Part 4 professionals meetings	CSSIW has seen improvement in this area following our site visit with the team manager.
The number of children looked after by the council	There has been an increase in the number of looked after children from 557 in 2012-13 to 611 in 2013-14 .

The implementation of a sustainable management structure	The council has appointed a director of social services and a director of health and adult social care.
Strengthening the management and leadership capacity with the appointment of permanent and experienced senior managers	This past year has seen the director's implement a new management structure. There are plans to further strengthen the management team with the appointment of an Assistant Director for children's services and a operational manager of strategic commissioning for adult services.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

- Site visit to sensory impairment team.
- Meeting with safeguarding manager regarding part 4 professionals meetings.
- Quarterly engagement meetings with senior officers to review performance and progress against areas identified in the 2012/13 ACRF evaluation.
- Observation of adults and children's scrutiny and corporate parenting committees.
- Attendance at residential and nursing and domiciliary care provider forums.
- Inspection of safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviour, within The City of Cardiff Council, ('looked after children inspection').
- Inspection of Cardiff's regulated day care, children's and adults care services.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

- Review the operation and effectiveness of the child health and disability team.
- Review progress in the development of social impact bonds.
- Quality of commissioning of service for adults with mental health needs.
- Review of the effectiveness of the arrangements for delivering integrating health and social care for people with complex needs.
- CSSIW will contribute to a WAO led review to examine whether councils are effectively supporting older people to live independently, including through joined up working across health and social care.

Performance

Shaping services

This year has seen the council take a more strategic review of its services. This has proved challenging in terms of the capacity of the director to take forward change while meeting his obligation as statutory director for social services. The planned appointments of Assistant Director for children's services and operational manager of strategic commissioning for adult services should further enhance the senior management team's capacity to focus resources on the priorities identified in the director's reports.

The director's report identified that one of the council's key challenges is implementing the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 in working collaboratively with partners to improve outcomes for the people of Cardiff.

The need to continue to strengthen the commissioning and partnership arrangements with the university health board and Vale of Glamorgan council was identified as an area for improvement in CSSIW's 2012/13 annual review and evaluation of performance. Partnership arrangements have been significantly strengthened through integrated health and governance and the merger of the children's and adult's safeguarding boards with the Vale of Glamorgan and a single point of entry for drug and alcohol services.

There is evidence of consultation with the people of Cardiff which has informed the council's strategies for service development and highlighted areas in need of improvement. This included consultation on the development of the older person strategy in the residents survey 'Ask Cardiff'. Feedback from the survey identified cost and finance rated high in terms of people's concerns, with information and awareness of services identified as an area in need of improvement. The council also consulted with representatives from Cardiff's black and minority ethnic communities and the older person's forum. Feedback from the consultation is being taken forward to shape the older person strategy for Cardiff.

Adults

The appointment of a director for health and adult social care has seen developments in both the delivery and review of services provided to people. Undertaking a more strategic overview of services has been necessary to understand the scope and challenge of services currently provided.

The appointment of a operational manager of strategic commissioning should increase capacity to further develop and review services and enable the director to focus on partnership working and the areas for development identified in the director's report.

The council has developed a more proactive reablement service to support people back to independence, reduce hospital admissions and facilitate earlier discharge. Performance indicators show the number of older people being supported in the community (and thereby maintaining their independence for a longer period) has remained stable at 46.4. This remains lower than similar authorities and below the all Wales average of 74.5. However the rate of older people who the council supports in residential care has also decreased and is lower when compared with similar authorities and the Wales average. While the rate of delayed transfers of care from hospital is significantly above the all Wales average, analysis of the six year trend shows that, for the first time since 2010-11, there has been an improvement in this area of performance. These are areas the council may want to develop and explore in the coming year to further support people to remain independent in the community and continue to reduce the reliance on residential care in light of budget constraints.

Cardiff has developed a three year dementia plan in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan, university health board, third sector partners, service users and their representatives. The council has also responded to the Welsh Government's framework for delivering integrated health and social care for older people with complex needs in its 'Statement of Intent'. CSSIW will want to consider the effectiveness of these partnership arrangements in the coming year.

