



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

# Performance Evaluation Report 2013–14

Newport City Council Social Services

October 2014

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

# **Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2013 - 2014**

**Local Authority: Newport City Council**

**This report sets out the key areas of progress and areas for improvement in Newport Social Services for the year 2013- 14**

## **Summary**

The council continues to take an innovative approach to the engagement of third sector and other agencies in delivering services. Some of these, such as the developing involvement of Barnardo's in the delivery of children's services have proved to be very successful. The ongoing challenge presented by the need to integrate health and social care is significant, and implementation of these can prove complex, as shown by the difficulties presented by the Gwent Frailty project. Whilst demonstrating some improved outcomes for people, the anticipated financial gains from this project have yet to be fully realised.

Leadership in the council's social services has been consolidated in 2013-14, with the interim appointments of the director and head of adult services being made permanent. In addition, the head of children's services post has been agreed on a three year full-time contract. The council has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and where it needs to improve performance. More needs to be done to ensure effective oversight and rigorous challenge to close the performance gap. Its new commissioning plan for adults has the potential to help bridge the gap, but it is yet to be implemented.

Financial challenges have continued, with particular pressures on adult services. The budget for 2014-15 has been reduced by approximately 0.4%, with adjustments to individual service areas reflecting particular over/underspends throughout 2013-14. There is evidence of more effective financial oversight and control.

The council's capacity to deliver high quality adult services remains fragile in some respects, with significant concerns being raised about the ability of some of the council's adult care homes to deliver appropriate outcomes for older adults with more complex needs. This is compounded by continuing delays in the completion of care plan reviews. This means that it is not possible to be sure that people are continuing to receive services appropriate to their changing needs, or that the council's resources are being efficiently deployed.

Performance in relation to children's services continues to be mixed, with evidence of some good outcomes in many areas. However, the implementation of a work

force strategy aimed at enhancing recruitment and improving staff retention has only proved to be partially successful to date. This, coupled with other factors, has had a negative affect on outcomes in relation to placement stability for looked after children, the timeliness of core group meetings and outcomes for care leavers.

Newport holds a variety of forums aimed at eliciting feedback on its performance and carries out detailed analysis of complaints. It consults widely on proposals for change or new initiatives – the commissioning strategy for adult services is a recent example of this. Population profiling at a local level also assists in informing future plans.

The director’s annual report is detailed and well set out, with themes clustered around key messages. Present and future challenges are acknowledged in relation to both demographic and financial pressures, as are some of the anticipated implications of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in shaping the future. Some additional work is required in aligning and focussing future strategies in order to take this fully into account. Relative areas of strength and weakness are identified. This is supported by a detailed analysis of the performance of children’s and adult services in appendices.

### **Response to last year’s areas of improvement**

<b>Area for improvement identified last year</b>	<b>Progress in 2013 - 14</b>
A more timely response to adults referred to council services via the Gwent Frailty programme, coupled with improvements in transfers of care from hospital.	<p>This remains an issue, and future progress is heavily dependent upon successful outcomes from the recently agreed changes to local discharge arrangements.</p> <p>Although there has been marginal improvement in 2013-14, performance in this area remains poor, with delayed transfers of care from hospital for social care reasons at 11.5 per 1,000 population aged 75 or over.</p>
Further consideration of re-referral rate in children’s services and assurance about the quality of decision making.	Performance has improved from 39% to 31.2%. However this is a continuing issue, linked to team restructuring and re-referrals from schools. Newly created posts for Education Social Workers have been identified as part of solution for 2014-15.
To improve identification of and support	This was an area of mixed performance,

