



Director of Social Services  
Annual Performance Report  
2013-14

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## INTRODUCTION

This is my annual report about Social Services in Denbighshire. The report looks at our performance in 2013/14 and sets out our priorities for 2014/15 and beyond. The report provides a detailed assessment of how effective services are for adults, children and families in Denbighshire.

My overall assessment is that we continued to provide high quality social services for the residents of Denbighshire during 2013/14. As this report will show, we achieved some excellent performance in areas that are important to our communities. We also started to make real progress with our aim to transform social services in response to the challenges posed by the financial position and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Clearly, not everything went as well as we had planned, and there are areas where improvements could still be made. The table below summarises some of our key strengths during 2013/14 and some of the areas where challenges lie ahead for 2014/15:

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall, the number of complaints received by social services decreased, whilst our performance in dealing with complaints within timescale improved significantly</li><li>• We effectively managed the risk in 100% of cases where there were Protection of Vulnerable Adult (POVA) concerns</li><li>• We increased the number of carers (of adults) who were offered a review or assessment of their needs. We then assessed the needs of more carers, and provided more services to carers as a result of those assessments</li><li>• We increased the number of adult care plan reviews undertaken, and also increased the number of care plans that were reviewed on time</li><li>• More adults were able to retain, or regain, their independence following a period of reablement</li><li>• 97% of adult service users were satisfied that the service they received improved their quality of life</li><li>• We improved our planning arrangements for looked after children</li><li>• We increased the number of children who are seen / seen alone as part of the initial assessment processes</li><li>• We reduced the number of re-referrals into the Children and Family Service</li><li>• We improved our performance in completing initial assessments (for children) within timescales</li></ul>
Challenges

## Strengths

- We need to continue improving attendance at work
- We need to ensure all carers are offered a review or assessment of their needs
- We need to continue to increase the use of Direct Payments and Individual Service Funds to give people more freedom to choose the services that meet their assessed needs and who provides them
- We need to continue to increase the completion of statutory visits to looked after children within timescales
- We need to continue to improve educational and health outcomes for looked after children
- Maintaining stable placements for children and young people, and minimising the number of moves they experience, will remain as a strong focus, yet for some this is not always possible as we experienced during the 2013/14. There are a number of reasons for children needing to move placement, and these are often for positive reasons, such as moving into kinship care; longer term foster placements; or being placed for adoption. Through our quality assurance process we always aim to learn from the causes of placement moves and ensure we build on our experiences.

The council continues to face a real challenge because of the impact of increasing demands and reducing financial resources. The financial position facing councils across Wales is well known, and the position for Denbighshire is no different. The council's overall revenue budget reduced by £3.1 million in 2013/14, and there has been a further £8.5 million reduction for 2014/15. The impact of these continued budget reductions on social services is two-fold. First, social services must take responsibility for sharing the overall burden by reducing its own budgets. Second, when other service budgets are being cut, it inevitably becomes more difficult for the council to invest further in preventative services and strategies to enhance wellbeing, because the benefits of this work are difficult to quantify and will not be seen for many years.

In terms of increasing demand, the council is dealing with the impact of changes to the demographic profile of the county as well as changing public expectations. Our society has changed in recent years, and continues to change. The general population is ageing, and there are many more adults with complex disabilities. There are an increasing number of children with significant disabilities who rightly have high expectations of services. Furthermore, family and community structures are changing, and there continue to be high rates of family breakdown.

Like many authorities in Wales, Denbighshire is seeing increases in the number of people with a learning disability; older people with complex care needs and whose support needs are extensive; and carers who need support to help them continue to support vulnerable people. Overall the number of looked after children and the number of children on the child protection register has remained relatively static, although we often see some fluctuation in numbers.

It is clear that we cannot respond to these demands with reducing resources and traditional models of social care. We therefore need to change the way we deliver

services if we are to successfully meet the needs and expectations of vulnerable people. The need for change has been identified within the council's Corporate Plan for 2012/17, which includes the following priorities:

- ensuring vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible; and
- modernising the council to deliver efficiencies and improve services for our customers.

Social services in Denbighshire are focussed on delivering against these priorities, and the Service Plans for both Adult & Business Services and Children & Family Services are specifically designed to support these priorities.

Denbighshire's Wellbeing Plan (Single Integrated Plan) is due to be launched towards the end of 2014, and will also have a strong focus on wellbeing and enabling people to become resilient and independent. This plan will be a key strategic document demonstrating the commitment of all our public and third sector partners to work together to achieve positive outcomes for the citizens of Denbighshire.

In order to clarify the role that we believe the council needs to play to support people to be independent, we have developed a model to show the type of support that a person could expect to be available to them at different stages of their life, and as their needs change. We have created a character called "Sid", which stands for "Supporting Independence in Denbighshire", to illustrate the model and to show how it would apply to an individual resident. Sid could be anyone, from a young, disabled person to an 85 year old with dementia, and the model shows the support that Sid could expect at different times of his/her life. Most people will fit within the first part of the model, where Sid requires no support from the council and is supported by family, friends and social groups to be active, connected and contribute to his community. The model then progresses through various stages, including "advice & information" and "re-ablement", through to managed social care support when Sid has complex and long-term needs.

We now need to communicate the "Sid model" to a wider audience, so that our communities understand what support they can expect at different stages of their life, and so that our partners understand the role that they can play in this joined-up vision for supporting independence in Denbighshire. For the council, this means ensuring that our own services, such as housing, highways, planning, environmental services and leisure, are designed to optimise independence. The Sid model will not work unless the general environment in Denbighshire support people with low level needs through accessible buildings and services that have an enabling culture. The question we need to ask ourselves as a council when making policy and financial decisions is "what will this mean for Sid?".

## **MODERNISING SOCIAL SERVICES AND ENHANCING WELLBEING**

Last year, the Welsh Government set out its vision for the future of social services in Wales in its paper “Sustainable Social Services: A Framework for Action”. This document put in place a framework for meeting the challenges facing social services in the next decade and beyond, and sets out priorities for action. Delivery of the Sustainable Social Services agenda is supported by the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014.

