



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

Performance Evaluation Report 2013–14

Gwynedd Council Social Services

October 2014

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

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2013 - 2014

Local Authority: Gwynedd Council

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Summary

There has been incremental improvement in social services in Gwynedd during 2013-14 with new services promoting independence in adult services, continued improvement in children's services performance and strong outcomes for looked after children.

The council plans to make significant savings in social services by 2017-18. This will require a fast pace of change and places significant pressure on social services, particularly adult services, to achieve substantial changes in the way care and support is commissioned and provided.

The council has made preparations to meet the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. The council has made changes in its leadership within social services in line with the statutory guidance on the role and accountabilities of the director of social services. However, further work is needed for the social services agenda to be owned corporately.

The council has a vision to plan and develop services with the community and partners. It has outlined its plans for the integration of health and social care services for older people with complex needs with an emphasis upon prevention and early intervention.

The director's annual report provides the citizens with a comprehensive and accurate account of the council's performance. The report's structure identifies what is needed to create sustainable social services that protect the vulnerable and achieve the necessary improvement.

Response to last year's areas of improvement

Area for improvement identified last year	Progress in 2013 – 14
Maintaining momentum in reshaping older people's residential services.	There has been continued incremental service development

Demand forecasting for community support.	There is sound information projecting demand for the service.
Developing the range of services in the community within adult and children's services.	New services have been developed in adults and children's services.
Ensuring that services promote independence for older people.	There is a growing use of enablement, telecare and direct payments.
Ensuring timely reviews for looked after children in line with statutory guidance.	Significant improvement in performance but remains slightly below Wales average.
Improving education planning for looked after children.	Significant improvement in performance and is now above the Wales average.
Securing health input to looked after children.	Slight improvement but performance remains well below the Welsh average.
Establishing a quality assurance system within adult services.	Comprehensive quality assurance system yet to be developed.
Ensuring the regular and consistent supervision of staff.	Policy and guidelines reviewed monitoring arrangements established.
Ensuring appropriate relationships, protocols and professional advice support the statutory director.	New structure established. Protocols to be worked through and endorsed by the council.
Implementation of the corporate safeguarding policy.	New corporate safeguarding governance, structure and policies established. Effectiveness and impact yet to be evaluated.
Raise the profile of corporate parenting responsibilities with members.	Needs further development. The council is strengthening responsibilities through 'pledges' to looked after children.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

- Site Visit - Adult Placement Scheme.
- National inspection of safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours January to May 2014 ('looked after children inspection').

- National review of the use of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) in Wales 2014.

CSSIW has successfully undertaken its mainstream scheduled inspection programme of regulated services operating in the Gwynedd area.

Quarterly engagement meetings have taken place with senior council officers that review social services performance.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

- The programme of change in adult services.
- Care planning and social work support for looked after children.
- The implementation of recommendations following the serious case review and domestic homicide review.
- CSSIW will also be contributing to a review led by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) examining whether councils are effectively supporting older people to live independently, including through joined up working across health and social care.
- Progress with implementing a quality assurance process for social services.

Performance

Shaping services

Adults

The council has commissioning strategies in place and these are due to be refreshed. The council have considered the local, regional and national implications of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act for Gwynedd and have trained its staff regarding the implications. The director has described to partners and the community her vision for the future of social services in Gwynedd that addresses the financial challenges and the requirements of the Act. This includes the development of preventative services that promote independence, and are planned, developed and evaluated by service users, families, carers and communities. The Social Service and Wellbeing Act is becoming central to thinking about social services in Gwynedd and the council has made preparations to meet its requirements.

In line with the council's strategic approach "Ffordd Gwynedd" the council aims to improve partnership working with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), and the third sector. The council has contributed to the regional collaborative agenda and is more engaged with stakeholders and partners. The council identify that the relationship with the commissioning hub could be more

effective and the Director is now the chair of the management board for the Commissioning Hub.

The council has made significant investment in new services for older adults and adults with learning disabilities.

- Construction has begun Pant yr Eithin, Harlech for seven units for people with learning disabilities.
- 40 extra care housing unit will open in Bangor in 2014-15.
- The extra care housing development in Porthmadog is being progressed.

The council plans to save £6,206,000 in adults' service by 2017-18 reducing the budget from £40,571,000 (in 2014-15) to £34,365,000. The council will undertake an end to end review in adults' service in 2014-15.