for young carers.	with the percentage of young carers known to social services who were assessed deteriorating from 90.9% in 2012-13 to 77.4% in 2013-14. The percentage of young carers known to social services who were provided with a service improved substantially from a low of 54.5% in 2012-13 to 77.4% in 2013-14, bringing Newport close to the average for Wales at 80.1%.
To ensure the maintenance of high standards in local authority adult care homes and a prompt response when non compliance is identified.	This has been an ongoing issue, resulting in one home being identified as a service of concern under CSSIW's enforcement procedures. There was an improving trend towards the end of the year.
To ensure accurate collation of data to evidence service provision to carers.	There has been significant improvement in relation to the number adult carers offered assessment or review. However, there is a continuing pattern of very poor rates of both carers of adults who had or were offered an assessment or review in their own right, and those who were subsequently provided with a service. The head of adult services has identified poor recording at being at least partially responsible for this, and anticipates an improvement in 2014-15.
Reviews of adult care plans.	This remains a challenge, with performance levels - at 65% of reviews held on time - well below the national average.
Development of outcome measures for disabled children.	This area has recently been commented upon in an internal report on Children with additional Needs Support project. Follow up work in relation to this is planned for 2014-15.
School changes for looked after children	Performance in this area has improved, with rates of school changes now down to below the national average. Relatively high rates of adoption were

	identified as a factor in explaining this.
Timely core group meetings	The timeliness of initial core group meeting has further deteriorated from 75.3% to 65.5% and has been identified as key priority for 2014-15.
Staff turnover and morale in children's services	<p>The implementation of the work force strategy has had limited impact during the year, although rates of retention and vacancies have improved. The high proportion of newly qualified social workers is also recognised as a continuing challenge.</p> <p>Internal staff surveys undertaken by the authority reflect an improving morale amongst children's services staff.</p>
Stability in relation to contractual arrangements for director	The interim appointment for the director's post was confirmed as permanent during the year.
Ensuring that any risks associated with the appointment of the head of children's services are assessed and properly mitigated.	This has been addressed by the secondment to the head of service post from Barnardo's, on a full time basis for three years.

### Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

- Inspection of safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviour, within Newport City Council, ('looked after children inspection').
- Site visit to Serenna Centre, where the children with disabilities team is based.
- Site visit to children's duty and assessment team.
- Site visit to the 16 plus team.
- Site visit to a carer's forum.
- Observation of Learning, Caring and Leisure Scrutiny committees.
- CSSIW met with senior officers via quarterly engagement meetings to review performance and progress against areas identified in the 2012-13 performance evaluation.

## **Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year**

- Impact of integration of adult/children's safeguarding functions on outcomes and performance.
- Effectiveness of scrutiny in overseeing safeguarding and other procedures.
- Inspection focussing specifically on the effectiveness of the council's assessment, care planning and reviewing processes for older people with complex needs.
- Progress towards the development of integrated services for younger adults with learning disabilities.
- 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**

Newport's 'Adult Services Commissioning Strategy for 2014-2017' has been finalised, following a period of extensive consultation. This seeks to align with priorities identified in the council's community strategy 2010-2020. There is a continued focus on the integration of health and social care, and the provision of a wide range of services aimed at prevention and early intervention. The effectiveness of the implementation of this strategy will be monitored over the next few years.

The Gwent Frailty (GF) project was established as part a wider 'invest-to-save' initiative, with integration between health and social care at its core. It aims to support people to be discharged from hospital earlier and prevent hospital admissions. The council has continued to experience significant challenges in relation to the GF project and reports that it has yet to satisfactorily deliver on anticipated outcomes, either in relation to outcomes for people, or financial savings. The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons (DTC) continues to be a serious issue, with the council having the second highest rate of delays in Wales. An external evaluation of the GF project has recently been completed, with the final report due in September 2014.

Initial plans to establish joint health and social care managerial posts with the health board did not prove to be as successful as anticipated and therefore this approach will not be taken forward. Rather, the council will seek to integrate service delivery with joint governance – rather than joint posts - across the wider Gwent area.

The council continues to re-shape some in-house day and residential services for adults, in line with proposals it has previously consulted on. The closure of a large day centre for older adults has been coupled with the expansion of extra-care schemes across the city. Accessing support services for older people without the need for contacting social services directly, is an increasing trend, supported by initiatives including the frailty project, and extra care.