In response to “Sustainable Social Services”, and to prepare ourselves for the Act, we established a 5 year programme to modernise social services. The programme aims to transform the way that social care is viewed and delivered in Denbighshire. The changes will redefine the responsibility of individuals, families and communities for maintaining their own health and wellbeing. This will require a change in culture and a greater focus on promoting resilience, independence, self-care and community support.

Changing the way we work, even when this is for positive reasons, can be challenging. We recognise that the level of change required will involve difficult decisions about the way some services are delivered and that these will not always be popular. We will have to manage this change effectively and ensure that we listen to and involve staff, elected members and communities in the modernisation programme. Some of the work we are currently taking forward as part of the programme is summarised below:

### **A single point of access**

Throughout 2013/14, we have been planning the introduction of a new, effectively co-ordinated single point of access, assessment and care co-ordination for preventative and rehabilitation work for adults across Denbighshire. This includes the provision of information, signposting to general community services, and the integration of a specified and developing range of intermediate care and short-term health and social services. This will be part of a staged approach to a fully integrated health and social care community service model that will eventually incorporate longer term community support and in-patient bed-based care and a full range of council services aligned to an ageing population.

We have been working with our health and third sector colleagues to develop the model for our Single Point of Access. Although developing this service has taken longer than we initially anticipated, we are now in the final stages leading up to implementation and we expect to go live in July 2014. It is proposed that this work will then be used to inform the development of a Single Point of Access across North Wales.

## Using Intelligence more effectively

This project will identify how the Council can use intelligence to focus its preventative and wellbeing initiatives where vulnerable groups most need early intervention. As a result, we should be in a stronger position to support the independence of vulnerable people in the community for longer and to reduce the demand for formal social services intervention.

## Enhancing Wellbeing

The project will focus on the wellbeing of Denbighshire residents using the New Economics Foundation (NEF) *five ways to wellbeing* indicators as a measurement tool. Whilst Social services is driving this work, it is recognised that the ways to improve wellbeing will not necessarily consist of formal social care interventions but will be available through a number of pathways, including:

- Universal advice and information from health, social care and the third sector
- Targeted advice and marketing (mail shots, online campaigns)
- Accessible community groups and services
- Accessible universal services provided by the Local Authority – e.g. Countryside walks, library resources, leisure activities

## Ensuring people have a strong voice and control

Over the coming years, we aim to develop and implement what is called 'citizen directed support'. This approach is about people having choice and control over the support they need to live their life as independently as possible. It is likely to take a number of years to fully embed the citizen directed support approach. It will require significant change for social services staff, providers, service users and families – but the change is worth making. We started the process in 2013/14 by completing a citizen directed support self-assessment which has been developed by the Social Services Improvement Agency. The self-assessment will now be used to inform our plan to implement this change over the coming years.

## Transforming services for disabled people and their families/carers

Our vision is for disabled people and their families to be confident, resilient and independent. To achieve this, we will work with our partners to enable disabled children and their families to exercise their rights to access to the same opportunities as all other children, while having some specific opportunities that address the issues that families with disabled children experience. A strong focus of this project is to make sure we provide a seamless experience of transition for young people and that the focus on promoting independence and providing opportunities continues throughout

adulthood. Services will have to be transformed and modernised and so the project is developing:

- An inclusion toolkit that will be promoted amongst all service providers to improve inclusion and accessibility
- Formal and informal education opportunities
- Development of opportunities for disabled children in mainstream activities
- Changes to the way we provide short breaks
- Delivery of a new workforce development programme

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## CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Part of delivering efficient and effective services is about how we deal with customer feedback and complaints, and we produce a separate annual report which provides an overview of customer feedback alongside a review of the effectiveness of our complaints process. The main findings of the annual report for 2013/14 are as follows:

- Overall, the number of complaints received during 2013/14 decreased, whereas compliments increased slightly.
- Involvement, staff and communication continue to be the three main areas of complaint; this is consistent with previous years.
- In terms of the outcome of complaints, the proportion of complaints being 'partially upheld' has been relatively static over the last three years, but the proportion of complaints 'upheld' decreased significantly in 2013/14.
- Performance in dealing with complaints within timescale improve significantly over the last year, with 97% of stage 1 complaints and 100% of stage 2 complaints being dealt with within timescale.

When complaints are upheld, action plans are drawn up when it is recognised that changes need to be made. Action plans are monitored until all the actions have been completed. Some examples of changes implemented following complaints are:

- When staff are off with sickness, open cases are monitored to ensure responsibilities are being met, regular reviews will be undertaken to ensure this.
- When a family is in dispute, it is important that communication from us remains equal to both parties.

As well as responding to complaints when people feel that something has gone wrong, we have developed mechanisms for understanding the general views of service users about the quality of social care services and the impact they have on their lives. We have a number of questionnaires that we use for this purpose, and we plan to extend the use of these questionnaires during 2014/15. Instead of listing the findings of all our customer feedback questionnaires here, we have included a summary of our findings within the relevant sections of this report. During 2014/15, we also have plans to develop the use of case studies to give us a more in-depth understanding of how service users view the support and care they receive.

We have also strengthened our quality assurance and contract management arrangements to ensure that we have confidence that both the services we deliver directly, and those delivered by third parties on our behalf, are delivered to a high standard and in a manner that actively promotes positive outcomes and dignity.

## SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE

The most important asset we have in terms of the ability to deliver and commission high quality services is the social care workforce. We are committed to supporting and developing the workforce to ensure that we are able to give best possible levels of advice, information, support and care to our communities. Our focus on training and development includes the whole social care workforce in Denbighshire, not just council employees.

