



Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012/2013

Local Authority Name: Caerphilly County Borough Council

This report sets out the key areas of progress for the year 2012/13 in Caerphilly Social Services Department and areas for future improvement

Summary

Caerphilly social services continued to perform well during 2012 /13.

Last year the focus lay on the integration of social services with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's social services department. However, this did not come to fruition. Both parties have maintained a commitment to work in partnership in specific service areas.

Whilst the decision was made not to progress with integration, the directors of both social services departments provided input into a review of collaborative working. This resulted in the publication of key lessons learned and positive suggestions and advice for agencies working in partnership.

Joint working with a range of partners has been high on the social services agenda and this has included taking the lead in a number of regional collaborative arrangements.

The latter part of the year saw challenges with vacancies emerging at both corporate and senior management level. This will pose challenges in 2013/14 as a new senior management team will need to be established.

The director of social service's annual report is clear and well balanced. It provides an outline of services provided, changes over the year and is honest about the challenges going forward. The interim director recognises in his report that the impact of welfare reform will need careful monitoring to maintain and redirect services to those key areas of need. Priorities are set out for the coming year. There is acknowledgement that continued review of existing services along with exploration of new alternatives will be required to continue the council's building of resilient services for the future.

Adults

The council has continued to review and develop services with partners. There is a strong commitment to working with other local authority social services departments and health. This has included developing existing relationships for example the Gwent Frailty model and hosting adult placement services, as well as participating in new arrangements – the Gwent wide adult safeguarding board.

Internal provision has been reviewed and new projects and strategies put in place to enhance services for people.

Children

Children's services have continued to perform well. The initial shared assistant director arrangements during the integration programme were followed by joint management for the remainder of the year. This did not show visible impact on children and young people receiving services.

The council continued to review services including residential provision for looked after children and respite services for children with disabilities, as well as participating in regional collaboration for safeguarding.

Whilst performance has been maintained, the opportunity to continue the trajectory of development will come with the appointment of a new assistant director for children's services in 2013/14.

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

- Impact of long-term interim management arrangements on the department.
- Potential effects of corporate instability.
- Sustaining current high levels of service in a financially challenging environment.

Response to last year's areas of development

One of the potential areas of risk highlighted within last year's ACRF was that of the integration of social services between Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. Both partners have been clear about the learning taken from this and the joint workforce development team which has recently been implemented is a positive result of the given to the project. Outcomes of this work will be discussed as part of CSSIW's ongoing engagement with both councils.

A review of progress made in implementing the recommendations from HIW's homicide review was undertaken in September 2013 and, while we found that progress had been made, there were still areas for improvement. The head of adult services is working closely with health and housing partners to maintain the impetus for improvement.

Good practice identified

CSSIW has identified the following areas of good practice:

- Continued commitment to exploring areas for working collaboratively with a broad range of partners, for example the community resource team within the broader Gwent Frailty model.
- Review of internal service provision resulting in positive change,; development of reablement beds, exploring new strategies for caring for people with dementia, developing a new children's residential unit and restructuring children's respite service.
- Sharing the learning from the collaboration project with Blaenau Gwent.
- Developing outcomes based approaches in assessment care planning and review.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

In addition to regulatory inspections and engagement meetings, CSSIW undertook the following work in Caerphilly:

- National review of the statutory role of the director for social services.
- Site visit and review of mental health services in Caerphilly.
- Attendance at meetings regarding integration (provider forum and public meeting).

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

A number of specific areas for improvement have been identified in the body of this report. The council's progress in relation to these will be discussed with the council during regular engagement meetings in the coming year.

- Review of the joint workforce development team with Blaenau Gwent.
- Site visits to corporate parenting groups.
- Site visits to carers groups.
- National thematic review of looked after children.
- National thematic review of commissioning of social care for older people.
- Work with the Wales Audit Office to begin a review into the effectiveness of the Gwent Frailty project.

PERFORMANCE

Shaping services:

As part of the local service board including public service and voluntary partners, the council has developed a single integrated plan. This provides a detailed review of the borough based on a local needs assessment. It recognises the diverse range of needs and identifies key areas for development and improvement of services within Caerphilly. The plan Caerphilly Delivers includes a range of strategies to tackle poverty and for future development to

strengthen local resilience, focus services and improve people's lives. The document overarches and encompasses previous strategies for adult and children's social services. Public consultation events were held to seek the views of local people in the development of the plan.

