



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

Performance Evaluation Report 2013–14

Denbighshire County Council
Social Services

October 2014

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

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2013-14

Local Authority: Denbighshire County Council

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Summary

The council has set out a five year plan to modernise its services. In social services this will involve a transformation, not just of the pattern of social care services, but also in the shape of the workforce employed to provide care and support. The council believe that this cultural change will help it to prepare for implementation the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the delivery of sustainable social services in the future

Significant, planned, staffing changes within the department took place during the year. These included changes at leadership level through the appointment of a new Director of Social Services, and in the re-structuring of staffing teams for many services delivered to children and adults.

The director's report acknowledges the substantial demographic changes faced by the council and considers their implications for the development of social care services within an uncertain financial climate. In doing so there is powerful evidence of a strategic approach taken to meeting these challenges. The council's approach includes a review of existing services; the introduction of innovative models of practice; integrated partnership development; and exploration of the potential for regional commissioning for some services.

The impact of robust scrutiny particularly through a system of 'service challenges', and by listening to the views of people, underpins the modernising agenda. Progress is underway with the introduction of innovative approaches to support the emotional well-being of younger and older adults, integrated project work with BCUHB, and early intervention for children and families.

The director's report demonstrates commitment, creativity and pragmatism in its response to 'More Than Just Words/Mwy Na Geiriau', with clear evidence of forward planning designed to heighten awareness and take-up of the welsh language, and to increase the accessibility of social services in the language of need.

Overall, the performance during the year of the council's social care department is strong. The introduction in 2013-14 of new models of working for both children's and adult services will need rigorous evaluation throughout the forthcoming year. The council's approach to looked after children requires strategic focus to ensure that the experiences and outcomes for the children and young people concerned can be improved.

Response to last year's areas of development

The council put in place strategies to improve performance areas identified in CSSIW's 2012-13 report.

Area for improvement identified in 2012-13	Progress in 2013-14
Establishing clear measurable outcomes to assist with the evaluation of existing and proposed services	Several new services introduced. Robust evaluation strategies yet to be deployed which can effectively capture outcomes, especially for children and families.
Assessment and support to carers	Some progress made through commissioning arrangements with third sector agencies and the development work leading to a North Wales Carers Information and Consultation Strategy.
Performance in relation to looked after children	Emerging progress but much still to do.
Staff sickness levels	Initial progress through introduction of methods designed to lead to a decrease in sickness levels.
Partnership working with BCUHB	Improving, with specific partnership practices and programmes jointly introduced with BCUHB.
Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards	Early signs of progress by enabling a small cohort of staff able to undertake training to enable them to undertake DoLS assessments in 2014-15.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

Areas for improvement have been identified within the body of this report and progress in relation to these will be monitored during scheduled engagement meetings. Priority areas are outlined below.

- Impact of changes to staffing infrastructure for POVA in order to ensure that the safeguarding process is operated in a timely, consistent, authoritative manner across the authority.
- Establishing a rigorous research process for listening to and capturing the experiences and outcomes for children, young people and their families. This should focus in particular on the re-shaped early intervention and children and families support services and in services for looked after children.

- Improving the quality of provision and outcomes for looked after children.

CSSIW visits during the year

CSSIW completed a full programme of regulatory inspections in Denbighshire. CSSIW also contributed significantly to safeguarding meetings for both children and adults and to escalating concerns meetings relating to adult care homes.

The CSSIW Inspection of the council's adoption services was undertaken in November 2013. CSSIW's inspection of Fostering Services was carried out in January 2014. The council was also included in the national inspection of safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours ('looked after children inspection') and completed a self evaluation as part of the national review of commissioning.

Performance

Shaping Services

Adults

The council's modernisation of social services programme focuses upon the development of new initiatives which support independence and enhance well-being. This approach is founded upon forecasts of the needs of the local population, including projections from national data and market intelligence. It is therefore based upon the best information available. The council is also the host authority for the activities of the North Wales Commissioning 'hub' which is helping to shape the delivery of services and support to adults living in Denbighshire, via improved quality monitoring, regional collaboration, and an evidenced-based approach to commissioning services for those with complex and long term needs.