Following the review it is expected that in 2014-15 the council will publish its older people accommodation strategy identifying the plan for the council's homes and work with providers. Also in 2014-15 the council will consult with stakeholders regarding future development of the learning disabilities residential and day care services based in Caernarfon.

The council has one of the lowest rates for supporting older people in the community (46.2 compared to the Wales average of 74.5); and one of the highest rates of supporting older people in care homes in Wales (25.6 compared to 19.8 Wales average – all figures per 1000 population aged 65 or over). People are more likely to live in council run care homes than in other councils in Wales. The council aims to reduce its use of residential care before deciding on a future direction for its older people's strategy.

The developments in adult services are complex with an expectation that change delivers significant financial savings. The council has established a programme management approach and will need to maintain an overview of the evolving situation and manage the expectations and associated risks. The Wales Audit Office are evaluating whether the council has robust approaches in place to manage the budget reductions. This is an area that CSSIW will follow up during 2014-15.

An Integrated Transformation Team including senior officers from BCUHB, social service, housing and the third sector has made progress in developing integrated working. Examples of developments are:

- the discharge social work service and the physiotherapist service working weekends, increasing responsiveness seven days a week;
- a review by the pharmacy service of high risk medication in the community;
- the development of the county forum; and

- the secondment of a senior BCUHB employee to support the integration and identify key triggers and barriers.

There are further plans to improve integrated working by co-locating health and social services staff and improving the communication between information technology systems. These developments are important for improving effectiveness and for gathering information to inform future planning.

Children

The end to end review of children's services in 2013-14 identified the need to improve preventative services and reduce the number of looked after children. The review has involved the head of paid service, members of the corporate leadership team and social services staff. Other important stakeholders were not involved in the review process and this was a lost opportunity to promote greater collaborative working. The council has developed plans to address the identified improvements needed in services in 2014/15.

The council's systems do not routinely capture a profile of the looked after children population and their assessed needs. This information is essential if the authority is to evaluate the effectiveness of its placement and permanency strategies and predict future resource needs. The information presented to the various panels could contribute to a detailed profile of presenting need.

The recent CSSIW national inspection found that services for looked after children and care leavers remain overly dependent on children's social services for the provision, funding and resources to assess and meet therapeutic needs. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is part of BCUHB and do not monitor the therapeutic service to looked after children/young people placed out of authority unless they have made a financial contribution towards the placement.

Areas of progress

- Development of services with BCUHB.
- Service planning in children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Strategic planning with BCUHB in adult services.
- Strategic planning with BCUHB in CAMHS.
- Using information from looked after panels to describe the population needs and trends.

Getting help

Adults

The council maintains accessible care pathways from an advice and assessment team that can readily provide information about resources in the community. A social worker now works seven days a week in the hospital arranging care in the community and promoting independence for people being discharged.

The council provides basic information about its services both in hard copy and online. There are examples of accessible information regarding services such as the adult placement scheme which includes a DVD describing the user perspective.

In December 2013 the council commissioned an external consultant to work alongside council officers to review adult assessment and care management practice. The review found that practice was responsive, solid and that thresholds were appropriately applied. It found that the use of outcomes and multi disciplinary work was under-developed and the social work assessments would benefit from a greater focus on the users strengths and abilities in addition to need. Although assessments lacked substance the care plans were more detailed and resulted in the appropriate resources being deployed to meet needs. There was an identified need to improve the timely provision of simple equipment and a maintenance service within people's homes.

The council's performance in reviewing care plans has continued to improve over the past years and at 85.3% is now above the Welsh average of 81.1%. The council also performed well in relation to the Welsh average in avoiding a delay in discharge from hospital. The number of carers who were assessed and provided with a service has risen from 167 to 234 in 2013-14 and the review of adult services found that there were appropriate carers assessments undertaken however.

Children

The performance indicators within children services suggest improved practice and processes in managing referrals and assessments. In 2013-14 there were 180 fewer referrals received by children's services with a decision being made on 99.3% referrals within a day. Year on year there has been a growing percentage of referrals allocated to a social worker for initial assessment with the council now being above average for Wales. There has also been a reduction in percentage of children being re referred from 39% in 2011-12 to 26.6% in 2013-14; however, this still remains above average for Wales and is an area for continued improvement. There were fewer core assessments carried out with an increased percentage completed within timescales. The percentage of initial assessments completed

within seven days needs improvement; in 2013-14 the council completed 67% of initial assessments in seven working days compared to a Welsh average of 72%.