The feedback from service users in relation to this was used to inform the development of the council's 2013/14 objectives which include key areas for social services.

The council retains a high level of engagement with local people through events, particularly around national awareness raising for example, carers week and adult and child safeguarding.

Adults

The council has continued to shape services to reflect demographic change. The director's report includes reference to the development of services to meet changing needs and support individual choice in how and where care is provided.

There is a focus on supporting people to remain within the community rather than in residential placements. Performance indicators demonstrate a rise in people being cared for in the community along with a decrease in residential placements.

This has also been supported by the development of reablement beds within one of the council's residential care homes. The council continues to work closely with health partners within the Gwent Frailty model as both a preventative and supportive service to maintain people within their own homes.

The uptake of direct payments has increased but the number of persons ceasing to receive this has meant that overall the number remains static. The council has planned a programme of education and awareness among staff and service users in 2013/14 to improve the use of direct payments. The progress with this can be discussed at our engagement meetings during 2013/14.

The council has continued to maintain its strong commitment to partnership working despite the decision not to progress with the integration with Blaenau Gwent social services. This includes work within the region with five other local authorities and health partners in mental health and learning disability. This will not be without its challenges in its implementation and governance arrangements.

CSSIW's regulatory inspections have provided positive feedback regarding joint working in reablement services. The review of mental health services and joint arrangements with health and housing in September 2013 showed that, on the ground, staff perceived areas where improvement could be made. Partnership meetings are undertaken on a regular basis to support the ongoing joint working arrangements with practitioners.

In mental health services we found improved links with housing, and positive planned developments.

The council hosts and manages the South East Wales adult placement service, Shared Lives, which covers local authority areas across the wider region. Feedback to CSSIW from partners included in these arrangements has been positive and additional areas for development discussed. This includes raising awareness of the potential wider options and uses of the service with practitioners.

Discussions indicated that social workers consider this mainly in terms of longer term placements for learning disability. The council should consider reviewing these early indicators (with partners) and consider action to ensure the continued development and broaden use of the service.

Service specific provider forums are maintained on a regular basis and includes in-house provision. These provide opportunity for discussion and for shared learning and consultation.

Children

The director's report references consultation with families and young people that use services. Evidence provided from the council demonstrated that there is a commitment to taking an inclusive approach to seeking feedback on an individual basis, for example at the point of assessment and review. In broader terms, feedback is sought through surveys and questionnaires.

The council also reported that it is compiling digital stories and this an area which CSSIW would like to explore further in the coming year.

Consultation with families of children with a disability was undertaken as part of the development and changes to respite services.

Young people's views regarding services were represented at the health social care and wellbeing scrutiny meeting by a representative of the young people's forum.

Long-term care planning for care leavers has been reviewed in response to changing needs and had led to changes in services available, for example foster carers providing supported lodgings and an independence flat being incorporated in the new build children's home.

The council has been committed to a range of regional collaborations. These support internal partnership objectives to improve services and are in line with Welsh Government policy. These include working with the five other regional authorities to develop a regional safeguarding board which has been implemented from April 2013, the regional integrated family support service and developing a regional adoption service (planned for implementation 2014).

The decision not to progress the integration with Blaenau Gwent meant that the planned joint fostering service was not developed. However, the joint youth offending team service remains and is due for external review in 2013/14.

The director reports success with the Team around the Family model and close ties with education in preventative services for children in need. Flying Start and Families First provision is in place for the areas within the borough with identified needs and additional resource secured to develop this further. CSSIW's inspections of nurseries providing this service have found good outcomes in terms of the opportunities available to children although the overall effect will need to be seen more broadly on a longer term basis.

Areas of progress

- Commitment to developing regional and joint working arrangements to build sustainable services.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop awareness with practitioners of the options available for use of the "shared lives" service.

Getting help:

There is a vast range of information regarding access to services available to the public via the internet as well as more traditional sources, eg leaflets. The council's website provides a clear and easily navigable resource for potential and existing service users and their carers. This includes links to additional pertinent information, guidance and services. Plans for 2013/14 include a review of the website including content and accessibility.