The director's report recognises the importance of 'more than just words' the policy framework for Welsh language services. This commitment is being implemented by shaping services to enable Welsh speakers to get help through the medium of Welsh. As part of CSSIW's engagement with domiciliary care forums we found the council asking providers about their capacity to deliver services through the medium of Welsh by identifying care workers who can provide this service. As part of a community inclusion program 'surgeries' have taken place with minority ethnic groups to enable people to have a greater awareness of the services provided by the council.

The Director reports an increase of 97 adults receiving direct payments giving people a real choice on how they wish to be supported.

Children

The integrated family support service (IFSS) is a joint partnership arrangement with the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff and the Vale university health board. Information from the annual report demonstrates the service is making an impact on engaging with families who have complex and challenging needs. The service is part of the preventative work being undertaken by the council with young people and their families. Analysis of the feedback and statistics provided by the service demonstrate this is a valued and successful project.

The council is continuing to explore the development of social impact bonds to improve outcomes of looked after children. Though work is at an early stage a board and project group has been established to oversee this innovative work.

Areas of progress

- The council has been successful in increasing the use of direct payments for adults and children.
- The integrated family support service has been successful in undertaking preventative work with children and their families.
- The council has reduced the number of people experiencing delays in the transfer of their care from hospital. However more needs to be done to further improve in this area.
- The council is Implementing 'more than just words'.
- The reablement service provides a good service to the people of Cardiff.

Areas for improvement

The council should:

- continue to reduce the number of delayed transfers of care; and
- continue improving the availability of direct payments to both children and adults.

Getting help

Adults

The council is continuing to focus its work on preventative measures to reduce the reliance on residential services. The reablement service is now co-located with health colleagues based in two offices across Cardiff. The use of a 'step up' 'step down' model of intervention ensures that the service targets people with the most appropriate level of intervention when it is needed. This year has seen a reduction in the number of delayed transfers of care from hospital. Performance in this area is one the council needs to continue to improve upon.

CSSIW's site visit to the physical and sensory impairment team found that the service had been restructured to provide a more streamlined and responsive service. There were some inconsistencies in the roles and responsibilities of staff working at the same level. A more strategic management overview of these arrangements is being undertaken to consider roles and responsibilities of qualified workers and the impact on staffing budgets, delivery of services and optimum use of qualified staff.

Work was being undertaken to reduce the cost of high packages of care, however this is not without its challenge as people accustomed to a high level of care are resistant to any reduction service. There is a strong emphasis on supporting people to manage their own budget through the use of direct payments.

The director's report has confirmed that all reviews for older people in receipt of a care service are up to date. CSSIW had identified this as an area in need of improvement through its inspection of regulated care services. CSSIW acknowledge improvements have been made in the last year to the quality and timeliness of care reviews for older people.

Work has been undertaken with adult carers through a consultation exercise completed in February 2014. Performance indicators show a reduction in the percentage of carers offered an assessment of need and carers offered a service following an assessment. The council has identified this as an area of development in the coming year and plans to further develop support for carers through joint work with the Vale of Glamorgan carer's strategy group. This is an area CSSIW would like to review in the coming year.

Children

The director reports a 35% increase in the number of referrals to children's services requiring initial assessment in the past year. The reason for the increase has not been identified in the director's report. Performance indicators show this has affected the number of assessments being undertaken within seven days which fell from 67.4% to 40.1%. The percentage of referrals where a decision is made within a day fell from 90.7% to 80.3%. However in the same period the percentage of referrals that did not proceed to initial assessment has fallen significantly which would suggest that a high proportion of referrals were appropriate. There has been a reduction in the number of re referrals within 12 months.

While little progress has been made in the percentage of first placements of looked after children who had a care plan in place, there was a significant reduction in 2013-14 in the number of children who had three or more placements in a year. The percentage of young carers known to social services who were assessed has significantly increased to 100%. This area of performance is higher than the national average of 85.9%. Performance in providing young carers with a social work service has fallen from 98% to 68.4%. However, the Council reports that all young carers are signposted to, or supported to access, universal or third sector services in the community.

