



Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2011 - 2012

Local Authority Name: Denbighshire County Borough Council

This report sets out the key areas of progress and areas for improvement in Denbighshire County Borough Council, Social Services Department for the year 2011-12

Summary:

The council has ambitious programmes of service change in both adult and children's social care. Clear leadership and performance management arrangements are in place to support their delivery. The overall aim of the programmes is to promote independence through prevention and early intervention, is leading service development. Significant progress has been achieved in a number of areas.

Service user feedback in adult services has been largely positive. The council is developing plans to involve the public, service users and carers in the ongoing modernisation of services. The council recognises that current performance indicators indicate the need for improved performance in supporting people to live in the community to be demonstrated.

Children's services have achieved improved performance in relation to a number of key performance indicators. The remodelling of the range of services available has progressed during the year but has not yet been completed.

The council undertakes a wide range of consultation activities. It recognises that for consultation to be effective information needs to be made available. Initiatives are being taken, by the council to improve the quality of participation and involvement. The council is further developing engagement activity to ensure consistency across service areas.

Quality assurance frameworks using self audit and service user engagement have been developed and are being implemented. The service is proactive in seeking independent review of its performance and open to considering where improvements can be made

The Director's report provides a clear accessible account of performance. It makes reference to the council's achievements and future plans and acknowledges areas where performance still needs to improve or where service developments have not yet been achieved. The report also explains why changes that may not be immediately popular are being made and provides an opportunity for readers of the report to provide feedback. The council has provided CSSIW with detailed position statements for adult and children's services plus supporting evidence. The council have been helpful in identifying and providing additional information to support statements made or to provide clarification.

Response to last year's areas of development:

Significant progress has been made in relation to many of the areas for improvement identified in last year's performance evaluation report. In areas where progress has been more limited the council has referred to reasons or detailed actions that are being taken to achieve change.

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

- Continuing ability to influence locality focussed strategic planning with BCUHB.

Good Practice identified:

- The council has implemented a reablement service which is achieving performance targets and positive feedback from service users. The positive impact of this service was noted during a CSSIW inspection.
- The use of independent audit and ongoing feedback to inform improvement in adult protection.

Site inspections undertaken during the year:

An inspection of the arrangements for the assessment and care management of adults referred to Denbighshire County Council Adult Social Services was undertaken between 20 February and 2 March 2012.

The inspection found that the service model adopted by Denbighshire was responsive to people's needs and there was evidence of positive service user feedback. Challenges remain in implementing some aspects of the strategy.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year:

- New model for integrated children and family services.
- Workforce development and absence management
- Services to carers

- Services to support disabled children and their families
- Evaluation of reablement service
- Demonstration of the effectiveness of community support to adults

PERFORMANCE

Shaping services

Adults

Adult services business and development plans are informed by analysis of the needs of the local population, national data, forecasts of demographic change, financial resource and corporate priorities. A number of commissioning strategies for key adult services are in place approaching the end of their time spans. These have been updated on an interim basis rather than revised with full consultation with stakeholders. The council is actively exploring options for regional collaboration and joint commissioning with key partners such as the Betsi Cadwaladar University Health Board (BCUHB) before new commissioning strategies are produced.

The council has made progress in developing opportunities for service users and other stakeholders to participate in service and strategy development. This is reflected in the recent residents' survey, the review of the restructure of adult services and service specific consultations. The council reports that good practice in service user consultation activity has been identified and that this has been used to inform service development and improvement. In addition specific service developments and projects where early engagement is needed have been identified. The service still requires to achieve greater consistency in the way feedback is gained and improved.

Children

The council's children and families service aims to provide an integrated and seamless service. This includes effective early intervention and prevention services combined with an integrated targeted service response at the statutory level. A restructure of the service has been undertaken following a review and evaluation of previous processes. Work is now progressing to embed the new structure and further develop effective interfaces with partners and increase intervention by practitioners in the direct delivery of service. Systems are in place to support the active participation of staff and managers in the developments

Scoping of commissioning requirements has been informed by the Families First Pioneer project action plan and through work commissioned by the council to map vulnerable families in Denbighshire. These plans are linked to corporate priorities including regeneration and outcome agreements. Commissioning plans have not

yet been fully implemented. The council states there has been extensive consultation with the independent and voluntary sector about future commissioning intentions.