The council has expressed clearly their objective to improve services to carers but performance indicators show that the number of carer assessments has fallen for both adult and child carers (adults 100% to 90%, children 100% to 96%). Services provided have also decreased since the previous year. The council has, however, been aware of this and has taken a pro-active approach to tackle this, employing a member of staff with specific focus on improving carer services. In addition, a piece of work has been commissioned across the five regional authorities to investigate this further.

Adults

Front door systems are in place for adult services, mental health and the frailty team. Clear information about contact arrangements is available on the council's website. This includes guidance on what people can expect from services. Performance indicates the reviews in adult services have fallen from last year. Whilst this remains above the national average, the council has highlighted this as an area for improvement for next year. The management team has discussed potential reasons for this decline in engagement meetings with CSSIW and has analysed these as part of the drive to improve. This identified that methods for collating information nationally (mental health assessments being included within health statistics) may have impacted on local performance figures.

The number of delayed transfers of care has marginally increased from the previous year and remains within the lower quartile for Wales. The geographical location in terms of the number of discharging hospitals is described as impacting on this. The council enjoys close working relationships with regional health partners and opportunities to extend these relationships to adjacent health boards could facilitate further examination of the reasons for delays and improve outcomes for people.

Children

Arrangements for assessment for children and young people are clear via the contact and assessment team. The council continues its strong performance in relation to assessment and review although the number of statutory visits in accordance with regulations has decreased since the previous year. Since last year the numbers of children seen by a qualified social worker has increased and re-referral rates remain static.

An annual survey of looked after children indicated that the majority of respondents (the response rate was 20%) knew how to get information about social services and were able to contact a social worker when needed.

While performance indicators show completion of reviews and assessments as positive, the director's report indicates that internal audit has highlighted areas for development in the quality of documentary processes within children's services. It was indicated that further audit to review progress will be undertaken 2013/14.

Social services have maintained a progressive approach to developing practice. Children's services staff participated in a national trial of outcomes based assessment, care planning and review undertaken on behalf of the Social Services Improvement Agency and ongoing development and review of this in practice will be an area of focus for the future.

Areas of progress

- Developing an outcome based approach to assessment, care management and review.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to seek out and develop methods to identify and engage carers.

The services provided:

There is a range of services available within Caerphilly. The council provides and has continued to develop its in-house services as well as commissioning with external service providers. The council takes a pro-active approach to collaboration, securing and developing existing services as well as identifying new opportunities for joint initiatives.

The council's governance arrangements provide a structure for quality review and audit that is reported regularly to the senior management team and at a corporate level.

Adults

Review and reshaping of services has continued in response to changing needs and to drive forward community based care, for example a review of day care provision and promoting alternative approaches to support people within their own homes.

The council's community resource team has continued to maintain the local provision of the Gwent Frailty model with ongoing reported success. A review of this service across the region is anticipated to be undertaken jointly by regulators commencing in 2014. The addition of reablement beds in one of the in-house residential services should provide a positive option to enable people to remain within the community and the council will want to continue to monitor the outcomes of this service.

There has been internal investment in enhancing the dementia care service within one of the council's care homes using the My Home Life initiative. There has been some early work to encourage external providers to invest in this qualitative development.

The council provides evidence of good links with local voluntary agencies and is seeking to develop citizen directed support. The need to collate this as a resource for staff reference has also been highlighted as an area the council would like to improve.

Internal audit is used to review services and identify improvement. CSSIW found positive indicators of joint audit undertaken with health as part of the review of mental health services.

The council is in the process of developing outcome based assessments. Evidence provided demonstrates that there is a commitment to seek feedback from individuals, for example at the time of the review.

The quality of provider services is reviewed through contract monitoring. The team is well established and works closely with providers to review services and, where identified, has secured improvement. Feedback through CSSIW's regulatory inspectors has indicated that on occasions this has been a somewhat intensive approach which could detract from the provider's ability to improve. Discussion through our engagement meetings has shown that this feedback has been actively considered by the interim director.

Children

The council has continued to reshape and develop services to reflect local needs and in line with national policy. There is a focus on preventative arrangements both internally, linking with education and with voluntary agencies to develop the Team around the Family, Flying Start and Families First. Additional resources have been secured to develop this approach within the areas of higher need within the borough.

