



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

Performance Evaluation Report 2013–14

Carmarthenshire County Council
Social Services

October 2014

This report sets out the key areas of progress and areas for improvement in Carmarthenshire County Council Social Services for the year 2013–14

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2013 - 2014

Local Authority: Carmarthenshire County Council

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Summary

The council continues to benefit from strong leadership across both children and adult services, senior officers have a clear vision and are implementing plans effectively to ensure people living in Carmarthenshire who require social care services have a better quality of life. The evidence available confirms that the council continues to prioritise the provision of social care services and that its plans remain ambitious despite the financial constraints that it faces. Its budgets are well managed.

The council has implemented a number of innovative projects and has provided evidence of a range of positive outcomes which have been delivered through its strategic transformation of services. It has signalled its intention to put people in control of the services they receive and to support more people to live independent lives. It is seeking to reduce dependency on its services by strengthening support in communities.

The council's annual performance report has been structured to reflect the key components of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. It is clear that it will be in a strong position to deliver services within the new legislative framework. The council has set out how it will deliver services that demonstrate improved commissioning and integration of services, where the well being and the voice of citizens will be at the centre of service delivery.

The council recognises that the current economic climate, welfare changes and demographic pressures, present significant challenges for the future. It is realistic about how to prepare for new demands and shifting public expectations. In response to the Welsh Government's expectation of integration of health and social services for older people the council has set out its intentions. The progress that has already been made in Carmarthenshire suggests that the council is in a good position to deliver on this vision of an integrated health and social care service.

The Welsh Government's policy '*Mwy na Geiriau*', '*More than Just Words*' the strategic framework for the use of the Welsh language within the social care workforce, is being implemented effectively, with measures being developed to ensure people have access to the services through their language of choice.

The directors and heads of services reports have clearly set out their vision of providing more cost effective integrated services. There are clear plans to demonstrate how the lives of people in Carmarthenshire will be improved by the delivery of better coordinated services. The council are clear as to their priorities and have continued to make improvements throughout the year.

Response to last year's areas of improvement

The council has made good progress in the areas identified for improvement in CSSIW's annual review and evaluation of performance report 2012-13.

Area for improvement identified last year	Progress in 2013 - 14
To continue the work on the development of an integrated service for adults with learning disabilities.	Continued progress has been maintained with some innovative projects developing.
The development of a more effective assessment tool in adult services	An integrated assessment for health and social care has been implemented in services for older people. In learning disabilities, mental health and substance misuse services progress is constrained by incompatible ITC systems.
The development of performance indicators in adults services to demonstrate improved outcomes for service users.	The council continue to review how they collect, record and monitor data within adult services.
The children and adult transition team for disabled services needs to develop a closer alignment between funding bodies to ensure a more integrated transition of service.	This has been achieved with the oversight of this service shared by the head of children and adult services.
Further development of dementia care services.	The council has made good progress in the development of dementia care services.
Reduce the delay of safeguarding investigation in adult's services.	The council have increased the number of staff who are able to undertake these investigations.
The further engagement, participation and involvement of children and families in shaping services.	The council have reviewed their participation strategy for children and young people.

Children's individual plans to provide clearer objectives and these should be linked to improving outcomes for children.	The council is developing a framework to ensure that plans reflect how children's outcomes will be achieved.
Increase the proportion of assessments where the child is seen by a social worker and the proportion where children are seen alone.	The national performance indicator for these areas has improved. However, performance remains below the Welsh national average.
Improved timeliness of initial child protection conferences.	Improvements have been made within the child protection conferencing service and performance indicators are now above the Welsh national average.
Further develop the work on engagement with families whose child is on the child protection register.	The council has undertaken a pilot project to review the process of engagement with children and their families within the child protection process.
Improve performance in the development of personal education plans (PEP) for looked after children and improved attainment for looked after children at Key Stage 3.	This has been achieved with significant improvements in the development of PEP. Outcomes for children at key stage 3 have improved.
Improved performance in timely completions of statutory reviews for looked after children.	There has been an improvement in timeliness of statutory reviews for looked after children.
Improve placement stability for looked after children.	The placement stability for looked after children has seen some slight improvement.
Ensuring the director maintains the involvement and oversight of the regional adult and children's safeguarding boards.	This has been maintained with the director having oversight of the boards

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

- National Inspection of safeguarding and care planning for Looked after Children and Care Leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours ('looked after children inspection').
- National Review of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS).