A project focusing on assisting people with learning disabilities to move from residential to less intensive supported living placements has resulted in an increase in the numbers of people receiving community support packages. However, Newport has a larger proportion of adults with a learning disability receiving a residential placement than the Welsh national average. There is a need for a more integrated approach, whereby both health and social care agencies focus on providing a range of services aimed at promoting independence for young adults with a learning disability.

The numbers of adults with mental health support needs in Newport receiving both residential and community based support have continued to reduce. The operation of a single access point for referrals, assessment and intervention assists in providing a streamlined service, based on a recovery model.

## **Children**

Services for children in Newport continue to be based upon an early intervention approach, aimed at reducing the need for statutory services, and improving outcomes for children and families. Many services for children continue to be delivered via its preferred partner relationship with Barnardo's (Cymru). Early intervention and preventative services are funded in part through Families First, and are directly managed by Barnardo's under the Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) framework.

A new Matching and Placement Support team (MAPS) was established during the year. This team aims to provide a more consistent, therapeutic approach to the delivery of individualised care, and to secure high quality foster care for children with more complex needs. It is too early to evaluate fully the impact of this service. However, the looked after children inspection found that early indications were promising.

The transition of the After Care team into a 16+ service has resulted in some disruption, this change being prompted by the need to re-focus on a wider range of support, rather than the promotion of independence which was formerly prioritised. This in turn has had a negative impact on some outcomes for children leaving care, as reflected in associated performance indicators.



## **Areas of progress**

- Single point of access to referrals, assessments and interventions for people requiring support due to their mental health support needs, resulting in a more streamlined service.
- Reduction in numbers of children in care proceedings, following implementation of Family Justice Review.
- Promotion of direct access to schemes such as Extra care, without social services involvement.
- Re-shaping of adult day care and residential services –ongoing.

## **Areas for improvement**

- Ensure that recently agreed changes to the Gwent Frailty project have positive outcomes for people using this service.
- Ensure that initiatives such as MAPS combined with other workforce changes, result in improved outcomes for looked after children, such as placement stability, and reduced re-referrals.
- Exploration of alternative models of dementia care, in conjunction with partner agencies.

## **Getting help**

### **Adults**

The Gwent Frailty project - aimed at reablement and reducing delayed transfers from hospital - continued to present significant challenges to the council in 2013-14, with generally poor outcomes for people using this service. As part of changes made under the wider Gwent Frailty initiative, the Community Resource Team (CRT) are in the process of re-considering the service model, in order to re-focus on short-term rehabilitation for those coming out of hospital. The council reports that this will include the recruitment to new 'community connector' posts, who will also have a role in assessing and meeting the needs of carers. Current users of the council's CRT services expressed their general satisfaction with the services they receive in meetings with CSSIW. Council surveys also indicate high levels of satisfaction with Tele-care services.

Adults requiring longer term care will increasingly have their needs met by the home care and related services. It is understood that current thresholds in relation to how these needs will be met are being re-negotiated as part of wider changes to the frailty project. In September 2013 the arrangements for discharge at the local district general hospital were revised, with a social care hub placed at its centre. The persistently high numbers of delayed transfers of care from hospital remain a

significant area of concern. There has been a recent expansion in the local availability of Elderly Mental Infirm (EMI) and nursing beds in care homes, which may help to relieve some of the current pressures.

Performance indicators reflect a marginal improvement over the past year in completion of care plan reviews for older people within appropriate timescales. However, the council's performance continues to be significantly below the Wales average. During inspections of the council's care homes, CSSIW identified issues relating to the care management, planning and review for older people with additional mental health needs. A long-term failure to invest in local authority managed homes also resulted in some poor physical environments. CSSIW concluded that the lack of strong managerial arrangements to ensure effective oversight of these services compounded these shortcomings. More recently, there is some indication that the changes implemented by the council are beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes for people. Nevertheless, the range and nature of these concerns are sufficient for CSSIW to plan a specific inspection of care planning, assessment and review for older people with more complex needs within the council in 2014-15.