The council works within regional collaborative arrangements. This includes the implementation of regional family support services and the development of the regional adoption service.

A new children's residential home has been developed and registered. This has replaced the previous service as well as providing additional accommodation for transition leaving care.

The council is committed to developing their fostering services. The collaboration with Blaenau Gwent for this service did not proceed due to the dissolution of the integration arrangements. The council has, however, continued to prioritise the service with clear goals for improvement in its priorities for 2014. This includes further recruitment of foster carers and a programme of training and development for carers within the joint workforce development team.

Within its corporate parenting role, the council focused on improving outcomes for looked after children, a cross party group meets regularly to oversee and develop this. Outcomes for looked after children are included as an improvement objective for the council for 2013/14. Positive outcomes from the additional investment in educational support for looked after children has resulted in additional resources being identified to maintain additional input for the year ahead and anticipated outcome measures set for this.

Children's views are sought individually at assessment and review, and there is access and support through independent advocacy services.

Areas of progress

- The development of reablement beds within a residential home.
- Continuing the project for additional educational input for looked after children based on positive results.

Areas for improvement

- Identify and collate resources for staff to signpost and continue to develop citizen centred support.

Effect on people's lives:

The single improvement plan encapsulates the drive to support individual rights and choices and physical and emotional wellbeing at a high level. This is placed at the core of the council's corporate plan. The council has well established audits and systems for seeking the views of people and encouraging feedback. These are embedded within the governance framework, reviewed within the social services department and reported via the director at corporate level.

Adults

Adult services have a pro-active approach to enable people to maintain independence. This includes development of local support networks. For people requiring care provision, the range of services support some choice in how, where and by who care is provided. This is supported by a range of resources, for example reablement, frailty services and supporting people, which have enabled an increasing number of people to be cared for in the community.

CSSIW's regulatory inspection of services within the borough has provided positive feedback regarding the in-house provision of community/reablement services.

In terms of people whose needs require more intensive support in residential services, the council has made improvements in dementia care in one of its own residential services by implementing the My Home Life initiative. CSSIW's inspection of this service found positive outcomes for people. Outcomes from this work were shared at a national level.

For people who are in need of residential care with nursing, and particularly those with dementia care needs, the choices of services are more limited. Social services have worked on a regional basis with local authorities and the health board to discuss broader issues around commissioning and development of the range and quality of service provision for the future. This continues to be work in progress.

Our review of mental health services showed that this remains an area for development. There was evidence of improved processes and the small sample of people we spoke with indicated they were achieving positive outcomes. Additional reviews could be undertaken to establish the levels of improvement the service has provided.

Commissioned services are monitored to ensure the level of quality is maintained for people using services. The move to an outcomes based approach should provide more individually focused information on which to base judgements about care.

The department has a well established adult protection team which works closely with the internal teams (in particular contracts and commissioning) and adult protection remains a strong service area with performance remaining stable. The regional collaboration for adult safeguarding is chaired by

Caerphilly and strengthening the joint working and learning from shared experience will be an important benefit for all partners included in these arrangements.

Children

There is continued good performance in children's services. Preventative strategies are in place to ensure early intervention for families and children in need. While the total number of children in need has increased over the last 12 months, the numbers of looked after children and children on child protection registers has fallen for the third successive year.

An internal review of the effectiveness and quality of services for children with disabilities identified areas for improvement, for example in the flexibility of the services provided. This led to the external provision of a respite service recently being brought back in-house. Evaluation of this will determine whether improvements have been realised when the service has bedded in.

CSSIW's inspection of the fostering service confirmed that the views of young people and carers are sought through the young persons Shout Out group and carers group. Young people are also involved on carer training and staff selection. Feedback from this inspection was positive regarding the services provided.

Views of looked after children were sought in an annual survey. These were generally positive about their access to social workers and support provided. However, the survey had a low response rate (20%) and consideration should be given to how to engage more children and young people in providing feedback about the services they receive. Performance figures for looked after children are generally good although only three quarters of statutory visits took place suggesting children are not being monitored as they should be.

The performance in children's safeguarding remains within the upper quartile of councils in Wales although the percentage of conferences and core group meetings held within timescales has decreased slightly.