- National Review of commissioning of social care for older people – the council undertook a self evaluation which fed into the national review.
- Transitional Planning for disabled children into adulthood.
- Implementation of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.
- Implementation of the Carers (Strategies) Measure 2010.
- Scrutiny arrangements for children and adults services.
- The programme of inspections of regulated services.
- Engagement meetings with senior council officers.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

- Progress on the modernisation and integration of adult social care.
- Early intervention and preventative services in child and family's services.
- Overview of scrutiny arrangements.
- Progress on achieving the recommendations identified from the visits undertaken by CSSIW during the year 2013/14.
- 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

Adults

The council continues to make sound progress in reshaping adult services with the transformation programme promoting and supporting people to maintain their independence and have a fulfilled life within their own community. Services are being aligned to secure a balance between preventative approaches and supporting those who are already vulnerable. It is evident that the council understands the demographics of need, are targeting services accordingly, and effectively planning to meet future demand.

The council is innovative in its approach to developing new services, and will be in a strong position when the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act comes into force, with an alignment between adult and children's services at the centre of the reconfiguration of some services. In the review of transition services for disabled young people it was evident that the model of integrated service delivery is working well, with staff from adults and children's services collaborating effectively in the best interests of people receiving services.

The council is developing guidance to support the principles of an integrated approach to service delivery. The council have commissioned a review of services for people with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and will be developing a single

integrated plan for the commissioning and delivery of services for children and adults with ASD. The challenge will be how the council can deliver a unified service that meets peoples assessed needs in the current financial climate.

Progress continues to be made in the reshaping of services for people with learning disabilities, with improved opportunities for work and leisure opportunities within the community. The projects such as COASTAL, CEI and STEPS have been instrumental in these developments, with sound evidence available to confirm the life enhancing opportunities these services have provided. The council will need to ensure these positive service developments grow and prosper in the current financial climate and as the central European funding which supports them ceases.

Services for older people continue to be delivered in an integrated approach with Hywel Dda Health Board; the Section 33 agreement being implemented effectively. However, a further restructure within the health board has affected the timeliness of some service developments.

Children

The council has reviewed and extended the family support strategy and action plan to 2017 in line with the Welsh Government's Families First programme. The plan sets out how the council will ensure that there is an alignment between the statutory and non statutory work in reducing disadvantage and poverty in families. This will strengthen the arrangements in place with a focus on improved outcomes, for children and young people.

In order to strengthen the preventative strategy the Flying Start programme is to be extended with additional areas being developed and an expansion of current projects. A range of integrated services are provided from these areas to support families; these include early education provisions such as playgroups, parenting classes and the strengthening families programme. CSSIW inspections found that the registered Flying Start services are providing children with good play and learning outcomes.

An innovative project has been introduced within schools as part of the Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF). The model is based on restorative practice focusing on the development of relationships aiming to engage better with families who are hard to reach. This will strengthen the range of support services available to families and compliment other services such as the Integrated Family Support Team (IFST).

The council has recently implemented an integrated family support service that seeks to work with families in an earlier and more co-ordinated way to achieve stability and better long-term outcomes. The council has built upon lessons learnt and it is in a strong position to develop further preventative support services. The reduction of the numbers of looked after children again confirm that the

preventative strategy is working effectively to support families early and prevent statutory intervention.

The reclaiming social work model based on the '*Hackney Model*' introduced last year (as a pilot) has been strengthened. The designated team Child and Family Unit (CFU) is developing innovative ways of working with families who are entering through the statutory route, using a multi agency, strengths based approach. An evaluation of this work has been conducted which demonstrates that there has been positive engagement with families to minimise risks and that outcomes for children have improved.