### Training and Development

During 2013/14, there were over 3,800 training attendances by whole sector social care staff, the majority of these attendances were through the Social Care Workforce Development Programme (SCWDP). In addition, Denbighshire County Council staff studied for accredited qualifications. In February 2014, the SCWDP Annual Awards Ceremony recognised 85 staff from the social care sector for achieving qualifications throughout the year. The position at the end of 2013/14 was that:

- 100% of managers / deputy managers, and 90% of care workers / officers / assistants, within local authority residential services for elderly and elderly mentally infirm people held the recommended occupational qualification.
- 100% of managers, and 78% of senior domiciliary care workers / care workers, in local authority domiciliary care services for adults held the recommended occupational qualification.
- 100% of managers and 78% of family support workers in local authority domiciliary care services for children held the recommended occupational qualification.
- 87.5% of managers and 59% of care staff in the independent domiciliary sector for adults held the recommended occupational qualification.
- 87.5% of managers and 67% of care staff in the independent residential sector for adults held the recommended occupational qualification.
- 65% of active foster care households have at least one foster carer holding the recommended qualification.

### Flexible Working

Last year, social services did a lot of planning around the introduction of flexible working. Flexible working will enable us to provide a better service to the public because staff will have easy access to information due to improved technology, regardless of location. Our response times will also be faster due to the reduction of delays in communication. Flexible working will also provide benefits for staff, including a reduction in travel, and an improved ability to manage work/life balance.

## **Workforce Profiling**

We have been developing a new workforce strategy to ensure we can deliver services as outlined within the Social Services and Well-being Act. For example, a review of structures and roles within our adult locality teams has been undertaken to ensure a more holistic approach to the way services are delivered. We will begin implementing these changes during 2014/15.

## **Performance Appraisals**

We have paid a lot of attention to the completion, and quality, of performance appraisals for staff as we recognise that this is an important investment in making sure our staff develop their skills and experiences. 93% of eligible staff had a performance appraisal during 2013/14, which was a significant improvement on the previous year. The challenge will now be to build on this good work and ensure that all of our eligible staff have a performance appraisal every year.

## **Attendance at work**

Overall levels of sickness absence across social services have been a concern for us over the past few years. This is something that we have been working hard to tackle during 2013/14, and there are signs that the situation is now starting to improve. The council has recently introduced a new “attendance at work” policy, which links attendance more closely to capability, and provides managers with more support to manage absence effectively. Evidence from other organisations suggests that flexible working opportunities for staff often result in improved morale; wellbeing; performance; and attendance at work. We therefore expect to see significant reductions in sickness absence during 2014/15. However, sickness absence in social services currently remains as a priority for improvement.

## WELSH LANGUAGE

We are committed to being more proactive about how people can access our social services through the medium of Welsh and increase the use of Welsh at work. While not all staff will be fluent in Welsh, we do expect that all will demonstrate a sense of place and enthusiasm for Wales, while making practical arrangements to meet language needs. In order to enable this expectation, and to deliver the requirements of “More Than Just Words/ Mwy Na Geiriau”, we have developed a Welsh language statement and established a Welsh language strategy group (chaired by the Director of Social Services). Progress against the associated action plan includes:

- ‘Iaith Gwaith’ badges have been distributed to those members of staff who speak Welsh.
- ‘Rwy’n Dysgu’ badges have been distributed to those members of staff who are actively learning Welsh.
- ‘Use your Welsh’ posters have been circulated for displaying in prominent public areas of our buildings e.g. staff room, photocopier room, etc.
- Information on various training courses is regularly circulated to social services staff, for example, a half-day Welsh language taster session around language courtesy; offering language choice; and responding to language need.
- Officers are ensuring that through the contract monitoring process, services commissioned are available through the medium of Welsh.
- External and internal trainers re-enforce the ‘More than words’ requirements in all appropriate training courses.
- Our dementia logo has been translated into Welsh.
- The Social Care in Partnership regional group has been provided with lanyards and advice for recruitment fairs.

Future plans include:

- Ensuring the “active offer” is evident at the first point of contact with social services.
- Supporting our staff to improve, and use, their Welsh language skills, especially in key areas such as the Single Point of Access and the Children and Families Support Gateway (previously known as the First Contact Team).
- Ensuring all forms, leaflets, promotional material are bi-lingual and in new corporate format.
- Monitoring our customer experience questionnaire which includes a question asking whether people were provided with a service in the language of their choice.
- Improving our processes for identifying service users who are Welsh speakers
- Identifying what impact (positive or adverse), policy decisions would have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Continuing to publish information about the Welsh language services that are available.

## WORKING WITH OTHERS

We take great pride in our positive track record for delivering improvement, and for our commitment to partnership working. Across North Wales, there is a strong recognition of the need to work within a regional footprint, both to accommodate the Local Health Board structure and to maximise efficiencies; whilst also being responsive to local need and historical service developments. This results in service planning and delivery needing to operate on a regional, sub-regional and local level. Some of our partnership working, at a regional, sub-regional and local level, is summarised below.

### North Wales Commissioning Hub

In 2012/13 we established the North Wales Commissioning Hub (NWCH), which is a collaboration between the six North Wales authorities and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. The Hub, which is hosted by Denbighshire County Council, delivered some real improvements in the commissioning of services for people with complex needs (adults and children) during 2013/14, including:

- Taking on responsibility for placement sourcing for children and young people (residential care / residential care with education placements) and supporting partners in identifying suitable placement options for 49 children and young people, as well as for around 120 adults.
- Leading on the development of a regional outcomes framework for quality monitoring of care homes for adults. It developed processes for collating and analysing intelligence on quality from a range of sources, and led on the development of the information sharing protocol for the quality monitoring of adult residential care homes.

### Adoption Service

The North Wales Adoption Service continues to get stronger and as a result of some key developments including: a dedicated training officer, targeted recruitment campaigns and the development of a bespoke website, there is a diverse range of adopters that has increased the ability of the service to place children in North Wales.

### Safeguarding

In preparation for the forthcoming Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, regional safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable adults and children / young people have been put in place to:

- co-ordinate safeguarding and protection policies within the region
- promote shared understanding and practice for all agencies within the region
- contribute to all Wales understanding of POVA / Child Protection practice
- promote a joined-up approach to training.