During 2013-14 the emphasis of the council was to enable people aged sixty five years and over to remain independent. . Networks have been developed to help people with complex needs to remain in their local communities. Some examples include the delivery of targeted programmes designed to help meet the emotional well-being of older adults such as the 'Men's Sheds' and University of the Third Age both designed to prevent social isolation, encourage sharing of skills and interests, and to identify specific areas of help and support. There is also a volunteer scheme known as 'Age Awareness and Dignity in Care' recruiting older people to train practitioners working in the health and social care professions and also councillors within Denbighshire.

The introduction in 2013-14 of a new collaborative project with BCUHB designed to give a Single Point of Access (SPOA) to health and social enquiries was delayed, but subsequently started in June 2014.

The council provides evidence of consulting and listening to the views of those adults and their families receiving support to meet long term care and sometimes complex

needs. There was an improvement in performance in relation to the numbers of reviews of care plans carried out, although demand for reviews also increased. In 2013-14 the council introduced a rota of visits to eight council services by elected members in which they spoke to users of these services and the staff supporting them, before submitting a report which is shared with the service and an action plan developed to address any action deemed appropriate.

There are an increasing number of people with learning disabilities living in Denbighshire for whom services are largely delivered by several independent sector providers in the county. There are also a relatively large number of older people with learning disabilities living in the county. The move toward providing supported living arrangements (and also in intensive support packages for individuals with very complex needs), may also include the provision of services to many people with autistic spectrum conditions. This range of need has implications for the council. It will need to accurately assess and evaluate the quality of life for people living in these services so that it can be confident that the specific needs of individuals are being met.

Children

The early intervention model developed and implemented by the council in 2013-14 for vulnerable children and their families reflects a determined and defined approach underpinned by a theoretical model. Children and their families are supported at times of day where their need for support is highest, i.e. early morning and evenings, by the Team around the Family (TAF) service. The objective is to anticipate and prevent crisis situations, and so avoid stepping-up to Children and Families services. TAF is part of the Families First programme and 186 families were being served through this service in 2013-14, of which 137 were new referrals. The reshaped Families First delivery model is being further tuned in response to feedback from families and stakeholders. The council has worked over the past year to empower and skill-up parents of children in need (and their families) so as to prevent admissions of children into care.

Denbighshire council has therefore been able to demonstrate innovation in shaping those parts of its services to children relating to early intervention and to support for disabled children. The council is also striving to implement an integrated approach to family support.

Following a review of services for disabled children, the waiting list for occupational therapy was reduced and then removed completely. The council has appointed a full-time transitions and independence coordinator.

The council has introduced new posts in services for looked after children and also worked with Barnardos to reshape their work with young people in preparation for their transition to adulthood from the age of 14.

Through the implementation of evidence based tools and in partnership with health visitors amongst others, there have been performance improvements in

safeguarding processes for looked after children 94% of reviews and 89% of statutory visits which were held on time. Although hampered by difficulty in recruiting to posts, the council is meeting timescales in relation to children on the child protection register, with 100% of child protection reviews held on time.

Areas of Progress

- Creative programmes established to meet the emotional well-being of older adults and the adult male population. Early consolidation of the practice-based team approach to early intervention model vulnerable children and their families.
- Implementation of innovative schemes to support the emotional well-being of younger and older adults.
- Use of consultation with adults and their families to feed into the design of services and quality of life for adults especially those with long-term and complex needs.

Areas for Improvement

- Evaluating the quality of life and outcomes for people with learning disabilities living in the many supported living services.
- Defining a clear strategy and research process for listening to and capturing the experiences and outcomes for children and young people, especially around the recently re-shaped early intervention and children and families support services and in services to looked after children.