Areas of progress

- The continued development of an integrated approach with health and social services in the delivery of adult services.
- The council are considering the development of services in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.
- People are being involved in decisions regarding the development and delivery of services.
- The continued strengthening of the early intervention and preventative strategy within children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Development of services to people with autistic spectrum disorder.
- Strengthening the preventative strategy for families with children who have emotional difficulties and challenging behaviour.

Getting help

Adults

The council has good arrangements in place to enable people to be well informed in making choices about health and wellbeing initiatives and services. It continues to develop and expand the contact arrangements to ensure that the public are informed about the range of services available. The adult social care website has been updated, and provides a wealth of easy accessible information. Feedback from The Citizen Panel and 50+ Forum users is positive.

Community Resource teams have been developed aiming to support people more effectively in the community and not become reliant on social care services. A third sector broker scheme links to teams, complementing their role in accessing community resources to improve people's general wellbeing and live a more active life in their community.

The council continues to have effective referral processes through Care Line Plus and significant improvements have been made in response times from the referral to the first point of contact by the practitioner. However, the rate of delayed transfer of care for social care reasons has increased from 4.6% in 2012-13 to 6.6% this year. This increase is a concern and the council believe that a shortage in domiciliary care services is the main contributory factor. This clearly presents challenges for the council in its commissioning role. The council, in conjunction with Hywel Dda Health Board, are looking at addressing this deficit. This needs to be a priority to ensure that people can leave hospital when they are ready to do so.

The council continue to work effectively in the development of services that support people's independence and maintain them in their home and community. A range of innovative services are in place, including the convalescence beds which during the past twelve months provided a service to 133 people; and the flexi bed scheme which provided a service to 169 people. The reablement service has increased its provision, with more people being supported to live an independent life, with 31% of people not requiring an ongoing service. The council continue to promote the direct payments scheme across adult services. Services for people with a physical disability and sensory impairment have improved their performance in promoting independence and social inclusion.

Improved assessment processes ensure people are at the heart of decisions that affect them; a person centred planning approach has been implemented in mental health and learning disabilities services. An integrated assessment framework has also been introduced in older people's services through projects such as Transforming Adult Social Care (TASC). These are positive developments, but it is imperative that the council also monitors and manages the fundamental elements of effective assessment, care planning and review. During the year there has been a decrease in the timeliness of reviews with only 63.8% of reviews taking place as required. Furthermore, inspections of regulated services indicate that at times this having an adverse effect to the outcomes for people.

In the review of the implementation of the Carers (Strategies) Wales Measure 2010, we found that the council in collaboration with the health board are providing a good range of services which set out to provide a life line to vulnerable people. The Investors in Carer scheme (IiC) is working well to support the role of carers. There are effective reporting mechanisms and the designated elected member for carers is proactive in ensuring that the council provides a responsive service. The council commissions a much valued carer's information service from Carmarthenshire Action for Voluntary Services. There is a wide range of resources and information available which carers have helped develop. The council has effective mechanisms with 100% of assessments of carers taking place. However, the performance of the council is below the Welsh average for reviewing assessments and attention should be given to this to ensure that services provided continue to meet the assessed need of the individual.

Children

Through the Family Information Service the council continues to provide families, children and young people with a good range of information on the its preventative and support services. This is easily accessible and in a range of formats. The web site has been updated with an official launch in October 2013 and 2,500 families took part. It is reported that there has been an increase of visitors to the website by 40% since September 2013. Whilst this site is very informative and provides a wealth of information to support parents, it does not give details of the role of CSSIW in the regulation of early year's services. This information should be included to help parents understand the importance of ensuring a service is registered in order to provide appropriate safeguards for children.

Access to statutory services is better coordinated with information sharing at the centre of the work to provide a multi agency response where assessments indicate a holistic perspective is required. A multi agency safeguarding children hub, (MASH) has been introduced in collaboration with partner agencies, based within the Dyfed Powys Police central referral unit. This aims to improve safeguarding for children through better information sharing and timely responses. This is a pilot project and will be evaluated and reviewed by the West Wales Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The duty service has reorganised to provide a single point of contact for child protection referrals, to provide a more consistent approach to decision making. It is evident that this restructuring has provided a more responsive service with 99% of decisions being made within a day. The proportion of referrals allocated for assessment has increased by 0.8 percentage points with 2.3% of all referrals not proceeding to allocation.