## Commissioning

2013/14 has also been a busy year for commissioning across the region with the establishment of a new sub-regional young carers service and an in-depth project to scope the options for a North Wales advocacy service for vulnerable children that will go live in April 2015.

## Working with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

We are committed to working in partnership with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCU) to ensure that health and social care become more integrated. We welcome and support the BCU Operational Plan for 2014/15, which includes the following commitments:

- In each of our 14 localities, NHS and Social Services staff will work together to provide integrated care and to support more people to remain independent in their local community.
- Services will be planned and delivered jointly with local authorities, the 3rd Sector and communities through an integrated approach.
- Health and Social Care professionals will work more closely together, with patients and families, to identify those people at risk of deteriorating health.
- Community services will be accessible through a simplified, well coordinated 'single point of access'.

There are already some examples of excellent partnership working with BCU which are delivering real benefits for the people of Denbighshire. The development of the Single Point of Access, discussed earlier, is one example of this, but others include:

- A statement of intent in relation to agreeing a framework for delivering integrated health and social care for older people with complex needs has been developed jointly by colleagues from the North Wales Authorities and BCU.
- There are plans being finalised for the introduction of a new integrated assessment process which puts the citizen at the heart of the process for decisions about their health care and well-being. The focus will be about building on people's strengths and their networks and community contacts in order to maintain and improve their independence.
- Discussions about a new model for integrated service delivery in Localities are underway which will ensure that we take a 'team around the person' approach, and ensure effective care coordination across health and social care in all sectors. 2014/15 will see the development of small patch-based virtual teams and a change of skill mix within Adult Services. We have also committed, via a formal partnership agreement, to developing and deploying a group of staff known as Health and Social Care Support Workers, who will work to multi-disciplinary care plans for a limited period of time

- In order to help with speedier discharges we have engaged in some limited weekend working with BCU. This included a Social Worker working on a Sunday and Health and Social Care Support Workers being available to deliver initial packages of care. There are indications that this may prove useful as more people recognise what is available.

## **New Work Connections**

The New Work Connections (NWC) project was funded by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), with match funding from participating local authorities. Unfortunately the project has now closed because the grant funding has come to an end. The project ran from 2010-14 with the last activity ceasing in February 2014, and the final 3 months until May 2014 being taken up with the tasks associated with project closure and archiving. The main aim was to reduce economic inactivity and to improve employment levels amongst disadvantaged groups by providing a range of flexible interventions to meet assessed needs. Denbighshire was the lead authority for this regional project covering the four local authority areas of Ynys Mon, Conwy, Denbighshire and Gwynedd.

Working closely with a wide range of partners, including North Wales Women's Centre, Hafal, North Wales Training, Llandrillo & Deeside Colleges, Job Centre Plus, DVSC and internal departments within the council, the project supported nearly 3,000 participants within Denbighshire who were facing hurdles in moving closer to the labour market. Nearly 2,000 of participants gained a 'positive outcome', including significant and, for many, challenging steps like gaining a job interview, attending a training course or doing voluntary work. Whilst around 200 people have entered full time work as a result of the project, a great many more have entered part time work in order to accommodate their needs and/or other responsibilities.

## **Social Care Workforce Development Programme**

The joint Conwy and Denbighshire SCWDP Training Group continues to provide a more efficient, cost effective service and use of grant monies across the sector. There continues to be strong links with the Regional Social Care in Partnership (SCiP) North Wales and the Service Manager, Workforce Development has recently taken over as Chair of the North Wales SCiP. A local recruitment fair was held in February 2014 in partnership with SCiP North Wales to promote social care as a career of choice. 31 exhibitors attended, consisting of Adults and Children's independent and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector social care providers, Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus. A total of 123 people interested in a career in social care attended the event.

## Working together as a council

We also recognise the importance of maximising the resources available within the Council and as such we have worked closely with wider Council services in Denbighshire to deliver services. Examples include:

- The provision of physical activities for vulnerable adults in partnership with Leisure Services;
- Piloting of new models to support the integration of disabled children and young people into mainstream leisure and youth activities.
- A review of the process for managing Disability Facilities Grants, working closely with Planning & Public Protection Services;
- Delivery of the Supporting People Programme, where we work closely with our colleagues in housing to provide housing-related support to vulnerable people to help them gain (or regain) the skills and confidence necessary to live independently.
- Strengthened our relationships within Housing Services to develop accommodation for vulnerable families, for example, supporting families to move from temporary Local Authority accommodation into private rented; and supporting families to maintain their tenancies.
- Delivery of the Families First Programme and developing closer connections with Flying Start and Communities First.

## ADULT & BUSINESS SERVICES: PERFORMANCE

### What we are about

We aim to ensure that vulnerable people are protected and able to live as independently as possible. For most people this means working with them so that they can continue to live in their own home and participate in their local community to the extent they wish.

### The services we provide

The type of service we offer depends on a person's needs. Depending on their individual circumstance, we could offer someone:

- information and advice e.g. about community services, benefits, and how to claim them;
- signposting to services available in their community;
- support that helps people to regain or develop their skills and confidence to take care of themselves safely;
- equipment and home adaptations to assist people with daily living activities;
- care and/or support in a person's home;
- respite/support for carers such as advice on healthy living or arranging for some short term care to enable carers to have a break from caring responsibilities;
- day services; and
- care in a residential or nursing home for people with specific high level care needs.