Getting Help

Adults

The council strives to find ways in which to improve the accessibility of information and advice to adults living in the county and engages with a range of stakeholders in order to do so. This includes the council's focus on the provision of preventative and reablement services which has been advanced through creative partnership work with BCUHB.

For example, following the publication of a joint statement of intent with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, social care and health practitioners are working together more closely to provide assessment and support for people at risk of deteriorating health. This includes support for those with complex needs and their families. The planned introduction of the single point of access is a consequence of this work.

In 2013-14 the council began limited weekend working with BCUHB, including the provision of a social worker and health and social care support workers to deliver initial packages of care to people leaving hospital, so that discharge can be achieved in a smooth and timely manner. The success of this and other initiatives is confirmed

by the relatively low rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons in Denbighshire (0.5% per 1000 of population compared to a Welsh average of 4.7%). The council and BCUHB also entered into a formal partnership to employ a group of part time staff known as Health and Social Care Support Workers.

In the drive to enable older persons to retain or regain their independence the council's intake and reablement service worked with 379 people during 2013-14, of which 296 were supported to return to their own homes from hospital. Consultation with recipients of the intake and reablement service took place by the council, with user-responses being generally very positive.

Working with other agencies has helped the council to focus their services where most needed. The Integrated Community Equipment Service is delivered through partnership with BCUHB and provides a range of equipment. In 2013-14 it helped 1,923 people to live safely at home. This represents a 10% increase compared to last year.

In 2013-14 the council introduced one-off funding to develop support for parents of older people with Learning Disabilities; support for carers of people with dementia (including home -based support); and additional support for carers following assessment. In 2013-14 there was a small increase in carers offered an assessment or review; and also in the in actual assessment or review. The council will need to be mindful that Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act (2014) strengthen carer's rights and place duties upon the council to meet their assessed needs.

At a strategic level, the council is involved in the North Wales Carers Strategic Group in developing a North Wales Carers Information and Consultation Strategy, with the aim that this will enhance the approach taken to the assessment of the needs and support provided to carers. The council has also commissioned arrangements with six third sector agencies to provide carers support.

Children

The council provides accessible information about the care and support services provided to children and their families in Denbighshire through key areas such as its early intervention service. The introduction of locally based practice teams (and seven day per week intensive service provided by the Family Support Team) enables good access to practitioners by children and their families. The First Contact Team was re-named the Children and Families Support Gateway and it provides a valuable source of information, advice, support and activities for children, families and young carers. The council website provides concise information relating to children, young people and families, looked after children, fostering and adoption. This information could be further enhanced through the use of mobile technology such as phone apps and easy-read versions so that information is accessible to those of all ages who find reading the Welsh or English Language difficult. Overall, the council monitors and provides information demonstrating an improving trend in the performance of its children and families services. Despite a slight

increase in overall referrals received there was a small reduction of 23 in referrals to the Children and Family Service in 2013-14 when compared to 2012-13 (799 to 766 respectively). Re-referrals decreased during the year (19% in 2012-13 to 17% in 2013-14). This reduction may demonstrate the effectiveness of the re-shaped assessment and intervention process. However, the pathway and outcomes for people who do not meet the threshold for care and support from social services is unclear.

The council has a protocol in place between social services, education and families first services to promote the identification and referral for assessment and access to services for young carers. During the year the council, along with BCUHB and two other North Wales authorities, have been exploring the development of a sub-regional young carers' service. Following a tender process, the new service started on 1st April 2014.

Twice weekly meetings are held with other agencies including the Police, Education and Health to consider referrals so that the most appropriate agency supports and works with children and their families.

There was a significant decrease in the number of qualifications obtained by children who are looked after during the year, suggesting that the educational process is not serving some young people well in helping them to prepare for adult life. This may in part be addressed by the welcome introduction during the year of a designated full-time Education Liaison officer for looked after children, who is redesigning and introducing an up-to-date Personal Education Plan. The social services department commissioned Barnardos to provide a dedicated personal advisor to care leavers. The impact of these developments needs to be closely monitored by the council.