The annual inspection of the council's fostering service had mainly positive findings, but it found that not all foster carers had an annual review of their approval as required. This was a specific issue for those carers who are family and friends. The council need to ensure that this group of approved carers are given the same priority as mainstream foster carers. This will ensure that good outcomes for all looked after children are achieved.

A good range of family support services are being provided to disabled children and their families, with an expansion planned of the residential school, to provide up to fifty two week placements. The annual inspections of residential services to disabled children identified that these services offer children positive life experiences that enhance their outcomes.

Areas of progress

- Improved information to the citizens of Carmarthenshire of services available within both children and adults social care.
- Better alignment of services within local communities.

- Increased use of the direct payment scheme.
- Improved assessment process in adult social care that places people at the heart of the decision making process.
- Improved multi agency working within children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the delayed transfer rates in adult's social care.
- Develop better arrangements for the commissioning of domiciliary care services in adult services.
- Improved the number of reviews in adult's social care.
- Foster carer reviews are undertaken annually as required.

The services provided

Adults

The council is committed to supporting people to maintain their independence as much as possible and continues to develop new integrated models of care as part of its transformation strategy. The Transforming Adult Social Care (TASC) project provides an integrated model of support, based on empowering people to be involved in their care and make decisions about what matters to them. This has resulted in a shift in working practices for staff, with less duplication and social care and health practitioners working collaboratively to improve people's general wellbeing. Responses to referrals have shown a significant improvement since the project was implemented in November 2012. In addition there has been a significant reduction in returns to the service; this suggests that it is having a positive impact on the outcomes for people.

The council manages the West Wales Adult Placement Scheme. The inspection of this service found that it is a valued with people being provided with a range of positive experiences. Carers are being supported effectively with improved arrangements noted. Effective links are in place between children and adults services in the planning of transition to ensure the continuity of service for young people and their families.

The council has made significant progress in the development of Dementia care services, with the dementia care action board approving a strategy '*A Positive Future*' to improve services to people with dementia over the next five years. A dementia friendly community has been identified aiming to provide more effective community support.

The council has made a significant investment, in conjunction with Welsh Government and Family Housing Association, to develop extra care accommodation for people with differing needs. The schemes will replace current residential services and provide better housing options. The council through its

engagement meetings with CSSIW will ensure that communication is maintained on the progress of these services.

In the review of services provided under the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010, CSSIW found that effective strategic arrangements were in place between Hywel Dda Health Board and the council. The arrangements to support Part 1, 2 & 3 of the measure were reported to be working well with reported improved multi agency working. However, this is hindered by incompatible IT systems and this is an area requiring further attention to support better collaborative working and improved outcomes for people. It was also reported there are challenges for people who have a dual diagnosis of learning disability and mental health in getting help from the appropriate services. Whilst guidance is currently being drafted to support the development of effective treatment plans, the council in conjunction with the Health Board will need to ensure that people can access the most appropriate support service. The provision of Part 4 of the measure, the Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) service was reported to be working well.

Children

The council continues to invest in services for children and young people to support them where possible to remain with their families in their community. There is a clear vision about the need for early intervention and prevention, delivered through an integrated multi agency approach.

The review of transitions found that services provided to young people and their families were founded on a strong value base which places the needs of disabled young people at the centre of service delivery. In general, transition services focus on the development of independence with evidence that young people experience good outcomes. The council provides clear strategic leadership and direction for how transition services should be delivered and there are a number of strategic groups that are focusing on the development of a more cohesive service. The specialist transition team aims to provide an integrated multi agency approach to support young people with a disability between the ages of sixteen to twenty five. Whilst the council has addressed the funding arrangements between its own adult and children's services to provide better alignment of services, this has not been achieved with health partners and there is no health worker within the transition team. Whilst the pathway from the children's disability team to the transition service is clear this is not a unified access and excludes young people with a physical disability and autistic spectrum disorders, unless they also have an associated learning disability. This is an area for consideration as part of the strategy for transition services as well as ensuring this meets the criteria for access into adult services.