The council reports consulting with children and families by a range of methods. It recognises that the involvement of children and families and the collation and analysis of feedback received needs to improve.

Areas of progress

- The council makes extensive use of national and local data, research material and needs analysis.
- Relationships with the independent and third sector are developed to support strategic objectives.

Areas for improvement

- Consultation of children and families in service development and review.
- Completed commissioning strategies to be implemented to support effective service provision in line with strategic direction.

Getting Help

Adults

The council has introduced measures to evaluate the effectiveness of responses made to referrals to adult social care. These have included performance reports, a review of the effectiveness of signposting, the use of quality assurance questionnaires and specific consultations. An internal review of practice, which looked at the receipt and allocation of referrals was undertaken in relation to a serious case review held during the year. This resulted in clear guidance being issued to staff to ensure that referrals are passed for management decision in a timely manner.

Evidence indicates that the council provides an effective and responsive service with timely access to assessment. There are exceptions such as accessing assessment by a rehabilitation officer where the number of people awaiting a service has increased during the year. The council has been successful in embedding the policy of offering people a reablement service as a first response to referrals. The council's excellent record in terms of delayed transfer of care from hospital to the community has been maintained.

The council recognises there are some aspects of communication and information sharing that require improvement. The council has strengthened the First Contact Team. It has identified areas for improvement in practice and is compiling local

directories of services and community facilities. Community information centres have also been established. Further improvements are planned in the quality and range of public information available and through the establishment of customer service standards. A report by the Wales Audit Office has referred to the development of area member groups as a positive contribution to improving local communication.

At the time of the CSSIW inspection of adult services in February 2012 there was a lack of clarity and consistency in the inter face between the reablement, locality and the health lead intermediate care teams. The council are seeking to address this by the development of a single point of access to an integrated health and social care system and have been accepted by the Social Services Improvement Agency as a demonstrator site. This is an ambitious project which will be subject to ongoing evaluation.

The move to locality working included the relocation of staff from Specialist Adults and the EMH social work teams into the locality teams. Actions to reduce the impact of the changes have been identified and the impact will be monitored by the council.

Children

An improved performance in relation to a number of key performance indicators relating to access to services has been achieved during the year. These include the percentage of referrals to the service which were re referrals, the percentages of referrals allocated to a social worker and the time taken to undertake an initial assessment. In addition a greater percentage of children were seen and seen alone during initial assessment.

This improvement in performance follows a restructure of service, an evaluation of the referral and assessment process and an increased emphasis on prevention and early intervention through further development of the Team Around the Family (TAF). In addition the Joint Risk Assessment Panel (JRAP) enables the statutory agencies to exchange information, clarify referral criteria and agency responsibilities and to coordinate multi agency responses.

The council has not been able to demonstrate improved performance in the timeliness of core assessments undertaken during the year and this remains an area for improvement for 2012-13.

The development of an integrated multi-agency disability service was identified as a development area in last year's report. The issues identified then have not yet been resolved due to delays in relocating the child development centre. The council states that this has not delayed the delivery of service but it has impacted on the development of a more integrated approach to assessment and care

planning. Multi agency operational panels have been established to consider new referrals and agree the appropriate response.

Areas of progress

- The council is proactive in reviewing and analysing responsiveness to referrals and the arrangements for access to assessment.
- People referred to adult services receive a timely and responsive service.
- Performance indicators show significant improvement across the majority of key performance areas in children's services.

Areas for improvement

- Completion of the new service models for children with additional needs.
- Improvement in the percentage of core assessments completed within timescales.
- Interface between reablement and health led intermediate care services.

Services provided

Adults

The council has made progress in developing a wide range of services and mainstream local community facilities to encourage independence. A reablement service has been successfully implemented. Two thirds of people referred to it do not require a further service and the majority of people surveyed provide positive feedback of their experience. The council is seeking ways to extend the reablement service model to people provided with services by the independent sector.

Success in providing alternatives to residential care has been achieved by an increased provision of extra care housing, and the further development of existing sheltered housing and community living schemes. Many services are provided in partnership with health, the independent or voluntary sector. Other positive developments include the extension of telecare to 450 additional people and the achievement of the delivery of over 80% of pieces of equipment within five working days. There has been a decrease in the percentage of younger adults supported in the community as measured by performance indicators however which the council needs to address. Challenges in meeting specialist housing need remain and the council has identified the need for an accommodation strategy to be developed with the housing department.