The relatively low provision of carer's assessments and support in Newport is recognised by the council as an on-going unmet need, and the effectiveness of the council's response to this need will be monitored over the coming year.

## **Children**

The council operates a busy information station in the city centre, designed as a one-stop access point for a wide range of its services. Feedback from both users of social services and staff point to some unresolved issues linked to confidentiality and the juxtaposition of people attending meetings of a sensitive nature in areas accessible by others. This issue has been noted previously by CSSIW. The head of children's services reports an improvement in some aspects of the oversight and management of this access point, but recognises that there remain some unresolved issues.

The number of children on the child protection register has risen over the last three years from 110 to 192. This significant increase has been attributed in large part to an increase in referrals from the disabled children's team. The head of service concludes that this is possibly due to a tendency to 'fast track' issues through the child protection route, rather than identifying potential for referral to family support services as an appropriate alternative. This is yet to be confirmed.

Overall, numbers of children supported by the disabled children's team fell in 2013-14, which was also the first full year of operation for the associated 'children with additional needs' service.

The children's Duty and Assessment Team (DAT) experienced a slight reduction in the number of contacts, and a significant reduction in the number of referrals last year, in line with national trends. There was an increase in the overall contacts and referrals involving the police, a significant proportion of which were relating to domestic abuse.

Performance figures in relation to the timeliness of decision making about referrals, and completion of initial assessments, confirm that Newport continues to do well in these areas. In addition, the percentage of referrals that did not proceed to allocation for initial assessment has reduced from 55.9% to 36.1%, although this remains considerably higher than the Wales average. While the re referral rate has reduced considerably over the last three years, it also remains well above the Wales average at 31.2%. The council recognises the need to respond to this, and anticipates that the recruitment of education social workers will have a positive impact over the next year.

The timeliness of initial core group meetings has deteriorated with performance falling from 75.3% to 65.5% in 2013-14. This is significantly below the national average of 90%. This has been attributed to a combination of a backlog of cases, and a lack of effective transition between conference and core group stages, which will need managerial focus and effective monitoring to ensure that the staffing and other resources available are aligned to best effect.

### **Areas of progress**

- There has been improvement in the percentage of adult protection referrals where risk levels are managed.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The council should understand the reasons behind the poor uptake of support to carers, and take effective action in response.
- The council should ensure that care plan reviews for users of adult services are completed in line with statutory requirements.

### **The services provided**

#### **Adults**

The rate of older people supported in the community has decreased over the last six years. During the same period, the rate of older people supported in residential care has also decreased steadily. However, within these general trends, the council continues to fund a relatively high proportion of enhanced fees for some nursing beds.

The council's in-house provision for older people continued to experience substantial difficulties, resulting in CSSIW issuing a number of non-compliance notices relating to assessment of need, risk assessment, and care management. Performance indicators in relation to the completion of adult care reviews showed a marginal improvement over the year, but remain at worryingly low levels, well below the national average. Visits by CSSIW to care homes in Newport during the year confirmed that issues relating to the quality of care planning and associated processes are linked to poor outcomes for people. This raised wider questions about the quality and the timeliness of the assessment, care planning and reviewing processes for older people with more complex needs in Newport, prompting CSSIW to identify this as an area of focus for next year.

Inspections of the home care, integrated care and supported living projects operated by the council showed that outcomes for people using these services were positive. The supported living service had successfully developed strategies enabling people with limited communication to more effectively manage change in their lives.

Carers in Newport continue to be positive about the 'Shared Lives' project, whilst appreciating the continued operation of New Willows as a respite provision for those adults with learning difficulties who have more complex needs. The authority continues to revise its provision in this area, and to consult those affected by anticipated changes.

There continue to be relatively high rates of residential care provision for adults with learning disabilities in Newport. This highlights the need for innovative and integrated approaches to the commissioning and delivery of services for people with learning disabilities to be developed.