## PREVENTION, EARLY INTERVENTION AND ENHANCING WELLBEING

As mentioned earlier in the report, our Modernisation Programme is focussing on the development of new initiatives to enhance wellbeing and support independence. However, a lot of our business is already focussed on enabling people to remain independent without the need for ongoing support from social services. We have a range of services that have been developed to build networks and support to help people live in their community. In 2013/14 we have extended the range of community initiatives that support this agenda, including:

- **Men's sheds:** The scheme aims to reduce social isolation and improve health and wellbeing among men with a wide range of needs and circumstances (including domestic violence victims, alcohol and substance misuse, Asperger Syndrome, learning disabilities, physical impairments, and depression). The scheme is also an opportunity to share skills and learning, which could lead to future employment opportunities. The number of people participating is increasing, and the project has been expanded to respond to demand. One man, after attending training and carrying out work experience, was able to secure employment.
- **Volunteering opportunities for older people:** including the recruitment of older people from the community who now train front-line staff in Age Awareness and Dignity in Care. To date they have trained about 200 people, including councillors, third sector and private sector colleagues and health professionals. We are in the process of recruiting more older people as the demand for the training has increased. They have all attended college in order to become qualified to deliver training sessions.
- **Introduction of the University of the Third Age (U3A) for Prestatyn, Rhyl and District.** U3A enables retired or semi-retired people to share their interests, hobbies and experiences in a friendly social atmosphere. A website has been launched which already has over 80 interest groups.

### Promoting independence

We have continued to develop our services to provide a strong focus on supporting people to maintain or regain their independence. Examples of how the service supports people to lead an independent life include:

- Intake and Reablement;
- Telecare and assistive technology;
- Equipment; and
- Extra Care Housing

## Intake and Reablement

We have an effective Intake Service which aims to respond promptly when people seek help, and to help identify the best way for them to regain or maintain their independence by delivering advice and short term intensive support.

Reablement is short-term support which is designed to develop people's confidence to manage as many tasks as possible on their own rather than having other people do things for them. Last year, our reablement team provided a support programme to 379 people, including 296 people to help them return to their own home from hospital.

The percentage of people who no longer needed a social care service following involvement from the reablement service went up to 77% from 72% the previous year. This shows that the reablement approach is producing real and sustained benefits for residents. Despite this, we feel that further improvements could be made, and at times it is a real challenge to meet the large and growing demand for reablement. We therefore plan to review and re-focus our reablement service during 2014/15 to ensure that it is as effective as possible and that we have the resources available to respond to demand.

We have developed a customer questionnaire which enables us to evaluate the experience of residents receiving a service from our intake and reablement teams. During 2013/14, the questionnaire responses were extremely positive, including:

- 99% of people felt that they were treated with dignity and respect;
- 95% of people said that the support they received helped them to live more independently; and
- 95% of people said that the support they received helped them to feel safe and secure.

### People told us:

*"The staff who came to me gave me a lot of confidence I was doing so well"*

*"I think they are such dedicated people and so very helpful"*

*"I felt like social services really grasped the situation and supported me to the best of their ability"*

*"It has given me a bit more independence around my home"*

## Telecare

Telecare is a range of equipment that uses sensors and an alarm system which is plugged into the telephone socket. This alerts a carer or a monitoring centre when a person needs help or something has been detected such as gas or smoke and an appropriate response can be instigated. By the end of 2013/14, there were 1,550 people with Telecare in Denbighshire.

## Equipment

We have an Integrated Community Equipment Service (CESI), which is a formal partnership with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCU). The service provides and manages a wide range of equipment to help people live safely at home. In 2013/14 we provided 1,923 people with equipment, which is a 10% increase from the previous year.

## Extra Care Housing

In the Council's Corporate Plan 2012/17, we have said that we would like to see more Extra Care Housing across Denbighshire. For many people, we believe that Extra Care Housing is a better alternative to residential care, because people will be more able to remain as an active member of the community. Denbighshire already has three highly successful Extra Care Housing schemes, but will aim to have two additional schemes in operation by 2017 (containing a total of around 100 units), with yet another scheme in the development phase.

The development of additional Extra Care Housing will also enable us to achieve another one of our Corporate Priorities, i.e. to reduce the number of people in residential care. We believe that a large proportion of people currently living in residential care homes in Denbighshire could lead a much more active, independent, and fulfilling life within an Extra Care Housing environment.

## SUPPORTING ADULTS WITH COMPLEX AND / OR LONG TERM CARE NEEDS

Whilst our emphasis is on prevention and early intervention, we recognise that an ageing population has complex, long term care needs that require responsive support tailored to individual needs. Where specialist/long term services are needed we are committed to ensuring that we provide high quality, responsive services that focus on meeting people's needs in their own community wherever possible. At all stages our aim is to ensure that people are able to have a strong voice and control over their support arrangements. Progress in these areas can be summarised as follows.

### Providing high quality services - progress made in 2013/14:

We increased the number of care plan reviews undertaken, and also increased the number of care plans that were reviewed on time. This means that we maintained our excellent performance of reviewing around 94% of care plans on time, despite an increase in the number of reviews needing to be reviewed.

We have developed a questionnaire to help us to understand the views of service users and carers about the quality of services. We gave the questionnaire to service users at the point of re-assessment. The completion rate during 2013/14 was 83%, so we are confident that the views are genuinely representative of service users. The results show that:

- **98%** of service users were either **fully or partially satisfied** with the services they received.
- **97%** were either **fully or partially satisfied** the services were meeting their needs
- **97%** were either **fully or partially satisfied** that the services improved their quality of life.

This is what people told us in their feedback:

*"I find the care staff very caring and am enjoying being with other residents"*

*"I feel the equipment supports my independence"*

*"Very happy with the support and is especially pleased that the care staff speak Welsh"*

*"Service user is very happy with the services provided as she is now able to carry out some of the daily living activities which she had been struggling with"*

We have also developed a programme of rota visits which provide Elected Members with an opportunity to visit our in-house provider services and speak to service users and staff about the quality of services. The visits have proven to be an excellent way for Members to meet service users and staff and to hear their views on the services we provide. Thirteen adult services establishments have been identified as appropriate for

rota visits, and 8 were visited during 2013/14. After each rota visit, the Elected Members involved submit a report which is shared with the service. Action plans are developed in response to any specific issues raised within the reports.