The looked after children inspection found that services to children were a corporate priority. The council promotes the ethos of family based care within the child's own community and is rightly concerned to maintain family, school and

community links. The authority remains amongst the best in Wales in supporting looked after children to remain in county, in line with the requirements of *Stable Lives Brighter Future*, but in some cases maintaining the young person in the locality appeared to be the priority rather than meeting their needs. In these cases young people experienced a significant number of predictable placement breakdowns, and whilst positive outcomes have been achieved during the year in improving placement stability, it is evident for a small group of children this remains an issue. The regulatory inspection of the council's fostering service identified that a robust matching process for children was not always evident. Therefore the council need to prioritise how their placement strategy and matching processes leads to better placement choice and stability for looked after children.

CSSIW reviewed services to young carers and found that the council has strengthened both its support and services provided. Young carers are benefitting from the support they receive and are actively involved in shaping the support services. Services are delivered through a coordinated approach with the health board and there is an alignment between support to young carers and other services, such as education welfare and the team around the family (TAF). This ensures the appropriate identification of children's caring role and it is evident that this joint initiative is improving outcomes for young carers. During the year, 100% of young carers known to the council had an assessment and 98.2% of them received a service.

Areas of progress

- Better coordination of services in adult social care.
- The development of dementia services.
- Integration of adult and children services to ensure better transition of services.
- The arrangements have been strengthened within schools to ensure families have better access to support and preventative services.

Areas for improvement

- The integration of IT within adult services to support effective multi agency working.
- Improved access to mental health services.
- The development of a unified access to services for children and young people with disabilities.
- The placement strategy and matching process for looked after children needs to be strengthened.

Effect on people's lives

Adults

The performance in older people's services indicates that the realignment of services that support people to live independent lives in the community is beginning to demonstrate improved outcomes. Fewer people require residential care. This has been achieved by the development of the reablement services and the integrated approach to service delivery between the health board and the council. Key to continued success will be the further development of integrated community services, to ensure improvement in response to unscheduled care and the availability of domiciliary care.

Services to people with learning disabilities and mental health have continued to improve, with increased availability of community services and the reduction on the dependency of residential care. A number of new supported living services have been developed and further schemes are planned to be opened during the next twelve months. Whilst there has been an increase of 15 percentage points in people using services the council has improved on its timescale for assessments.

A thematic review across all councils in Wales of the effectiveness of the commissioning of adult social care focused on the commissioning of care and support for people with dementia and their carers. The council as part of this review undertook a self audit and measured its services as being good against the Welsh Government commissioning guidance.

CSSIW through the regulatory work find that the commissioning and contracting team provide an effective service, ensuring that social care providers are supported to deliver a good standard of care. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that people using social care service are safeguarded and protected and the council ensures effective arrangements for successful implementation of Welsh Government escalating concerns protocol. A key focus is on provider performance and improved outcomes for people.

The adult safeguarding board has launched its multi agency strategic business plan. It sets out the areas of priority with intent on fulfilling its responsibilities in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act to provide integrated delivery of adults and children's safeguarding. This is specifically within areas such as domestic abuse with a conference planned for October 2014. The development of the adult safeguarding regional board is planned within the overarching framework for regional collaboration

The council has invested in training additional staff from health and social services as investigative officers in order to improve the timeliness of adult protection investigations with information supporting improvements in this area. The council report good working arrangements with Dyfed Powys Police and that there are effective measures to evaluate risk on adult safeguarding referrals. Whilst improvements are noted CSSIW inspectors report some inconsistency in the application of thresholds and the timeliness of holding strategy meetings. Therefore, it is recommended that the council consider in those cases where the

risks are unclear holding a multi agency strategy meeting, which would lead to better information sharing between agencies and may result in the need to undertake less individual agency investigations. The council must ensure that adult safeguarding referral decisions are timely and that risk is managed effectively to ensure people are protected.