The national looked after children inspection found that referral and information sharing processes between professionals appear well-embedded. Operational relationships between teams and partner agencies support timely communication. Social workers and their managers have a good understanding of the young people they work with including knowledge of presenting vulnerabilities and risky behaviours.

The council has invested in a training programme for staff to support the use of its risk model tool. It is well used in relation to child in need and child protection cases. However, it needs to be further embedded for looked after children, including those involved in 'risk taking' behaviour.

As a result of significant effort the council has improved its performance in the timeliness of reviews for looked after children. The LAC inspection reported that young people said that they were encouraged to attend their reviews and that advocacy was available. The inspection found that the quality of the care plans was variable and needed to be refreshed by subsequent assessment. It was difficult to get a picture of the child and the child's journey from reading the care plan. The inspection found that that the reviews were overly focused on immediate events and not on the long term outcomes. Young people reported great frustration regarding the lack of clarity in delegated authority in issues such as permissions for school trips, over night stays etc. This is an area that CSSIW will follow up.

Some young people seen were not aware of the advocacy service and take up of the advocacy service is low with the issue based approach and lack of Welsh speaking advocates being identified as obstacles.

The LAC Inspection report identified some good corporate co-operation to improve access to leisure and sporting activities for looked after young people.

Areas of progress

- Reviews in adult services.
- Sharper practice in managing referrals and assessments in children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Timeliness of initial assessment in children's services.
- Continued improvement to reduce the number of children re-referred.
- Awareness and use of advocacy services.

The services provided

Adults

“More than just words” is a Welsh Government strategic framework for the use of Welsh language in health, social services and social care. It was developed in order to strengthen front line services. Gwynedd council contributed to the “More than just words” ministerial task group that drew up the framework. In 2014 the council won two awards at the Welsh Government Words in Action Conference. The council benefits from having Welsh as its administrative language.

In its implementation of the strategy the council has established a cross departmental task group responding to the requirements of the framework. The council commissioned a survey of its language requirements and considered relevant available information. In light of this work the council improved its contract and contract monitoring arrangements. The council is planning to strengthen its ability to meet language needs through the implementation of its new electronic case management system that will start in 2016. The council say that the knowledge gathered from implementing this strategy will inform its wider planning and commissioning processes.

The council is committed to promoting independence for people. In 2013-14 the council provided 462 reablement packages. A council review of the reablement service found that less than half needing ongoing packages of support and only six per cent seeking further assistance within two years. Of those who were supported in the council residential unit for people recovering from illness over three quarters returned home. Independence is being promoted through the use of new technology with some 500 packages of telecare provided in 2013-14. Telecare is now used across adult services including 35 packages of care for individuals with learning disabilities.

The council operate a well managed adult placement scheme that listens to the voice of those who use the service who believe their views are valued. The service was recognised nationally in October 2013 when the manager received the Care Forum Wales Gold Award in the Leading Practice in the Management of Social Care. Staff in the service also received bronze and gold awards in the Promoting Fulfilled Lives category.

The recent CSSIW inspection of the council’s domiciliary care service was largely positive and people participating in the inspection commented positively on the quality and service provided. The council provide a substantial proportion of its domiciliary care.

Children

The council has developed its services for young people, children and families.

- Gwynedd council is running one of the three “When I’m Ready” pioneer programmes for looked after children starting in April 2013. The scheme extends the duration of placements and helps young people take advantage of opportunities to train or gain qualifications.
- The Gyda’n Gilydd scheme has developed to support over 250 families before they reached the need for social service support.
- The Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) service is to focus on families where alcohol, drugs or both are problems amongst the parents, in order to safeguard the children who are in their care. The multi-agency IFSS team was developed on a joint basis with Anglesey and was operational in 2014-15.

The national LAC inspection identified a need to develop looked after children’s access to primary health services and move on accommodation. As part of its corporate parenting responsibilities, the council should ensure that children who they look after can use primary healthcare. Performance in being registered with a GP within 10 days declined from 92.5% in 2012-13 to 78.4% in 2013-14. Whilst the percentage of health assessments for looked after children improved by 15% to 46%, it still remains significantly below the Wales average of 81%.