The council uses 'quality circles' to bring together performance intelligence, from a number of sources on the services that are contracted with independent providers. A report produced by the council indicates that monitoring visits to provider settings

by the commissioning and contracting services have tended to be reactive in the past. A planned schedule of visits has now been drawn up in order to increase the robustness of contract monitoring. The council's performance in reviewing adult care plans has deteriorated slightly during the year and performance in this area needs to improve.

Children

The council has continued to develop an effective early intervention and preventative service. It reports that the Team Around the Family has been further embedded and that work to develop a Joint Assessment Family Framework is supporting multiagency assessment at the early intervention level. Effective sign posting is supported by the development of strong relationships with agencies by the Team Around the Family and Genesis projects.

The commissioning of services to support the Families First plan has not yet been fully implemented. The council states that at present a fully established and coordinated approach to the delivery of family support services 'across the spectrum from universal to 'targeted' is not present. The result is families are not able to experience a smooth transition in and out of appropriate services. Work is ongoing to address this through a more multi agency approach to family support at both the targeted and the universal level. An internal intensive family service has been developed to support families with complex needs. The council states however that there are a limited range of intensive family support responses and these require development. Family support services to provide for less complex needs are being commissioned externally. The decommissioning of services previously provided under the Cymorth initiative has taken place.

A transitions coordinator has been appointed as part of the council's actions to improve the experiences of children with a disability transferring into adult services. An additional service has been introduced to widen the availability of support to those young people who have received support from children and family services but who will not be eligible for statutory adult services. The need for children with disabilities to be supported to access universal youth services has been identified. New services are being commissioned under the Families First programme. The effectiveness of these developments has not yet been reported on and this will be a subject for further discussion with the council.

The council's corporate parenting strategy clearly expresses the council's approach to meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities and the commitment to engagement activity. The council reports good performance in terms of stability of placement for children who are looked after. It acknowledges that a greater range of placements through the recruitment of more foster carers would provide more choice of placement and is reviewing foster carer training needs. Performance in respect of reviews of placement for looked after children have shown significant improvement. There have also been improvements in the timeliness of statutory

visits but further improvement is needed. The review of children in need within timescales also remains an area for further improvement.

The council received a positive report following the inspection of fostering services by CSSIW. The need for further consultation with children and young people about their experience of foster care was noted.

The education liaison officer and young persons' health advisor are established posts which support the council to achieve its objectives. There is a contract with Barnardos for a personal assistants service for children leaving care. There has however been deterioration in the council's performance in relation to the percentage of formerly looked after children who are in non emergency accommodation and engaged in employment, training or education. This indicates the need for further evaluation of the effectiveness of service provision.

Areas of progress

- Establishment of an effective reablement service.
- Successful in providing effective alternatives to residential care.
- Widening of the eligibility for transition support.

Areas for improvement

- The council needs to complete the implementation of commissioning plans in children's services to establish the coordinated approach to the delivery of family support services across the spectrum.
- Further embedding of engagement and consultation activity in service development and evaluation.
- Review of services provided to adults.
- Outcomes for care leavers.

Effect on people's lives:

Adults

An independent audit of a selection of cases referred to the Protection of Vulnerable Adult (POVA) procedures between January 2011 and March 2012 was commissioned by the council. It has concluded that there was a 'thoughtful', 'robust' and 'consistent' approach to adult safeguarding in Denbighshire however a number of good practice recommendations were made. This has resulted in written guidance being provided to staff and some of the recommendations have been referred for consideration by a task and finish group. The council has responded to the recommendation that mental capacity should be recorded more consistently and also to an issue raised by the CSSIW that identified the need for further Mental Capacity Act training with particular emphasis given to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards legislation. Recommendations regarding the recording of decisions,

the communication with all interested parties and the more consistent use of risk assessments have also been noted and are being responded to.

A service user/carer survey of their experience of the POVA procedures was planned.. This was not completed but the council reports that plans for this are now progressing. The council reports that risk was managed in a high percentage of POVA cases.

The council has identified a number of local indicators to assist with the evaluation of performance in a number of areas. The local performance indicator concerning the number of people with a mental health condition supported in the community indicates that this has reduced slightly over the last 12 months since the introduction of charges for day care services. The effect of this will be monitored by the council's performance management process.

