

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2011 - 2012

Local Authority **The Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council**
Name:

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

Summary:

The Vale of Glamorgan council has a major change plan in place (2011-14) with seven identified priority areas. It includes a focus on integrating services with health partners and collaboration with Cardiff social services including joint commissioning.

The council faces significant financial challenges with a projected over spend. Its programme to support and encourage independence and to tackle high cost placements will be central to addressing budgetary pressures. The council has also restructured and reduced management posts and is working collaboratively with Cardiff City Council and Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board. Staff vacancy rates have affected the council's ability to make progress although many posts have now been filled or are being recruited to.

In adult services the council appears to have significant strengths in promoting access to services, and in particular access to community support. There has also been work undertaken to improve care planning for young people making the transition from children's to adult services more seamless. The council has strengthened its processes in relation to adult safeguarding which are effective.

In children's services performance has been sustained including good performance in safeguarding children. The triennial inspection of the council's adoption service in March 2011 indicated a number of areas to strengthen. Fostering services were found to be largely compliant and operating well. At the time there was a need to appoint a fostering manager. This has now been achieved.

The Director's report gives a fair and consistent account of the work of social services directorate and the serious financial challenges it faces in providing services.

CSSIW has identified the following potential risks:

Financial pressures in the face of increasing demands. In particular the consequences of not achieving the anticipated reduction in numbers of looked after children.

Workforce resilience in the longer term; recruitment and retention in the face of increasingly high caseloads.

Response to last year's areas of development:

The council has made progress on a number of identified areas for development and is continuing to address these in its business and development plans.

Progress has been made on improving the timeliness of decision making on initial referrals and on reducing the time it takes to complete specialist assessments in adult services. While the time being taken to complete non specialist assessments has increased, the waiting period is still considered to be good. The average number of days from referral to receipt of a service has reduced from 99 to approximately 40 days and is still declining.

A multi agency complex case panel has been established with health and education to look at the potential for joint planning and funding arrangements for looked after children with challenging behaviour and complex needs.

Staff vacancies have been filled and services have been reconfigured.

The council has engaged positively with CSSIW during the year to discuss and report on progress and developments.

Good practice identified:

Clarity of forward planning – the Social Services' change plan is coherent and detailed and sets clear objectives, priorities and timelines.

Use of joint funded and shared posts to achieve economies and access to expertise in particular to areas of specialist service delivery.

Development of an on line learning training package for staff in Autistic Spectrum Disorder. This won a national award and the tool has been adopted by several other councils.

Site inspections undertaken during the year:

During 2011-12 there was a service inspection of access arrangements in adult services. The inspection sought to evaluate the quality of the support provided to older people and physically disabled people and their carers through council services. The inspection identified significant strengths in access to services, care management arrangements, review and intermediate care services.

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year:

- The outcomes for people as a result of new adult protection arrangements.
- The council's strategy on engagement and consultation. The inspection of adult service recommended that people's experiences of using first contact services should be regularly sought.
- Outcomes for children no longer looked after.
- Delayed transfers from hospital.
- Decision making in children's services and rates of re- referrals.
- Staff recruitment and retention in children's services.

PERFORMANCE

Shaping services:

The council has provided evidence of engagement and consultation with stakeholders and will now need to monitor its impact on the development of children and adults services. The need for an even more robust approach is referenced in the council's annual reports and is an area for CSSIW to follow up next year.

Adults

The council has prioritised developing commissioning strategies and recognises the significant financial challenges ahead. As set out in their change plan there is a commissioning strategy in place for adult services.

Part of the council's change plan is to develop models of care that maintain service users' independence, locating people in their own homes and communities. Good progress has been made in adult services, in modernising its services and in progressing collaborative work with Cardiff council. As part of the council's service model which encourages independence, an initial trial in the use of Telecare technology has led to the wider roll out of services to support people with a range of disabilities to live independently in their own homes.

A commissioning strategy for older people's services has been completed and endorsed by Cabinet. The strategy was consulted on with independent, third sector

providers and strategic partners. The strategy includes a model for preventative and reablement services.

In 2012 a manager was jointly appointed with Cardiff council to manage services for people with a learning disability.

Children

The council is clearly sighted on the need to reduce its looked after children population and is addressing this through planning for permanency; the use of Residence Orders or Special Guardianship Orders has increased. The council reports that plans to progress the change in legal status have already been agreed in thirteen cases. It will be important to carefully monitor the outcomes for these children who no longer have the same level of statutory support as a child who is looked after. The council has a strategy in place for monitoring these placements. Priority has been given to strengthening placements for the children that are looked after and investing in providing respite support for disabled children at Ty Robin Goch.

Last year's CSSIW annual performance report identified the need to produce a commissioning strategy for children's services. The council has now produced this and it includes the accommodation needs of 16 to 18 year olds.

In partnership with Cardiff City Council and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, the council gained funding to commence an Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS).

The council is aware of the need to recruit more foster carers who are able to provide stable placements for older children with complex needs. National Minimum Fostering Allowances have been introduced and the council is currently engaged in developing regional commissioning of children's placements through Cymru Collaborative Commissioning Consortium (formerly South East Wales Improvement Collaborative (SEWIC)).

Areas of progress

- Progress with modernisation and working in collaboration with others

Areas for development

- Recruitment of foster carers

Ensuring and demonstrating positive engagement of citizens in the development of services.