Reports on in-house provider visits undertaken during 2013/14 confirmed good standards of care. Positive comments have been received on the care and quality of the establishments and staff in every report, including:

- “Very cheerful staff and service users”
- “Full of activity painting, knitting, craft, sewing etc.”
- “Home is safe and secure, residents are happy and relaxed”
- “The clients were cared for well and all support services operate efficiently in clients interest and comfort”
- “Very enjoyable visit with well cared for and happy residents”
- “Very warm and friendly atmosphere”

## Protecting vulnerable adults

We have effective systems in place to make sure that vulnerable people are safeguarded. We work well with other agencies, and last year 254 people from across the social care workforce attended POVA (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) training. We have posters that explain the types of abuse a vulnerable person may suffer and who to contact if someone has concerns.

We have also recently developed a corporate safeguarding training programme that will be rolled-out across the council during 2014-15. This recognises that staff in other council services come into regular contact with the public and therefore have a responsibility and opportunity to safeguard vulnerable people (children and adults).

In 2013/14 there were 87 vulnerable people referred to us where we undertook an investigation into their circumstances. We effectively worked with these people and agencies to ensure that the risk was fully managed for all of the 87 referrals investigated.

## Carers

We value the role of carers and appreciate this can be challenging and demanding. We aim to improve the quality of life of carers and support them to achieve their potential so that they, and the people they care for, can live fulfilled lives.

We know that we need to be responsive, and prepare for an increase in the number of carers coming forward for support, as evidenced by national and local statistics. We also need to prepare for the likely impact of new legislation, including the Carers Strategy (Wales) Measure which places a duty on health staff to identify Carers, and

the new Social Services Bill which will strengthen Carers' rights and place additional duties on the council to meet their assessed needs.

During 2013/14, we focused one-off funding to develop Carers' services that address our agenda to support independence. This included:

- support for parents of older service users with learning disabilities via project worker support for the service user;
- support for carers of services users with dementia, including home based support and group based activities for the service user; and
- additional support for Carers following assessment to assist them in accessing on-going support and support to address any issues in regard to services for the cared for person.

We are also currently in the process of tendering for a Carers Community Development Officer Post who will work with communities and local services to develop locally based initiatives to support Carers. We expect to have appointed a provider and recruited to the post by the end of the summer of 2014.

In addition, work is ongoing to review the provision of sitting services for Carers to ensure that future delivery and commissioning arrangements for these services are efficient and effective, and available to carers in greatest need of this type of support to sustain their caring role.

Our performance in terms of supporting carers in 2013/14 was as follows:

- We offered 1,517 carers an assessment or review of their needs, which is 14% more than the previous year.
- 463 carers went on to have an assessment or review of their needs, which is 9% more than the previous year.
- 442 of the 463 carers who were assessed or reviewed were subsequently provided with a service.

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES: PERFORMANCE**

### **What we are about**

We aim to ensure that all vulnerable children are safeguarded and are able to live in secure, stable and loving families. We have strong ambitions for the children and young people we support and aim to ensure they all have opportunities for success and are enabled to grow into healthy, well rounded adults.

### **The services we provide**

We recognise the importance of providing the right support to children and families at the right time. This involves working closely with other agencies to combine our effort so that we:

- help prevent problems arising;
- respond early before problems escalate, and
- provide effective support when intensive help is needed from statutory services.

The services we provide include:

- information, advice and signposting people to help and support;
- supporting families to care for their children safely, and to reduce the risk of family breakdown;
- helping children in need, disabled children and young carers;
- supporting looked after children and care leavers;
- providing stable, secure placements through fostering and adoption, and
- child protection to ensure vulnerable children are safe.

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN A TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE WAY

The early intervention service has gone from strength to strength during the past year with more and more families being supported at an earlier stage. In response to feedback from families and stakeholders we have re-shaped the Families First delivery model for 2014/15 to enable a more targeted and co-ordinated response for all families receiving support throughout the whole programme. We have also strengthened our links with other key anti-poverty programmes within Denbighshire (Flying Start and Communities First) to ensure available resources are maximised and more opportunities offered to families.

A key element of the Families First programme is the Team Around the Family (TAF) which is a key early intervention and prevention response to support families as quickly as possible to prevent their issues escalating and placing the family at risk. TAF is a key layer of support that prevents a step-up to formal support from Children and Family Service, along with an effective step-down out of the service. In 2013/14 TAF supported 186 families, with 137 of these being new referrals during the year. Of these families only 22 were stepped up to the Children and Family Service and 67 families were stepped-down.

*"I think that without the support I've had things would have turned out differently"*

We continue to meet with colleagues in Health, Education and the Police twice a week to consider referrals and ensure the appropriate agency responds to the family to address their issues.

A lot of work has happened within the service over the past year to develop a more pro-active approach to working more directly with families that really promotes positive outcomes. Alongside this we have implemented more engaging models for assessment and care planning such as the Framework for Analysis that makes it clearer for families how they will gain access to the right levels of support they need from a range of services. Evidence of this can be seen in improvements in practice where the child is seen / seen alone by the Social Worker as part of the initial assessment.

Within the Children and Family Service we are starting to feel the impact of early intervention services and more targeted work with families through a reduction in the number of referrals made into the service from 799 in 2012/13 to 776 in 2013/14. Contacts have increased slightly. As significant is the reduction in the proportion of re-referrals from 19% in 2012/13 to 17% in 2013/14. We are now measuring and comparing the activity within the early intervention services and in the Children and Family Service in order to evidence the impacts.

# HELPING CHILDREN IN NEED, DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUNG CARERS

## Children in need and their families

A lot of work has been done over the past year to extend the range of support provided to children in need and their families to empower and skill the parents, build family resilience and ultimately prevent admissions into care. A key area of development has been the expansion of the family support service to a 7 day waking hour provision that delivers intensive 4-6 week plans that are aimed at motivating families to make real change.