The development of a quality assurance framework has continued during the year and forms an important part of the performance management arrangements. A range of methods is used by the council to gain customer feedback and this provides an evaluation of performance. Responses indicate that services users feel they were treated with dignity and respect and that generally the services were reliable.

Comprehensive feedback is sought by the intake and reablement service. Three quarters of the people asked stated their confidence had improved following reablement and almost half said the service had helped improve their privacy and dignity. Such detailed feedback has not been provided from other service areas. The council recognises that quality assurance needs to be further embedded and focussed on outcomes that people value

The council welfare rights service has had a significant impact on the income of the county and of individuals. Service developments under the New Work connections project have also started to have a positive impact. Over 500 participants during the year achieved a range of benefits including further education, employment and involvement in voluntary work.

The council has introduced specific measures to increase the involvement of service users in service planning and delivery. This was a central feature in the development of community living services and is also illustrated by the training of five older people under the Dignity in Care and Equalities (DICE) initiative. This helped to cascade the DICE message to Older People, to staff employed by the council and the independent and voluntary sectors through training events. Another initiative is the inclusion of mental health service users as paid members of service planning boards.

A number of initiatives have been used to improve services to carers and the council reports that 100% of carers who are assessed are provided with a service.

However performance indicators show that only approximately one third of carers were offered or provided with an assessment or review. A waiting list for assessments developed in 2011-12. Increased funding has been made available to address increased demand. This is an area in which the council needs to provide evidence of improved performance.

The take up of Direct Payments (DP) is still low compared to some other councils. The council did take steps to try to improve take up during 2011-12 but the effectiveness of the measures taken is still to be demonstrated.

Children

The council has made significant improvement in many of the key indicators that relate to the safeguarding of children including the timeliness of initial case conferences and initial core group meetings. The council reports that all child protection reviews were held within statutory time scales. This is an overall good performance.

The Conwy and Denbighshire Local Safeguarding Children Board conducted an audit of all re registrations to the child protection register in the period 31 March to 16 August 2011. The audit was commissioned by the Serious Case Review Group following a recommendation made concerning a Denbighshire case.

Whilst recognising the difficulty in drawing conclusions from such a small sample a number of recommendations were made. These included the need to improve performance in completing timely quality core assessments and the introduction of measures to ensure that any unmet or ongoing support needs, are addressed in child in need plans. It was also recommended that partner agencies should be proactive in continuing support and involvement with families and children who have recently been deregistered and improved practice with regard to the completion of chronologies should be a focus of social work supervision. It was recommended that the LSCB could monitor the number of children re registered as part of its performance monitoring role.

The audit report recognises that the department had subsequently undergone a major restructure and had introduced models of practice that support early intervention as well as improvement in the quality of assessment and practice.

The council has provided evidence of a range of activities undertaken during the year to engage with children and young people and their carers. The new quality assurance framework includes a greater emphasis on both the service user experience and on service user engagement. Both the infrastructure to collect and analyse the information available and the approaches used to engage and involve service users needs further development. All children and young people have access to independent advocacy which is commissioned in partnership with other councils but the take up is quite limited.

All known young carers in Denbighshire are offered an assessment and provided with a service. The council has a young carers strategy in place which aims to develop a coordinated multi agency approach that focuses on the needs of the family as a whole not solely on the young carer. Consideration is being given to commissioning services for young carers jointly with partner councils in North Wales utilising the Families First grant funding. The council will however commission services as a single council for 2012, whilst work is ongoing to align service requirements with the partner agencies.

Areas of progress

- The council shows a commitment to creating an 'improvement culture' in its positive attitude to independent evaluation and review of services and its response to recommendations made.
- Significant improvement has been achieved in timeliness of child protection initial case conferences and initial core group meetings.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of service user engagement activity to improve the intelligence available to more consistently inform service delivery and the management of performance.
- More consistency in the provision of support and involvement with families following deregistration from the child protection register when ongoing needs are identified.
- Increased access to assessment and review for carers.

CAPACITY

Delivering social services:

The council has adopted a medium term financial planning approach and the Wales Audit Office improvement report 2012 assesses that the council is well placed to address the financial challenges although the scale of change required will inevitably continue to require clear leadership and direction.

The business planning process provides for an analysis of budget management, financial pressures and the achievement of efficiencies. A twice yearly challenge process is in place to evaluate the performance of the service with regard to financial sustainability, delivery of service and corporate priorities.