The council is a member of the regional safeguarding board and reports that early review has secured change/improvement within some of the sub-groups supporting this. The impact of shared arrangements is an area which all members will need to monitor locally as part of the overall governance of the regional arrangement.

Areas of progress

- Commitment to regional safeguarding arrangements.
- Development of internal service provision.
- Commitment at senior management level to regional review of commissioned services and pressures for adult residential care with social service and health partners.

Area for improvement

- Consider methods of engaging further with children and young people to obtain feedback about the effect of services on their lives.
- Ensure statutory visits to looked after children take place as required.

CAPACITY

Delivering Social Services:

Social services worked within its budget for the year. The council protected its social service budget in 2012/13 and has confirmed its intent to maintain this for the coming financial year. The council has recognised the constraints and demands from changing demographics and an increasing aging population, as well as anticipating the impact of welfare reform.

The council's improvement objectives and single integrated plan consider long-term challenges to the borough and look to longer term preventative strategies to ensure continued delivery of services to the most vulnerable people. A medium term financial plan is in place and a monthly monitoring process is in place to ensure early identification of pressures.

The director's report recognises the need for ongoing review and reshaping of the services provided, and identification of potential savings and improvements to ensure that services focus on key areas of need, building resilience for the future and providing best value for money.

In its improvement objectives for 2013/14 the council identifies its intent to improve outcomes for looked after children by reducing the percentage of placement change during the year. Family placement teams have been developed to improve recruitment and support for foster carers and additional financial resource has been allocated to fund this.

Additional funding has also been identified to support development of a 16 plus team.

Workforce resilience has been considered and, while recent recruitment has filled team vacancies, an additional review has been undertaken to secure further financial resources for staffing in mental health services.

The council has committed to a programme of staff development and this has resulted in building a joint workforce development team with Blaenau Gwent social services. This was initiated from the original integration work between the two social service departments and supported by strong business management and both directors. CSSIW will be visiting this service in 2013/14.

Areas of progress

- Implementation of the joint workforce development team.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop resources and signposting to “grow” citizen centred support.

Providing direction:

In 2012/13 CSSIW undertook a national review of the statutory role of the director of social services. This provided a detailed review of the functions of the director and the support mechanisms in place to enable them to carry out their statutory duties. The review confirmed that in Caerphilly there was a clear understanding of the accountabilities of the director, with sound structures and governance and support arrangements to enable the director to carry out his role.

The assistant director for children’s services role became vacant during the year and was held as a joint post between Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly during the move toward integration. Performance indicators demonstrate that for this period there was no significant impact on the performance of the children’s service area. The permanent appointment to this post in the new financial year by the council will provide stability and leadership to continue the review and development of children’s services.

At the end of year point there had been further shift in senior management. The departure of the director for social services left a vacancy currently covered internally by the assistant director for adult services and with interim arrangements to cover his post. Appointment to the director post has experienced delays due to corporate changes. At the point of drafting this report, interim arrangements have not impacted on the quality of provision within social services. However, it is essential that an appointment is concluded to maintain momentum in achieving objectives and providing long-term stability and direction.

The cabinet member for social services (who has in his position had lengthy involvement with social services) is active in his role/support for the directorate and visible in his support and attendance at meetings/events.

Cross cutting initiatives between social services, health and wellbeing are recognised as essential at corporate level, and are reviewed within one scrutiny committee. CSSIW attended and observed a scrutiny meeting which was well attended. The full agenda provided opportunity for discussion around a range of issues which were discussed in detail before decisions were made. Social services staff and the local youth forum were represented, providing presentations to the members present.

Close links are maintained between children’s services and education including co-location of safeguarding and working with the team around the family. There is corporate commitment for looked after children, which includes additional funding for educational support.

In terms of developing its corporate parenting role, there have been sessions for relevant members to enable them to develop their understanding of this role which have been well received.

Our engagement meetings and the council's objectives for 2013/14 have highlighted that the council is clearly sighted on working in collaboration with a range of agencies (public, private and third sector) to drive forward improvement and best value services.

Areas of progress

- Positive engagement with health partners.

Areas for improvement

- Securing permanent appointment to the post of director of social services.