The percentage of young people allocated a personal adviser has fallen significantly in the past year and is below the performance of similar authorities and the all Wales average. This fall has been attributed to improvements in the

accuracy of the method of recording performance. It is disappointing that the council has made insufficient progress on the recruitment of personal advisers due to funding restraints. The director has appointed a permanent team manager to lead the personal adviser service and identified increasing the number of personal advisers as an area for development in 2014-15. Care leavers spoken to as part of the looked after children inspections were positive about the support they received from their personal advisers. They were empowered to have a voice and to engage meaningfully in decisions that influenced their lives. There was a clear, shared, understanding and commitment from staff to safeguard young people and improve their outcomes. Workers interviewed were experienced in managing risk and were familiar with the process. The looked after children inspection also found a lack of primary mental health services available to young people whose wellbeing was compromised but did not meet the thresholds to access children and young people's mental health service. The director's report has highlighted the work being undertaken with child and adolescent mental health service to improve outcomes for children and young people. Performance indicators show an increase in the number of child in need reviews carried out within the statutory timescale at 55.1%. However, performance in 2013-14 still falls short when compared with similar authorities and the all Wales average of 78.8%. The director is aware of the need to improve performance in this area.

Areas of progress

- The council has improved performance in undertaking reviews of older peoples care packages.
- The council has reviewed the thresholds for people with sensory and physical disabilities.
- The council is reviewing high cost packages of care.
- The council has improved performance in the quality of decision making at initial assessment in children's services.
- The council has been successful in reducing in the number of re referrals.
- The council is improving the number of young carer assessments.

Areas for improvement

The council should:

- work with health colleagues to ensure that children and young people with mental health needs receive appropriate CAMHS services to meet their needs;
- continue to reduce the number of delayed transfers of care;
- improve the number of adult carers assessments; and

The services provided

Adults

The objective of service provision is to support people to remain in the community. The increase in the take up of direct payments and impact of the reablement service are evidence of progress with this model of service delivery.

The council has two domiciliary care agencies registered with CSSIW. One agency is a reablement service and the second agency provides support to people in their accommodation. CSSIW's inspections of these services found that. While there were some areas for improvement identified, people receiving services experience positive outcomes and were supported well to regain or maintain their independence.

The City of Cardiff Council has a number of regulated care services within its boundaries. Overall the quality of residential, nursing home and domiciliary care services has improved over the past year. CSSIW has identified two adult care services, commissioned from external providers, as 'services of concern'. The council has worked positively with CSSIW and partner agencies to bring about change and improve outcomes for people who were using these services.

The annual review and evaluation of performance for 2012-13 identified the quality and commissioning of residential mental health services as an area for improvement. The director reports on a number of initiatives to promote mental wellbeing and reduce stigma. A joint mental health strategy and delivery plan has been developed in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan council and mental health partnership board. It is anticipated a joint commissioning strategy will be developed towards the end of the current financial year. However, CSSIW's inspection of residential services for people with mental health problems found a mixed picture in terms of the quality of services being commissioned and timeliness of reviews. This is an area CSSIW will want to explore in the coming year.

The council has a learning disability commissioning strategy and has continued to further integrate the service with the Vale of Glamorgan and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg university health board. The council has undertaken a review of the service and identified areas of development. Aware of the budget pressure - and the high cost of residential services for people with a learning disability - the council have a programme of interventions to support people in moving back to Cardiff. Joint work with housing services to identify suitable accommodation for people (and closer work with children's services) is enabling the directorate to plan more effectively to deliver services for people with complex needs.

Children

The council provides a range of service for children and their families. CSSIW's inspection of the council's children's home found all aspects of the service were well developed and effective in supporting and enabling the young people to make positive social and developmental progress.

The past year has seen the council focus attention on the rebranding of the fostering service. CSSIW's inspection found improvements had been made in the service resulting in raising the profile of the service and an increase in the number of carers being recruited. CSSIW's inspection of Cardiff's fostering service found that the service had responded positively to recommendations made at our previous inspection and that improvements had been made. The authority is committed to the support, training and development of foster carers.

In September 2013 CSSIW completed the inspection of Cardiff's adoption service. CSSIW found that the quality of the adoption team staff, including administrative support staff, the two team managers and the adoption panel was good and that their insight and expertise will positively support the ongoing improvement of the service. Preparation training had been of a high standard and adopters spoke positively about the quality of their assessments. However the leadership of the service has not ensured that its performance has been optimised and its effectiveness in advertising, recruiting and assessing prospective adopters since the last inspection has been inconsistent.