Young people are positive about the relationships they have with social workers in the 16 plus service in contrast with the inconsistent relationships children have with their social workers in other teams. Young people also highlighted the significant impact changes of social workers and placement had on their ability to form trusting relationships.

The CSSIW fostering inspection found that children and young people have secure placements where their needs are met. Children have a voice and have opportunities to speak up, and they can influence the way the service is delivered. The CSSIW inspection of Drws y Nant the council’s commissioned children’s home found a very strong sense of person centred care where young people said they were listened to and valued.

However, the looked after children inspection looked at young people with complex needs and found that the range of placements available was not sufficient to meet the complex needs of some young people and appropriate “matching” needs to foster carers’ skills did not always take place. The council is working to increase the range of in house foster carers to meet this need.

The council has made improvements to its complaints process and the corporate oversight of complaints. Learning from complaints and using them to improve services is an important theme in “Ffordd Gwynedd”, strategic matters and all

investigations by the Ombudsman are now considered by the corporate director. There are examples where complaints involved those who complained in identifying improvements and solutions, but there still is a need to further improve the consistency and management of complaints. The council plans to improve the service and respond to the Welsh Government new guidance regarding the management of complaints.

There is increasing emphasis upon personal choice and independence offered by direct payments. The number using direct payments rose in 2013-14 in comparison with the previous year and this improvement needs to be continued. The department learnt from complaints about the service with many families reporting unfavourable experiences. In addition an internal audit report found that the council could not be confident in the arrangements for direct payments. The council's corporate plan describes the need for a better response in supporting direct payments and the council will be reviewing the relevant procedures.

Areas of progress

- Increased range of services for children and families.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency in responding to complaints.
- Access to health care and accommodation for looked after children.

Effect on people's lives

Adults

In 2013-14 Gwynedd and Anglesey councils established a joint Safeguarding Adults Board. The board has developed a work programme to increase understanding of safeguarding and develop a preventative approach to safeguarding adults.

In 2013-14 CSSIW worked closely with, and had a good working relationship with the council's contracting unit. The unit monitors the quality of the external service commissioned by the council. The unit is strengthening its practice and plans to be more outcomes focused in its contract monitoring and to use volunteers.

In July 2014 a serious case review and domestic homicide report were published. The serious case review panel and domestic homicide review panel worked together effectively in this work. An action plan has been developed to improve services in particular mental health services and progress has been made against the identified actions. CSSIW will be following up the implementation of the action plan following these reviews.

In January and February 2014 Gwynedd faced the challenges of strong winds and flooding. The council staff responded to the emergency situation working tirelessly to ensure care and shelter for vulnerable people. The council identified areas for improvement in future emergency situations including more capacity in rest centres, better communication for care homes and contingency plans for domiciliary care services.

Children

In March 2013 an Estyn inspection: "A report on the quality of local authority education services for children and young people in March 2013"; found that understanding of roles and responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding at a corporate level and between departments within the council was not clearly understood. The council has since made progress in establishing better understanding of the issues and stronger corporate safeguarding structures. The restructuring at head of service level and the creation of the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department has strengthened the safeguarding for children young people, and vulnerable adults. This has also improved the corporate capacity to implement the new safeguarding arrangements.

The council has established a strategic panel of members and senior officers to embed safeguarding at a corporate level. The strategic panel is supported by an operational panel with managers from all council departments. The panels have reviewed the corporate and departmental policies, increased awareness and provided training; ensuring employment checks are appropriately undertaken. The council is developing arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the safeguarding work. These arrangements need to evaluate how effective knowledge is transferred across departments and the impact of the safeguarding arrangements.

The looked after children inspection found that the children's safeguarding board is in the early stages of moving to a regional approach. Agencies were found to be working well together in relation to sexual exploitation and missing children, strengthened by the work of the North Wales Police missing person co-ordinator.

The council has reduced the number of children it looks after from 203 in 2012-13 to 185 in 2013-14. It has significantly improved its performance in the timeliness of reviewing the care plans of looked after children, with 94.3% now being carried out within statutory timescales compared to 75.4% in 2012-13. However, this remains below average for Wales (95.9%).

The outcomes for looked after children in Gwynedd remain consistently strong year on year. The council is achieving stability of placements and qualifications for 16

year old looked after children with the best performing councils in Wales. All relevant young people have a pathway plan and personal adviser.