*“Pleased with all the help we’ve had but time to stand on our own. Thank you for helping us to a future” (parent)*

Staff within the service have been focussing on how they engage children and young people and how they hear their voice, obtain their views and build this into care planning and review. Implementing evidence based tools such as the graded care profile and ‘signs of safety’ and the roll-out of these with partners such as health visitors is critical in ensuring consistency in approach and language. This commitment has been evident in the improvements in performance in key areas of practice such as:

- statutory visits held within timescales (89%),
- child protection reviews held within timescales (100%)
- looked after children reviews held within timescales (94%)

Implementation of the Integrated Family Support model has been made but progress has been slow due to difficulties in recruiting into key posts. However, the team now has all key posts in place with staff having a range of backgrounds including a learning disability specialist nurse.

There has been an improvement in the work undertaken with Adults Services to develop a more holistic family focus with improved relationships established with adult learning, psychologists and community psychiatric nurses.

## Disabled Children

In addition to the disability services transformation programme described earlier there have been a number of key developments within the service that are aimed at ensuring disabled children develop, that they are able to access service to support their needs and that their independence is promoted. These developments include:

- a review and restructure of the Occupational Therapy Service that has seen the reduction and removal of a waiting list;

- a review of the Disability facilities Grant with future business models now being considered;
- introduction of a person centred approach to all work; and
- the appointment of a full time transitions and independence co-ordinator who will undertake a review of the transitions policy and enhance relationships with key partners (adults Services; education; health) in the promotion of independence

## Young Carers

During 2013/14 the joint commissioning arrangements between Families First and Children and Family Services were continued whilst intensive sub-regional re-commissioning work was taking place. Intensive work has been undertaken during the year to explore the options for a sub-regional young carers service between three of the six local authorities with Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board. As a result of consultation with young carers and stakeholders and a robust tendering process a new provider was appointed and the new service started on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

Within Denbighshire a process for identification and referral for assessment/ access to services has been completed jointly by Social Services, Education and Families First. Performance has remained stable in relation to young carers known to Social Services receiving an assessment and being provided with a service.

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

Corporate Parenting within Denbighshire continues to be of importance with an established Corporate Parenting Forum where elected members and senior managers scrutinise and challenge performance and quality of services in promoting positive outcomes. There is strong interest amongst elected members to further raise the profile of Corporate Parenting across the council, this will be a key focus of the revised Corporate Parenting Strategy.

### Looked After Children

During 2013/14 there has been an increase in the number of looked after children within Denbighshire from 160 (in 2012/13) to 164 which excludes respite. Whilst there has been an increase in the number of looked after children who have experienced 3 or more placement moves from 8% in 2012/13 to 10% in 2013/14 this does only relate to three additional children. It is important to highlight that for many of these children the placement moves have been for positive reasons which include being placed for adoption and returning home.

There has been a strong focus on permanence and ensuring looked after children are provided with loving and stable homes, as such we have improved performance in the production of care plans at first placement (100%) and completion of permanence plans at second review from 75% in 2012/13 to 94% in 2013/14.

In 2012/13 the health and education outcomes of looked after children were highlighted by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) as an area of concern and whilst performance has been affected as a result of staff vacancies there has been a strong improvement in practice and the focus on these outcomes in 2013/14.

### Education

There has been a notable improvement in behaviour in schools with no children permanently excluded and a reduction in the number of children receiving a fixed-period exclusion. School attainment has also improved at Key Stage 2 from 62% (in 2012/13) to 83% and remained steady and whilst performance at Key Stage 3 has decreased from 25% (in 2012/13) to 20% it is reflective of the cohort with 6 out of the 10 children having a special educational need. A full time designated Education Liaison Officer for looked after children is now in post and performance is expected to improve with her focussed attention, for example all children now have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan. The officer is also taking forward a piece of work redesigning the Personal Education Plans to make them more user friendly for children and young people.

## Health

There remains a strong commitment to improving the health of our looked after children and to reflect this we have now appointed a full time designated nurse for looked after children. The focus of this post has been on consolidating activity and improving performance in key areas such as registrations with GP's and completion of dental checks. A key change in the management of health assessments has been made with these now being completed by health visitors, school nurses and the designated nurse as opposed to the paediatric GP (unless there are chronic health conditions present). In addition processes have been changed to increase the reporting of health assessments being completed.

*"Would like to thank the Child's Social Worker for her support regarding child's challenging behaviour" (foster carer)*

Looked after children have actively engaged with the service throughout the year through focus groups for inspections and the NSPCC project and in addition a children's panel took part in the recent recruitment of an Independent Reviewing Officer. This increase in engagement is being maximised by members of the Looked After Children Practice Group who are moving ahead with plans to form a Children's Council.

During 2013/14 there has been a strengthened focus on looked after children who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and as such there has been an increased and effective use of the SERAF (Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Form), strengthened relationships and co-operation with North Wales Police and the establishment of a third sector provision.

Denbighshire is currently the only local authority in Wales participating in the NSPCC review of emotional wellbeing of looked after children. We have been working with our NSPCC colleagues to look at the design and scope of services and how best we can deploy existing services to better meet identified needs. NSPCC have been actively consulting with staff, looked after children, care leavers, foster carers and stakeholders as part of the review.

In October 2013 the service successfully implemented the revised Public Law Outline (PLO) protocol. The revised PLO will operate in all public law family proceedings undertaken in that court that includes applications for care orders, supervision orders, contact with a child in care, change of a child's surname whilst they are in care. The purpose of the revised PLO is to move such cases to a conclusion within 26 weeks and provides a structure for social work statements and evidence. The service continues to meet the growing number of court ordered viability assessments.

## Care Leavers

In 2013/14 we continued our close working with Barnardos who provide a dedicated Personal Advisor service to our care leavers. There have been a number of changes

made to the delivery of support to care leavers which include a change to the name of the service to become the '14+ Group' following feedback from care leavers. In addition the name change has been made to reflect the full age range of young people being supported by the service which includes an increasing number of 14 year olds which enables them to start their 'preparation' for the transition to adulthood at an earlier age. In addition we have undertaken more targeted work with foster carers to enhance their role in supporting looked after children to develop their life skills in preparation for their transition to leaving care.