## **Children**

The stability of placements for looked after children continue to be a cause for concern, with performance data for Newport indicating that the number of looked after children experiencing three or more placements during the year (10.9 %) is significantly higher than the Welsh average of 8.3%. This represents a worrying increase over last year's figure of 6.8%, and suggests that the positive impact of new initiatives such as the Matching and Placements team (MAPS) have yet to be realised.

Performance indicators in relation to the after care for looked after children also show deterioration. It is of concern that the five year period of National Lottery grant funding of the 'skills for living' specialist support previously provided by Action for Children (AfC) ended in March 2014. The head of service has confirmed that the council is in discussion with AfC to ensure that a replacement support service, dove-tailing with the in-house MAPS provision, is developed. It is

important to ensure that the transition between these two services does not impair positive outcomes for children and young people.

Last year's report noted a relatively high level of school changes within the council's looked after children population. The figure of 10.4% children experiencing one or more school changes (not related to transitional arrangements) for 2013-14 compares favourably with 15.5% for 2012-13. This year's performance is better than the national average. Closer scrutiny by the head of service has identified that relatively high numbers of adoptions over the year were behind much of this trend.

Pathway planning to assist in the lead up to transition for looked after children showed a significant reduction over the year, although more recent figures suggest that this is once again on an upward trend. Similarly, assessments undertaken in relation to the needs of young carers were substantially down from last year. The lack of robust recording procedures has been identified by the authority as a potential factor in explaining these trends.

In common with last year, re-referral rates continue to be relatively high; internal analysis suggests that re-referrals from school settings are at least in part responsible for this. The proposed introduction of education social workers is intended to address this issue. Although this initiative is at an early stage of development, schools are reported to have responded positively to the scheme.

The proportion of looked after children allocated a personal advisor fell significantly from 98% in 2012-13 to 59.6% for 2013-14, a figure well below the national average of 85.6%. Performance data also highlights concerns relating to the completion of required core assessments in a timely manner; those requiring longer than 35 days to complete rose sharply to 83.4%, compared with 60.6% last year, and a Wales average for 2013-14 of 57.6%. In some instances, recording issues and lack of effective transfer between teams have been identified as potential factors in explaining relatively poor performance.

The council's performance in relation to the completion of initial assessments within seven working days, and the percentage of child protection and child care reviews undertaken within statutory timescales continues to be good, with figures close to, and in some instances exceeding national averages. This confirms that the authority is undertaking key elements of statutory activity which are used to inform decision-making for vulnerable children within expected timescales. However, an area of concern relates to the percentage of core group meetings which were held within 10 working days of the initial child protection conference. This fell back from 75.3% in 2012-13 to 65.5% in 2013-14, and is significantly below the national average of 90%.

## **Areas of progress**

- A new Matching and Placement Service has been established, although the impact of this in relation to placement stability is yet to be felt.
- A commissioning strategy for adult services has been issued, following extensive consultation.

## **Areas for improvement**

The council should:

- ensure that key aspects of its services to LAC, including the timeliness of initial core group meetings, pathway planning, allocation of personal advisors and the level of re-referrals, together with assessments for young carers are enhanced;
- take effective action to reduce delayed transfers of care (DTC); and
- ensure timely and effective completion of assessment and care planning for older adults, in order to inform the delivery of care needed to meet complex individual need.

## **Effect on people's lives**

Information sharing between social services and the police is well developed in relation to safeguarding, and considerable work has been undertaken as part of the regional South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board (SEWSCB) and the Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GWASB). The regional approach to co-ordination of safeguarding arrangements has resulted in the development of specific projects starting with a focus on issues including child sexual exploitation, substance misuse and domestic violence.

Internal service user surveys continue to show generally high levels of satisfaction in many areas, e.g. 90% of users of telecare services were satisfied with the service they received. Similar levels of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the service they had received from the children's duty and assessment team.

## **Adults**

The director's report acknowledges that performance in some aspects of adult services deteriorated considerably during the year. He explains that budget savings made in the year 2012/13 during a period of significant budget challenges, led to under resourcing some key posts in Adult Residential Care provided by the council. As a result performance deteriorated and there has been a significant investment during the year which has led to a substantial overspend.