A national thematic Inspection of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) in Wales was conducted jointly by CSSIW and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW). It found effective arrangements for managing DoLS applications in the council with clear governance arrangements for the exercise of its supervisory body responsibilities. The impact of the recent Supreme Court judgement regarding the Cheshire West Case has significantly increased the numbers of applications. This will have implications for the workforce in dealing with the increased level of demand.

Children

The council continues to demonstrate its commitment to the development of responsive early intervention services, which recognises that early help provides better outcomes for children and young people. The reduction of the looked after children population and in the number of children who are subject to care proceedings is good evidence of progress

The number of children on the child protection register has seen a slight increase, but the majority of this can be attributed to large sibling groups. The council's child protection conferencing process has improved, with a system in place that is aligned to '*A Signs of Safety Model*'. A review of this system has taken place that identifies that parents are better engaged in the process. The improved arrangements ensure that children are better protected and that a timely process is in place regarding the holding of child protection conferences. Over 97% of the initial conferences take place within the required timescales compared to 84% for last year. Performance in the review of conference meetings taking place has improved from 97% for last year to just over 99%.

The local safeguarding children's board (LSCB) arrangements are effective and ensure that children benefit from services that protect them from harm. Evidence supports that the council has developed effective collaborative arrangements with its partner agencies to improve safeguarding outcomes for children. Management information has regularly been provided to scrutiny committee and areas of deficit have been addressed through scrutiny and corporate parenting panel. A local junior LSCB has been established to ensure children's voice is heard as part of the safeguarding priorities for the council.

The Welsh Government child practice review guidance has been fully implemented with a number of multi agency practitioner forums taking place. These reviews

have considered how improvement could be made in safeguarding practice and outcomes of these feed into the objectives of the safeguarding board.

The council ensures that robust arrangements for safeguarding within education are in place, with better access for training and support for staff. The education welfare service has been redesigned aiming to complement other preventative services, such as TAF and are providing a range of intervention strategies that promote better school attendance, as well as addressing issues with families with welfare and safeguarding concerns. The performance indicators show that attendance and attainment for looked after children has improved across the key stages.

The annual inspection of the council's fostering service found that children's views are actively sought, with participation and children's rights valued and established throughout the service. Foster carers are well supported including out of hours support and specialist support is provided to ensure they can meet the physical and emotional wellbeing of children. The educational attainment for looked after children is a priority and there are effective systems to ensure foster carers support children in achieving good educational outcomes. Improved systems are in place regarding personal education plans (PEP) from 51% for the previous year to 73.7% in 2013-14. A person centred approach to review the PEP has been implemented and it is reported that this is working effectively to involve young people and their carers in the process. Children's achievements continue to be recognised with an annual award ceremony.

The council have taken the lead role in the development of the regional adoption agency in line with the Welsh Government's policy of an adoption service for Wales. The regional adoption service started in April 2014. Prior to April 2014, the West Wales Adoption Agency provided the council with effective permanency arrangements for children with thirty adoption orders granted during the year. A priority for the council, as part of the development of the regional service, will be to further develop post adoption support services. The West Wales Adoption Service won an award from the British Association of Social Work Cymru, for their creativity in holding child appreciation days.

Areas of progress

- Reablement services have been strengthened.
- Reduced dependency on residential care in adult services.
- Increased capacity of investigating officers in adult safeguarding.
- Improved participation and consultation with families and children.
- A junior LSCB has been established.
- The Mid & West Wales Adoption Agency has become operational.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency in adult safeguarding in the application of appropriate thresholds in referrals and the timeliness of holding strategy meetings.
- Review the arrangements for looked after children who present with risky behaviours.

Capacity

Delivering Social Services

The council continues to make solid progress in transforming service delivery that reduces dependency and promotes independence. It aims to secure greater independence and choice for local people, with preventative strategies at the heart of service delivery in both adult and children services. The council increasingly looks for opportunities for collaboration and this is supported by better commissioning and procurement processes. There is a strong commitment to the development of the regional integrated community strategy.

The leader of the council has set out the priorities for social care services within the annual report and improvement plan and this demonstrates the high commitment of the council to the delivery of social care services to children and adults. It wants to provide services that are delivered efficiently and which enhance people's wellbeing, offering greater choice and control over their lives.