Outcomes for care leavers interviewed in Denbighshire were considered as part of CSSIW's looked after children inspection. It was reported that care leavers identified frustration with the lack of information available to them about their rights and entitlements - particularly in relation to housing and financial support and also that the council was not providing occupational opportunities for care leavers to attain economic independence.

The council can demonstrate a focus upon looked after children who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and it has strengthened relationships with North Wales Police. Denbighshire is the sole local authority in Wales participating in the NSPCC review of emotional well-being of looked after children. In October 2013 the council implemented the revised Public Law Outline (PLO) protocol which will affect the process and timeliness of all public law family proceedings.

Area of Progress

- Social care and health practitioners are working together more closely to provide assessment and support for people at risk of deteriorating health, including those with complex needs and their families.

- The council began limited weekend working with BCUHB, including the provision of a social worker and also health and social care support workers, to deliver initial packages of care to people leaving hospital.

Areas for Improvement

- Increasing rates of assessment and support for carers.
- Information provided by the council could be further enhanced through the use of mobile technology such as apps and with the preparation and publication of easy-read on-line versions being so that they are accessible to children but also to those who find reading difficult.
- Being clear about the type of services families are signposted to if they do not meet the assessment threshold in order to access the Children and Family Service (only 10% of all assessed meet the threshold).
- Increase the council's support to looked after children through employment and apprenticeship opportunities and information on rights and entitlements.

Services Provided

Adults

In 2013-14 the council restructured the social care workforce supporting adults into locality teams, with an increasing role for hands-on social care practitioners. The aim is for the adult social care department to better focus its resources on early intervention, and enabling support, but also respond to those people with longer term support and care needs.

Through citizen-directed planning and support there is increasing emphasis upon personal choice and control and people's opportunities are enhanced through the high level of engagement with other council departments and third sector organisations to make a range of community based services available to people. However, there was little improvement during 2013-14 in terms of numbers of people using direct payments - an option that would enable people to make their own decisions about the packages of care and purchasing aids and adaptations.

The emphasis of the council's approach to those with complex and long term needs continues to be on establishing responsive support, tailored to individual need, and within their own community as far as possible. During the year 94% of individual care plans were reviewed on time.

A corporate safeguarding training programme was established during the year and is due to be rolled out in 2014-15, to ensure that vulnerable people are being safeguarded. The Protection of Vulnerable Adults (PoVA) service received and worked with 87 referrals made on behalf of vulnerable people during the year. Leadership of POVA was extended to locality team managers and in view of this significant change it will be important that the council closely monitors and ensures

that this more localised service is operated in a timely, consistent and authoritative manner across the authority.

The council's award winning Telecare service was delivered to 1,550 people in 2013-14. This enables people to call for help from their own homes in the event of an emergency. There was a small decrease in the numbers of complaints made relating to social care received in 2013-14 compared to the previous year. The complaints received fell broadly within three themes of, concern; communication; engagement; and staff. There is a system in place for the resolution of those complaints which are upheld, and performance in dealing with complaints during the year improved with 97% of stage 1 complaints and 100% of all stage 2 been addressed within timescales.

Children

Overall, the creative approach taken by the council to the implementation of identification, early intervention and preventative models of provision to children and families during 2013-14 has been impressive. The changes to work patterns which took place demonstrate effective leadership by the council and genuine commitment from its staff. Whilst recognising that these are recent changes, it would be beneficial for the council to design a formal process of independent measurement and evaluation of the outcomes achieved, to support continuous improvement.

There was a small increase in the number of children within looked after settings, excluding respite, with 100% of children receiving care plans during their first placement, and completion of permanence plans at second review improved,(75% in 2012-13 to 94% in 2013-14).

The numbers of looked after children who had a health care plan in place continues to place the council's performance amongst the lowest in Wales (38.4% compared to a national average of 81%). To address, this late in 2013-14, the council introduced a new post of full-time designated nurse for looked after children. The council are confident that this post will bring about significant improvement impact and progress. This can be better assessed during 2014-15.