Substantial changes within the adult safeguarding team during the year do not appear to have adversely affected outcomes for vulnerable adults, with performance indicators confirming enhanced levels of risk management for those requiring protection. The percentage of adult protection referrals completed where the risk has been managed is now at a level well above both those of comparable local authorities, and the national average. The impact of the proposed appointment of a joint safeguarding manager overseeing the protection of both vulnerable adults and children will be monitored with interest by CSSIW.

The ongoing issue of delays in their transfer of care from hospital inevitably has a substantial, negative impact on people's lives. Such delays indicate that people may not be receiving the most appropriate support in a timely manner and could have a negative impact on their subsequent recovery or reablement.

## **Children**

Although it has only been in operation for a relatively a short time, the missing children's service, which operates across the five Gwent authorities, has demonstrated significant potential to improve the outcomes for vulnerable looked after young people. It is understood that the Welsh Government is shortly to tender for an external evaluation of this initiative

During the looked after children inspection CSSIW noted the overall effectiveness of the corporate parenting role in the council, but also highlighted the need for improvement in some areas. These included more consistent analysis of detailed information that would assist the council's judgments and decision making in relation to risk and vulnerability. Presently these factors are too often considered separately, rather than as an integrated element of the care planning and assessment process.

The development of outcome measures for children with disabilities was identified as an area for improvement in last year's annual performance evaluation. The council reports that work on this area is being undertaken as part of its wider change programme, focusing on community-based services.

Outcomes for young people who have left care are acknowledged by the council as being poor in some respects, and it has taken action aimed at addressing this. In contrast with these outcomes, the average qualification outcomes for looked after children improved significantly over last year, although the impact of the relatively small cohorts involved within these variations is acknowledged. School attendance of looked after children in Newport at both primary and secondary level

continues to be good, and the number with a personal education plan (PEP) in place within the expected timescales has risen over the past year.

A training scheme – My Pad - aimed at introducing young people to the challenges and expectation of independent living has been well received to date, and is being rolled to a larger group of young people..

### **Areas of progress**

- Extension of My Pad – young persons training scheme in association with housing association.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Enhance outcomes for children leaving care, following re-shaping of After Care / 16 + teams.
- Ensure maintenance / improvement of outcomes for users during the on-going re-shaping of adult services.
- Specific evaluation of work of disabled children's team.

## **Capacity**

### **Delivering Social Services**

The director reports that additional investment of £7m for social services was required during the year. There is a real terms reduction in the budget for 2014-15. However, the director is confident that the council will be able to respond to increased financial and demographic pressures. This is due to the introduction of tighter budget management via the new Budget Management System (BMS) which is designed to enhance budgetary planning and oversight, with each team having access to a dashboard indicating performance against targets. Enhanced financial management in relation to areas of joint working and pooled budgets are also identified by the director as having potential for further efficiencies, having already delivered some substantive savings, for instance in relation to the adult day care transport budget.

The council's projections indicate an increasing demand for its services, with a particular emphasis on dementia care, and it aims to respond to these by continuing to develop its reablement and community-based services.

The relatively high cost of some nursing care placements was raised as a concern last year. The recent establishment in conjunction with Torfaen commissioning team, of more rigorous monitoring arrangements of nursing and residential care providers over a three to five year period, is aimed at providing more effective monitoring and oversight. The impact of this will be monitored with interest.



The Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) continues to feature strongly in the delivery of children's services. This has grown considerably over the last twelve months, with large numbers of staff employed either directly by the council or by Barnardo's as its preferred provider. This growth has been prompted by a significant increase in the number of children / families referred, in particular to its prevention (Team around the Family) service, one of many initiatives operating under Families First. An internal report suggests that some of this increase may be as a result of higher thresholds being implemented in relation to children-in-need. Closer scrutiny and analysis of this and other emerging trends is hindered by ongoing delays in the development of an effective data base.