Adults and children's services report a balanced budget although this was achieved in adult services by the transfer of an under spend from the supporting people budget which will not be available in future years. There has been an overall increase in budget in recognition of demographic trends and specific service related pressures but efficiencies have been identified. There is recognition

that some of the modernisation objectives require pump priming with financial support

The council has clearly expressed workforce development plans in place. Training is planned in discussion with the independent sector to ensure a qualified and competent workforce across the independent and voluntary sector. This is delivered through the Social Care Workforce Development Plan (SCWDP) the joint Conwy and Denbighshire Social Care Workforce Development Partnership Training Group and the regional Social Care in Partnership as well as other collaborative initiatives. Access to training information and the work of the partnership is supported through the implementation of a communication strategy.

The council reports having exceeded all social care national prescribed training targets for 2011-12. A positive achievement by the council is recognition by the Social Care Accolades of the council's work to promote social care as a career choice.

The SCWDP annual business plan identified that additional initiatives are required to deliver a fully bilingual service across the partnership. These include evaluation of workforce information to identify language skills and gaps and collaboration with contracting teams to ensure that all service providers provide service in a language sensitive way.

The council continues to experience high sickness levels amongst the adult and children social care work force. Both services failed to achieve their target reduction in days lost to sickness during the year, with children's services recording a significantly higher rate than the target figure. The council reports that there has been focussed management activity to address this issue and recent monthly figures indicate that some improvement is being made.

The council did not achieve its intended level of performance in relation to the completion of annual staff appraisals and recognises that improvements are needed. The council have been successful in reducing their reliance on agency staff with the effect of achieving greater stability in the overall workforce.

Areas of progress

- Medium term financial plans in place with challenge provided by the business process.
- Performance with regard to national social care training targets.
- Promotion of social care as a career as recognised by Ambassador in Care accolade.
- Clear detailed business planning process is in place.
- Collaborative approach to workforce development.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that effective annual performance appraisals are undertaken.
- Improved sickness rates particularly in children services.

Providing direction:

Clear leadership is provided by the Chief Executive Officer, Director of Social Services and Heads of adult and children services in terms of both strategic direction and expected standards of performance. The council has taken steps to increase communication with the public about the needs of communities, the policy environment and the financial circumstances within which the council operates. It is not clear however that the intended evaluation of engagement activity has taken place. The council values include the need for the service to be open to scrutiny and challenge and to consider what is not working well in a transparent honest way so that it can be improved.

The corporate and service business plans demonstrate that the effectiveness of services is subject to review and challenge and that information gained through evaluation and feedback is acted upon. It is recognised that some service developments may initially be unpopular and that consultation with and involvement of stakeholders is essential if new service delivery models are to be successfully introduced. Clear links are made to corporate priorities and to the support required from corporate services such as Human Resources and ICT.

Members and senior directors are involved in the service challenge meetings. This enables them to develop a clearer understanding of service performance which supports the effectiveness of the scrutiny function. The Wales Audit Office annual improvement report January 2012 indicates that the council has made progress in reviewing democratic and scrutiny functions and improving management process and accountability.

The structure of the senior management team supports interdepartmental cooperation. This is developing as illustrated by projects such as leisure activities for older people and the changes made in the function of sheltered housing but it is an area where further developments can be made.

The council has shown a strong commitment to engaging in regional and sub regional collaboration, where it can be shown that this is beneficial to corporate priorities and local residents. In addition the council has demonstrated commitment to establishing effective partnerships with the independent and third sector. It reports that this has enabled the gradual introduction of changes to contracts, following discussion wherever possible.

Partnership relationships with statutory agencies have progressed during the year but some joint initiatives with health, such as the collocation of health and social care locality team offices and the child development centre project, have not progressed as planned. The reorganisation of the health service has caused some disruption to planning structures and differences in emphasis between regional and local objectives. The council is engaging with the structures that have been put in place and some progress in joint ventures is being achieved. The council is also seeking to ensure that initiatives designed to meet the needs of social care service users and those focussed on economic regeneration are mutually supportive.

Areas of progress

- Strong clear leadership is provided within adult and social care and the council as a whole.
- Positive service developments have been achieved in partnership with statutory and non statutory organisations.
- The service challenge process and council values support service improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Pace of progress in agreed joint initiatives with health.