There has been a significant decrease in the average external qualifications/points score (163.9) achieved by 16yr old looked after children. This may be due to the characteristics within the specific cohort for 2013-14. However, this is the lowest rating achieved by the council over the past three years, falls behind the national average (261.5), and so will require rigorous scrutiny during 2014-15.

The percentage of looked after children experiencing one or more changes of school, not simply through age-related changes, increased in 2013-14. Performance also declined in relation to placement stability for looked after children. The council should seek to understand and respond to the background to this decline in performance. It should listen to the experiences of the young people, and establish a clear interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary plan for improvement.

Areas of progress

- Citizen-directed planning and support and partnerships increasing the range of opportunities and choices for older people.
- Annual review performance of those with long term and complex needs.
- Embedding locally practice teams to provide early intervention and support to children and families during unsocial hours and at time of greatest need.
- Appointment of education liaison officer and increase in the number of children receiving care plans during their first placement and completion of permanence plans at second review.

Areas for Improvement

- Following changes to leadership ensure that the PoVA process is operated in a timely, consistent and authoritative manner across the authority.
- Increase the opportunities for people to use direct payments.
- Evaluating the new intervention methods used and assessing the impact upon the quality of life for children and their families Outcomes for looked after children, in particular placement stability, access to primary health care and educational and employment opportunities.

Effect on Peoples Lives

Adults

The council's focus on early identification and intervention is contributing to improving outcomes for people in that more are being enabled to live independently in their own homes, with fewer needing residential and long term care.

There was an increase in demand for reablement services during the year, with 77% of people not needing further social care services (an increase of 5% from the previous year). Reablement's speedy, personalised and respectful approach in working with people, who have recently left hospital, is viewed as strength by the people who use the service.

Changes have been introduced to the leadership of the safeguarding process whereby locality team managers have become designated lead managers responsible for a managing protection of vulnerable adult cases (POVA). The rationale for the change is to support anticipated increased demand in safeguarding referrals. In 2013-14 there were 87 people referred and responded to under the safeguarding process.

Activity in relation to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards remained low during 2013-14, with only 12 referrals being made of which 5 were granted. The council recognise that following the Supreme Court ruling of March 2014, it will need to plan and respond to the challenges presented by the potential increase in number of

applications from 2014 onwards. During 2013-14 the adult social care department supported six members of staff to undertake DoLS training so that they can perform assessments. In 2014-15 the department plan to enable further staff to attend either in-house or external training to build its capacity to undertake assessments and to explore regional collaboration.

Children

The council provides evidence of firm and effective commitment and scrutiny to safeguarding children and child protection which is supported by a solid corporate approach. Ultimately the council is seeking to create a culture of safeguarding throughout its social care services. The assessment and management of risk factors associated with safeguarding and child protection has received significant attention during the year. This is illustrated by shared learning events and the adoption of 'best practice' approaches.

All projects delivered by the social care department are required to complete a safeguarding self-audit tool (whether children, young people and for adults) on an annual basis, and all projects within the Families First programme must ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place, and reported at regular contract reviews. The number of children on the child protection register slightly decreased during the year (88 in 2012 -13 to 85 in 2013 -14).The council achieved a performance of 99% of initial child protection conferences and 91% of initial core meetings held on time.

Measures introduced in late 2013-14 to address specific areas of health checks and educational planning provide partial evidence of the council's strengthening approach to raising the profile of corporate parenting for looked after children. Partnership work with the third sector to work with young people aged 14 onwards to prepare for adulthood was also introduced. Performance Indicators however, suggest continuing decline in performance in outcomes for care leavers and for young people's transitions within services. This suggests the need for the council to challenge itself in the way it approaches its corporate parenting role so that these areas of decline are halted and addressed.

Areas of progress

- Reablement service outcomes for people.

Areas for improvement

- Measuring the timeliness and consistency of the safeguarding approach across the authority in view of the recent introduction of local leadership for some POVA referrals.
- Health, dental and educational outcomes for looked after children.
- Improving placement stability for looked children.