In addition, there has been a change in the focus of support to those aged 18 years and over with the Personal Advisors providing a dedicated response.

During the year internal audit completed a review of payments to care leavers and as a result of this audit we are seeking to introduce payment cards for care leavers in order to streamline cash payments to this cohort of young people.

There has been strong performance relating to care leavers:

- 100% in contact with the authority at the age of 19;
- 93% (15 out of 16 young people) known to be in suitable accommodation;
- 81% (13 out of 16 young people) known to be engaged in education, training or employment

# FOSTERING AND ADOPTION

## Fostering

Recruitment of foster carers within a competitive market remains a challenge, although the retention of in-house foster carers is good. A new marketing campaign has been developed to raise the profile of fostering in Denbighshire and attract new foster carers. To ensure effective targeting of this campaign work is underway to develop a foster care profile that will provide the detail of what the fostering service needs to look like in the future.

We have been focussing our efforts on ensuring that those foster carers who work with us are well supported, developed and confident in their role. To support this commitment we have established an effective kinship forum that is now offering support to those with Special Guardianship Orders and we have set up a foster carer forum in Denbigh to offer easier access to carers in South of county. Incredible Years training for foster carers is now delivered jointly with a member of the Therapeutic Service which has proved very successful with carers and social workers commenting on the helpfulness of the course in understanding and dealing with challenging behaviours. A rolling programme for the course has now been developed.

A key service development that we have rolled out this year has been the Support Care Service whose aim is to work with families who are experiencing difficulties or stress by providing short breaks for children and support for parents. Recruitment of carers into the service is ongoing.

The CSSIW Fostering Inspection carried out in January 2014 considered the quality of life theme with no areas of non-compliance identified. Key strengths identified in the inspection include:

- Foster Carers positive about the support and training provided
- Good morale and motivation amongst staff
- Knowledge of all foster carers through a dedicated placement officer is supporting effective matching of placements

*"Fostering has been our life for the past 25 years. We have loved and enjoyed it"*  
*(foster carer)*

## Adoption

The focus of our work in relation to adoption over the past year has been in relation to embedding the North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) and embedding its activity and service delivery. A key measure of this has been our experience of the ongoing success in placing children for adoption, including 'older' children and siblings groups which has been enabled through a steady approval of adoptive parents across North Wales.

A comprehensive training programme for adopters now well established and receiving positive feedback. In addition, Safe Base training is being provided to adopters, delivered by After Adoption, on behalf of NWAS. This course is specifically to assist with placement stability and offers long term support to adopters.

The CSSIW Adoption Inspection carried out in November 2013 identified no areas of for compliance. Key strengths identified in the inspection include:

- a range of adopters and increased ability to place children for adoption in North Wales
- support from adoption social workers is of a high standard
- children's long term (permanence) needs are assessed in detail

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## SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

Whilst there has only been a small increase in the number of children on the Child Protection Register from 93 in March 2013 to 103 in March 2014, activity has fluctuated throughout 2013/14 with a low of 54 children registered in September 2013.

There has been a lot of attention on safeguarding during the year with a robust response and learning strategy put in place in response to a review of a serious case. A number of lessons were identified within the review and to ensure the whole service, and its partners, provide a robust response there have been a number of learning events provided to staff whereby the case was reviewed in stages and the learning from the case discussed openly. An action plan is now in place to take forward all lessons learnt.

Within the service there have been a number of models rolled-out that focus on learning from best practice to improve the approach to safeguarding and child protection, examples include the "Signs of Safety Approach to Child Protection Conferences" and the Bruce Thornton Risk Model. The benefit of these tools is that it enables Social Workers to both screen and assess risk.

Despite a number of staff absences within the Safeguarding and Reviewing Unit there has continued to be a strong focus on managing child protection processes as is evident in our strong performance. 99% of initial child protection conferences and 91% of initial core group meetings were held within timescales.

As part of the contractual requirements for the Families First programme all projects are required to ensure safeguarding arrangements are in place and that these are reported at regular contract reviews. In addition, all projects are required to complete a self-audit tool for Safeguarding (children, young people and adults) on an annual basis.

On a corporate level there have been a number of key developments and include:

- implementation of a new Corporate Safeguarding Policy
- revisions to HR (Human Resource) procedures;
- safeguarding being adopted as part of the new corporate induction framework
- establishment of a Corporate Safeguarding Panel

## FUTURE PLANS

As mentioned earlier, our 2014/15 Service Plans are designed to support the delivery of our corporate priorities to:

- ensure vulnerable people are protected and able to live as independently as possible; and
- modernise the council to deliver efficiencies and improve services for our customers

Below is a summary of activities we aim to progress during 2014/15, and some of the results that we expect to see. It is possible that we will add to these as the regulations for the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 are rolled-out.

We will begin to implement our revised workforce strategy to ensure we can deliver services as outlined within the Social Services and Well-being Act.
We aim to significantly reduce sickness absence across social services
We will develop our approach to using intelligence to inform service developments
Denbighshire will have two additional Extra Care Housing schemes in operation (containing a total of around 100 units) by 2017, with another scheme in development. We expect one of these schemes to begin construction during 2014/15.
We will increase the use of Direct Payments and Individual Service Funds to give people more freedom to choose the services that meet their assessed needs and who provides them
We will deliver against our Welsh Language Action Plan to meet the requirements of “More Than Just Words/ Mwy Na Geiriau”
We will ensure that all carers are offered a review or assessment of their needs
We will develop a framework to identify and evidence the impact (numbers and outcomes) of early intervention services
We will implement a service wide approach to the use of risk models and risk management in the direct work with families
We will embed the Intensive Family Support service model
We will develop a detailed looked after children (fostering) profile for Denbighshire
We will establish and embed new corporate safeguarding arrangements
We will identify and implement a range of resources to actively engage children, young people and families e.g. use of social media, technology.
We will maximise Care Leaver's opportunities to access accommodation that meets their needs