There has been a fall in the number of children in need. While there was an improvement in the percentage of reviews of children in need plans from 42.7% to 55.1%, this remains significantly below the Wales average. Further work is required if the council is to fully meet the needs of this vulnerable group of young people. The preventive work being undertaken by Integrated Family Support Service and collaboration with third sector partners should support the continued improvement in this area of need.

The looked after children inspection found the authority had effective arrangements in place to share information with partner agencies which could support joint planning for looked after children. A needs assessment of the looked after population has been commissioned with Families First to inform strategic planning for the future of the service.

There was clear leadership and a positive culture within the management team, which was not at full capacity at the time of the looked after children inspection. A comprehensive breakdown of workload and performance was available which outlined capacity to meet the needs of looked after children. There had been a focus on stabilising the workforce and plans were in place to develop a specialist service for looked after children and young people. Good progress was being made and there was a realistic approach to addressing a legacy of over reliance

on agency workers. Arrangements for delivering front line services had been reviewed and senior managers had identified the issues which needed to be addressed.

The inspection found that the quality of assessments seen was inconsistent, they were not routinely updated and did not reflect the current needs of looked after young people. The recording of care planning was limited and there was little evidence of how young people were engaged in the process. The format of the plans did facilitate easy access to information or engagement and did not have a specific section to record the views of children and young people. Work was on-going to revise electronic documents and this was well supported by IT business support staff with knowledge and understanding of the particular needs of assessment.

Areas of progress

- The council is providing a good reablement and supported living services.
- The council has rebranded the fostering service to attract more foster carers.
- A good quality service is being provided at the council's children's home.
- A needs assessment of the looked after population had been commissioned to inform strategic planning for the future of the service.
- The council has been successful in reducing the number of agency workers.

Areas for improvement

The council should:

- review the commissioning of service for adults with mental health needs;
- ensure children in need reviews are undertaken in accordance with statutory timescales; and
- Improve the inconsistencies in the quality of assessments for looked after children.

Effect on people's lives

Adults

The use of direct payments provides people with real choice about how they want their service to be delivered. While the council has improved performance in the use of direct payments, recent surveys and consultations have identified that over four fifths of respondents were not aware of direct payments arrangements. If the council is to continue to increase the use of direct payments more attention needs to be given to raising awareness of this and other services.

As part of CSSIW's visit to the sensory impairment team we identified that while new referrals are promptly processed, there is a significant waiting list for the provision of aids and adaptations. Limited staff resources means urgent referrals are prioritised with little impact on reducing the waiting list. Some work has been undertaken to review the arrangements in place for people in need of aids and adaptation, however, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work.

Effective partnership arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable adults. The adult protection procedures work well and thresholds are consistently applied and risks are identified. Where concerns have been identified in the standards of care provided in residential services, the council has used their escalating concerns procedures to bring about improvements in outcomes for vulnerable people. The council has recently appointed an operational manager for safeguarding for adult, children and education services. This is an area of development that CSSIW will want to consider in the coming year.

Children

The number of looked after children has increased over the past year and performance in undertaking statutory reviews is below the Welsh average. Statutory visits to looked after children form an important part of the process of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This was an area of improvement identified in last years performance review.

The looked after children inspection found the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) had moved to a regional footprint. A self assessment had been completed and a business plan was in place. Clear priorities had been agreed which include improving the management and reduction of child sexual exploitation (CSE). A number of protocols had been developed by the LSCB which specifically related to the most vulnerable children and young people.

CSSIW's evaluation of the council's performance for 2012-13 highlighted a number of concerns from registered providers of under eight day care services regarding delays in providing feedback and outcomes following a child protection referral. CSSIW undertook a site visit to the safeguarding team within children's services during 2013-14 to explore the consistency of services, any barriers for improvement and the overall performance of the service. The interim manager was aware of the demands on the service and is currently the only person who has responsibility for chairing strategy meetings under part 4. While child protection meetings held under part 3 of the act have not raised the same concerns there appears to be less clarity about process for part 4 meetings.

Since CSSIW met with the manager significant improvement has been made in the timeliness of strategy meetings and information provided to CSSIW where staff working in regulated care services are implicated. The appointment of an

operational manager should enable the service to have a more strategic view on the effective delivery of the safeguarding team.