Capacity

Delivering Social Services

During 2013-14 the council introduced significant changes within the department at leadership level and in staffing infrastructure. To support these changes flexible working times and new staffing practices and roles within local areas were introduced; leading to a heightened focus in providing practical support to children, adults and families at time of the day where their needs was greatest. This is clearly an evolving process and consolidating new staffing structures and practices will inevitably take time.

The council has identified the need to both support and develop the social care workforce and this includes all organisations supporting vulnerable people in Denbighshire. Some progress has been made during 2013-14 and 93% of eligible social services staff received an annual performance appraisal. Ways of reducing staff absence in social services were introduced during the year and the director reported that whilst there was an improving trend identified during the fourth quarter of 2013-14 the reduction of staff absence levels remains a priority.

Further, the council is also working within a challenging and uncertain financial climate, in which the reduction in revenue received across 2013-14 – 2014-15 will total £11.6m. The expenditure on social care per head of population in 2013-14 was the highest in north wales and the 5th highest in Wales. Social services in Denbighshire have the lowest number of staff per population in north wales at 7 per 1000.

A big challenge for social care services in the council will be to ensure the sustainability of its introduction of creative, early intervention and preventative models of service delivery. The evidence to justify the introduction and continued use of such models, as opposed to more traditional approaches, may be difficult to produce in the short term. Therefore it will be essential therefore for the council to develop and introduce a robust research strategy so that it measures, monitors and formally evaluates these new programmes. Baseline data, intervention processes and outcomes for the people it serves should be captured and the learning shared.

The recent widening of the potential application of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessments is very likely to place significant resource implications upon the council, through higher numbers of requests. During 2013-14 DoLS did not feature significantly and the low number of referrals mirrored 2012-13. However, the preparedness of the council to respond to increased demand has, in part, been illustrated by the training provided to six members of staff with the skills to undertake DoLS assessment. However, any DoLS assessments will need to fit into the existing roles of these staff. It is therefore recognised by the council that there is the need to increase DoLS training to staff, to build's its capacity to assess, and reflecting a more general need to mainstream the DoLS throughout the council, social care and health.

Providing direction

Denbighshire is experiencing a changing demography especially in relation to an increasing older population and also rising numbers of people with learning disabilities. The council has sought to address these and the associated budgetary pressures through the introduction of its corporate modernising agenda, by progressively rebalancing its social care workforce, engaging with the public and seeking their views, and by looking to plan and delivery services in often creative ways.

There is clarity and focus in the Director's report which outlines the direction of travel for social care services in the county, including the partnerships established and being developed to help deliver these objectives. Within the council there is keen interest and support from elected members. They play a key role in the exemplary 'service challenge' meetings where they question lead officers about the performance and impact of the council's services.

The council hosts the North Wales Commissioning 'hub' which is shaping the delivery of services and support to adults living in Denbighshire. Senior officers from Denbighshire social services department contribute to the monthly meetings and network activities of the North Wales Social Services Improvement Collaborative (NWSSIC). This body aims to project and enable coordinated improvement in the delivery of collaborative working between the social services departments across the region. Whilst the numbers of people entering residential accommodation has been decreasing, the council has invested in ensuring that people's care plans have been reviewed in a timely manner.

The council's role as a 'corporate parent' of children and young people that it looks after has seen only initial signs of progress during 2013-14, with vacancies within key posts designed to improve the personalisation of educational planning and address health and dental outcomes. These vacancies were filled towards the end of 2013-14 and the impact to date is therefore too early to determine. However, the national thematic inspection of looked after children by CSSIW identified that the outcomes for young people leaving care was a source of concern. Members will need to provide greater support to assure that strategic aims are effectively owned and translated into action across the council services and by partner agencies. This will be needed to ensure appropriate health care, increased educational support and outcomes, and employment or apprenticeships opportunities through the council, for all it's looked after children.