Another of the teams operating under the IFSS umbrella is the Family Assessment and Support Service (FASS) which has recently recruited to a Community Adolescent Mental Health Specialist (CAMHS) post, in response to identified need. This work has been augmented by the commissioning of a number of projects under the 'Families First' initiative, aimed at providing more effective early support to families. Expansion of the Family Assessment and Support Service has seen the recent deployment of a specialist in child sexual exploitation.

The success of the Integrated Family Support Team (IFST) model across Newport has seen this expand across the Gwent region, with two teams now covering three sites.

In children's services there are continuing difficulties in relation to the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of experienced social workers. The potential impact of less qualified support workers being suitably skilled and experienced to work with children and families with a higher degree of risk had been raised in an earlier Cordis Bright report (April 2013). There are significant challenges presented by having a high proportion of newly qualified social workers. The implementation of a work force strategy aimed at addressing this has only been partially successful to date. Outcomes for vulnerable children and their families are likely to be significantly influenced by the effectiveness of the measures taken to address this over the next twelve months.

There is a risk that the core work undertaken with more vulnerable looked after children will continue to be undermined by insufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced social work staff. Figures in the director's report suggest that there have been recent reductions in both the turn-over and vacancy rates amongst childcare social workers, but it is also recognised that the progress made remains fragile.

### **Areas of progress**

- Introduction of new Educational Social worker posts aimed at resolving longstanding high re-referral rates.

- Development of 'single point of entry' for all referrals of vulnerable families and children who are not eligible for social work support.
- Expansion of Family Assessment and Support Team (FAST) to include Child Sexual Exploitation specialist.
- Establishment of 3-5 year arrangements with residential and nursing care providers, as part of on-going commissioning initiative with Torfaen.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Ensure that the resources identified for additional children's social work posts are effectively targeted at areas of most pressing need, including core group meetings.
- On-going turn-over of staff in front-line social workers, and impact of NQSW on morale and outcomes for children / young people.
- Effective alignment of I.T. implementation projects to priority area's such as POVA recording and financial oversight and management, as highlighted in the director's report).

#### **Providing direction**

Senior leadership in the department has been stabilised with interim appointments to both the director and head of adult services positions being made permanent during the year. The head of children's services position has been consolidated, and the conversion of this position to a full-time secondment from Barnardo's for a three year period is a timely development in providing focus and continuity.

Senior managers understand the need to prepare for and respond to the demographic and financial challenges ahead, and are mindful of the wider context of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. They recognise for example that this has implications well beyond the 2% of the population that social services in Newport currently interact with. Recent moves in Newport towards profiling the population at neighbourhood levels has been acknowledged by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) as having the potential to enhance future planning and delivery of integrated services.

The director reports using the councils' wider Prospectus for Change corporate improvement programme to bring social care issues to the attention of the senior leadership of the city council. An illustration of this has been the explanation of the new statutory duty upon the city council for ensuring the wellbeing of citizens as part of the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014.

CSSIW's looked after children inspection acknowledged that the population considered in the inspection were appropriately recognised as a corporate priority in Newport, and that senior officers were well informed about the vulnerability of individual children and care leavers.

However, it was also identified that members needed to provide greater challenge to ensure that the council is achieving best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. They also needed to assure themselves as to the extent to which strategic aims were being effectively owned and translated into action across the local authority and partner agencies. The role of members and scrutiny in both setting and overseeing performance has also been flagged by WAO. Our recent attendance at scrutiny and other meetings during the year has led to questions being raised about the degree to which senior managers are held to account within social services, and raised issues relating to the credibility and rigour of internal targets.

### **Areas of progress**

- Projects within the wider authorities' 'Prospectus for Change' programme have assisted in highlighting issues relating to social care to the wider council leadership.
- Profiling of population needs at neighbourhood level.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Role of scrutiny in overseeing some areas of performance, coupled with lack of challenge and rigour in relation to the setting and monitoring of internal performance targets.