The council is committed to developing a strong and professional workforce and continues to invest in its social care workforce through the social care workforce development partnership (SCWD) with a substantial increase in the attendance of training during the year which includes attaining professional qualifications. The SCWD promotes the philosophy of one sector one workforce with the key aim of improving outcomes of people who use social care services, through this collaborative arrangement.

The workforce continues to be stable with vacancy levels low; however, there have been some changes within children's services. It is reported that this has had minimal impact on service delivery but the timescales for approval for advertising posts were seen to cause some delay and had affected service delivery. Improved personnel arrangements have been introduced with better management of sickness absence and support for staff and managers.

Performance management systems are effective with mechanisms in place within adults and children's services to monitor performance. Senior officers maintain good oversight of performance. Discussions and reviews undertaken during the year have demonstrated that the council has addressed the areas identified in last year's performance evaluation report. Information from regulatory inspections confirms that the council continue to perform well, with people generally having good outcomes.

The council has an effective complaints procedure and these are being used effectively to inform future service developments. Whilst complaints during the year decreased overall, there has been an increase within some service areas. Compliments to the council have increased with people being very positive about the services they have received.

The council are ensuring that the Welsh Government Policy ‘*Mwy na Geiriau*’ ‘*More Than Just Words*’ is being implemented effectively, with robust arrangements in place to ensure that the social care workforce can meet the needs of people through the medium of Welsh. The council’s plan is to ensure that the Welsh language becomes an integral element of the planning and delivery of services. The learning and development team have won an award for their work in the promotion of the Welsh language within the workforce.

Areas of progress

- Further strengthening of the preventative services.
- The regional collaboration.
- Strengthened arrangements for staff training and support.

Areas for improvement

- Staffing vacancies are filled within a timely timeframe to ensure the minimum disruption to services.

Providing direction

The council continue to provide strong political and corporate support for the delivery of social care services. Effective collaborative arrangements are in place with clear governance arrangements with the third sector, partner agencies and neighbouring councils. Carmarthenshire’s integrated strategy sets out the council’s plan for the delivery of aspirational, innovative and sustainable services across adults and children’s services. The strategy aims to provide better aligned services, focusing on value for money whilst ensuring that families live safe and healthy lives which are free from poverty and deprivation.

The Mid & West Wales Health and Social Care collaborative have developed the mandate for future regional working and sets out how through these regional partnerships services will be delivered more effectively. This will assist the council in achieving sustainable, flexible and adaptable ways of working that will ensure that they can continue to deliver effective social care services.

Leadership in the council is strong across children and adults services with officers working effectively in developing an integrated approach to services that will make them well placed for the implementation of the Welsh Governments Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

The Wales Audit Office concludes that the council is managing its improvement programme well and continues to develop public reporting which provides a fair and balanced assessment of progress as well as the impact this is having upon citizens and service users.

Scrutiny arrangements are effective and officers provide elected members with detailed information, with members providing officers with robust challenge to ensure decisions are made effectively. However, public interests reports from the Wales Audit Office have highlighted a need for the council to tighten up on its procedures for decision making.

Senior officers provide strong leadership and support to ensure that adult social care services are provided effectively to the citizens of Carmarthenshire. A significant factor in this has been that the council has had consistency in senior managers. However, a number of senior officers are due to retire. The council should ensure that the transition is managed well and that the wider staff group are supported to maintain the relatively strong performance of social services.

The statutory director who retires in September has provided effective leadership within adult and children's services. He has helped to ensure that services are delivered effectively and that people in the council have access to support services that enrich their lives. The council has put into place suitable interim arrangements regarding the statutory director's role until the newly appointed director takes up their post in November.

The director of education and head of children services provide effective leadership within children services. The configuration of services works well, with a clear alignment between the preventative and statutory services to ensure that services target vulnerable groups and address disadvantage and child poverty. This year has seen improved performance indicators with evidence to support improved outcomes for children and young people.

Areas of progress

- Further development of integrated services to improve on the council efficiency.