The council has reported some success in the educational attainment of looked after children. The Director reports that ten young people are being supported at university and the average educational attainment of looked after children at key stages two and three have improved. The percentage of young people engaged in education, training or employment is slightly below the Wales average.

In contrast to this, there has been little improvement in the percentage of young people with a personal education plan (PEP) in place at 23.9%. This is significantly below the Wales average of 62.7%. It is important that good quality PEPs are in place for all relevant looked after children to establish clear targets and actions to respond to each child's needs and aspirations and provide a continuous record of their achievements.

Areas of progress

- The council has improved the arrangements for professional strategy meetings in children's services.
- The council has appointed an operational manager for safeguarding and review.

Areas for improvement

The council should:

- continue to raise awareness of the availability of direct payments;
- improve performance in the number of statutory reviews for looked after children; and
- improve performance in ensuring personal education plans are in place for looked after children.

Capacity

Delivering Social Services

The director for health and adult social care reports an overspend of £3.624m for 2013-14, reflecting a growth of 9% in care hours through domiciliary care services and an increase in the cost of residential and nursing home placements. Within adult services, additional finances have been made available in 2014-15 in response to pressures in domiciliary and residential care. The additional money has been offset by the required savings of £6.2m from the social care budget.

Childrens' service area reported an overspend of £570,000, this is significantly less when compared with the 2012/13 overspend of £1.9 million.

The projected population rise over the next 15 years will have an impact on the ability and capacity of the council to provide services at the current level. The focus on developing support and services to support people in the community should delay people being admitted to residential care or receiving packages of care. This will result in an increase in the complexity and level of needs of people being admitted to residential care and higher cost to the council. In addition, lack of capacity within residential and nursing homes presents a challenge to the council in providing choice to the people of Cardiff. It also drives up cost. In response, the council is currently reviewing the commissioning model of domiciliary care and residential and nursing home placements. The new arrangements should be implemented in 2014. The council is also taking steps to review expensive packages of care and undertaking reviews of out of county placements. The scope of budget constraints would suggest that these measures are unlikely to be sufficient to make the necessary savings.

The council made permanent appointments to Operational Manager posts in children's social care to support the directors and take forward change and improve service delivery. There has been a more strategic overview on the delivery of services provided in both children's and adult social care. The capacity of the directors to take forward this review has at times been limited due to the lack of senior managers in post and the span of control for the service areas they are responsible for.

The director's report has highlighted the retention of staff and size of caseloads in children's services as a key issue for the council to address. This has affected some areas of performance in children's services. The director's have reduced the number of agency workers and is currently recruiting to current vacancies. To address increased caseloads and morale within the team the Director has secured support to procure a managed team for 250 cases in children's services. This is an area CSSIW will want to visit in the coming year to determine the management arrangements and quality of service provided.

Areas of progress

- The council is reviewing the commissioning of domiciliary and residential and nursing home placements.

Areas for improvement

- The retention of social workers.

Providing direction

The appointment of the director of social services and a director for health and adult social care is innovative and has brought stability in leadership and direction within the department. The nominated director of social services is also the director for children's services. In the absence of an Assistant Director for children's service the span of control in undertaking the director's statutory role in the oversight and management of social service has at times been stretched.

Supporting looked after children to achieve their full potential have been identified as a corporate priority. During the looked after children inspection CSSIW found that elected members and corporate officers were well informed and evidenced strong commitment to support looked after children and young people. Corporate parenting arrangements were well developed, and challenged performance. There were a number of mechanisms in place to allow elected members to meet with service users and check out the quality of services they were receiving.

CSSIW has attended a number of scrutiny committee meetings over the past year. We found there continues to be effective challenge and understanding of social services policies. There is a strong corporate commitment to social services to ensure the people of Cardiff have access to quality services.

The challenge for Cardiff over the coming year is maintaining and improving quality while managing a service with increased demands and a shrinking budget. A strategic approach to facing this challenge has started, but further reviews of services will need to be undertaken to ensure the demands and needs of the people of Cardiff are met.

Areas of progress

- The council has strengthened the management and leadership capacity with the appointment of a permanent director of social services and appointment of a director for health and adult social care.

Areas for improvement

The council should:

- Take forward plans to recruit to agreed senior leadership and management posts within the department.