The number of children on the child protection register has remained stable but the timeliness of child protection conferences has declined (from 86.7 to 82.8%) after better performance last year and is an area that needs to be improved.

Areas of progress

- Establishment of Gwynedd and Anglesey Safeguarding Adults Board.
- Establishment of the corporate safeguarding structures.

Areas for improvement

- Evaluation of the impact of the corporate safeguarding structures.
- Timeliness of child protection conferences.

Capacity

Delivering Social Services

The council has an established workforce that is gaining experience in social care. There are no substantial vacancies or staffing issues.

The council produced a thorough training plan for the social care workforce in 2013-14. The plan is the result of an appreciation of national and local challenges within social care and builds on local knowledge with evident consultation with stakeholders and appreciation of the priorities of Sustainable Social Services and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014).

The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) provide a legal framework to protect people living in care homes and hospitals who are vulnerable because of mental disorder and lack of mental capacity. The CSSIW DoLS inspection found that the appropriate training was provided to the specialist assessors who were supported by knowledgeable and experienced managers. Local training and promotion of the DoLS outside the council had not resulted in wide awareness and understanding of the safeguards. The need to increase DoLS training and awareness reflects a more general need to mainstream the DoLS throughout the council, social care and health. Inspectors noted that the council should examine its management arrangements to ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the supervisory body that oversees the DoLS assessment process and the managing authority that is responsible for the care provided.

Recent case law has considerably widened the scope for potential application of the DoLS safeguards and this is already having a marked impact upon demand

and the need for the council to appropriately respond. The council has 9 best interest assessors and is in a good position to meet the increase in demand.

The council presently spends close to £60 million a year on social services and plans to reduce this by £10 million by the end of 2017/18, with savings mostly being made in adult services. In recent years the council has managed its financial position well. Spending within social services in Gwynedd during 2013-14 was broadly as planned, however there was an over spend in adults services of £498,000. In the final quarter of the year there was significant strain from spending on the care for older people, learning disability, and mental health.

The council's ability to accurately report on performance has continued to improve. Risk management within the service has improved with regular use and updating of a risk register.

The council has not established a comprehensive quality assurance system. It plans to do so in 2014-15. The need to improve quality assurance was noted by CSSIW in last year's annual evaluation report. It is also an area for improvement in both of the recent national inspections and in the adoption inspection report. The council is introducing a cross cutting children and adults safeguarding and quality assurance team.

Areas of progress

- Risk management.

Areas for improvement

- Raise awareness of the implications and requirements of DoLS and improve the governance arrangements for the operation of the procedures.
- Quality assurance.

Providing direction

The council clearly recognises the context of prolonged financial pressures, demographic changes, increased expectations and the implications of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

There is a clear understanding that social services need to be provided in a different way. The council is committed to being open minded in the co-production of services with the citizens of Gwynedd. It has identified clear priorities and is committed to ensuring the right care in the right location at the right cost.

Social care and social services have a high priority in the council's strategic plan. This is seen in the priority given to vulnerable children and young people, the

support for adults and safeguarding. There has been strong corporate support for implementing projects in social services.

The statutory director of social services was confirmed as a corporate director in July 2013 and she has created and appointed two new head of service posts, the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department.

It has been an extremely demanding year for the corporate director meeting her corporate responsibilities and establishing the senior leadership team within social service. The new leadership team has raised the profile and influence of social care on a corporate level. There are early indications that the new arrangements will produce improvements in the support and leadership for social services.

It remains important that the council draw up a suitable set of protocols that define reciprocal arrangements and relationships between key post holders across the council. These protocols should be worked through by the key post holders and formally accepted and endorsed by the council. There is a risk that social services will not receive appropriate attention from the corporate director if her portfolio of responsibilities is too great.

The council has made positive steps in its corporate parenting arrangements but these now need to be further developed. The corporate parenting panel will work with looked after children in 2014-15 to provide outline the actions that the council will take to support children in care. Members will need to provide greater support to assure that the strategic aims are effectively owned and translated into action across the council's services and by partner agencies; ensuring appropriate health care, increased educational support and temporary employment in the council for looked after children.

Areas of progress

- Profile and support for social services within the council.

Areas for improvement

- Corporate parenting support for looked after children by the council and partners.