Getting help:

Adults

An inspection undertaken by CSSIW in October 2011 found that access routes to both social work and direct service help and support are diverse with evidence to suggest that they are effective. The range of contact options includes distribution of information through a range of community and health based contact points. The council has developed and extended the on-line capabilities of its web-site to ensure service users get up-to-date information. Other access routes to services include hospital referrals, out of hours' duty systems and the provision of specialist and generic information packs through the council's contact centre (C1V). The TeleV (a home safety package) service and GP out of hours service are co-located with C1V, providing opportunities for improved joint working between the council and health partners. Our inspection found that the Vale Intermediate Care Service (VICS) is able to use these systems to respond to crisis situations, drawing upon relevant health support where necessary and having the potential to intervene quickly.

The council has recruited an additional adult services social worker in C1V and developed new pathways to the Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS) and the Adult Community Care Team (ACCT). This has reduced delays in access to services.

The council has improved its performance in reviewing care plans for adults receiving a service and now compares well with other authorities. The Director's report indicates that the council has good monitoring arrangements, and continues to seek to improve its response to enquiries.

While there has been a significant decrease overall in the amount of time an adult has to wait to access to specialist services, there has been an increase in the amount of time that people have to wait for non specialist services. The council attributes this to an increase in demand for services and has since improved quick access to reablement for people discharged from hospital by reducing the need for assessment. However, overall there has been an increase in people experiencing delayed transfers from hospital. The council reports that this is partly due to the Western Vale now being included the data and also because of some difficulties in the mental health older people service, where half of all the delays can be accounted for. CSSIW will want to explore this in more detail with the council.

Children

Despite reporting an increase in the number of children on the child protection register and an increase in the number of looked after children, the council continues to demonstrate strong performance in the timeliness of completing initial assessments. The percentage of referrals during the year that did not proceed to

allocation for initial assessment is higher than the national average and the statistics for re-referrals are also higher than the national average. Statistics relating to the rate of re-referrals would suggest that the decision making and / or quality of these assessments merits some further attention.

There has been further improvement in performance in the completion of initial and core assessments and these compare favourably with other councils across Wales. There has been some down turn in data for the health of looked after children. The number of children who have had their teeth checked by a dentist has reduced and is below the national average and there has been a reduction in the number of looked after children receiving statutory health assessments.

Statistics demonstrate that the council has identified a significant number of young carers and that all have been offered assessments. A high proportion have also taken advantage of the services offered.

Adults / Children

Areas of progress

- Improved response times to initial requests for help
- Improved transition arrangements for young people moving to adult services
- Delivering timely assessments and reviews for looked after children
- Services to carers

Areas for Development

- Review quality of decision making and initial assessments and possible impact on re-referral rates in children's services.
- Continue to review how service can reduce the numbers of people experiencing delayed transfers from hospital.
- Review how the health needs of children looked after can be improved.

Services provided:

Adults

Assessment and care management is undertaken by a multi agency team, which considers not only the social care needs but also the health needs of people with a learning disability. The council reports that the creation of a team specifically for young people aged 18 to 25 has strengthened services provided to people with a learning disability.

The council had identified a shortage of day support/opportunities for people with complex and challenging needs and those in transition, and has subsequently undertaken a major reorganisation of day services in the authority. It is currently commissioning 12 different providers of day services.

Through commissioning the council is providing supported living services for approximately 70 service users in 27 properties. These people hold tenancies and receive support services to live as independently as possible. The adult placement service has approximately 19 service users in long term placements with families across the borough.

The council supports formal service user consultation via service user / carer representation on the Learning Disability sub-group and provides funding to three organisations (Advocacy Matters, Vale People First and the Parents Federation) to promote service user and carer involvement in services.

Supported accommodation is in place in the form of individual flats used to promote independence and develop life skills for people with learning disabilities although the council has identified that the availability of longer term accommodation for people with mental health problems is an issue.

Led by the council, a regional monitoring and support service is in place for adults with Aspergers and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Staff working in education as well as adult and children's services receive an intensive training package in autism awareness. The council's on line learning tool has won a national award and the tool has been adopted by several other councils to help develop awareness of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The council is continuing with its Orange Wallet scheme to assist people with pervasive developmental disorders with independent travel.

Health and social services have recruited integrated managers for the Vale Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). The council has used integration with health partners to provide the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) service across the community mental health team and the Crisis and Home Treatment Service. The council is mindful of its responsibilities under the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 and plans to ensure that all people using the CMHT have updated care plans, can re access services through self referral and receive short term interventions where necessary.

As part of a reconfiguration of services the Community Mental Health Older Persons team has been aligned with the Older Person's Locality Team. The aim is to provide a more integrated and holistic service, which can share skills and expertise to the benefit of service users and reduce costs. Under these arrangements the council will also consider workload management and its impact on the increase in waiting lists. A small scale specialist service for sensory impairment is provided via the adult community care and occupational therapy teams.

Younger adults with mental illness who require intensive support are being placed in residential care designed for older people resulting in the need for a variation to the registration. This is not in line with person centred service provision. The council should as a matter of urgency identify more appropriate services for

younger adults and explore opportunities to commission more person centred and individualised solutions.

The council commissions third sector services such as Hafal, Mind and Gofal who offer various specialist services promoting the principles of independence and social inclusion. The council also reports that as a result of consultation with younger people various sporting and activity groups have been set up and all groups are well attended.

Various strategies have been developed by the council to support carers; these include carers support officers, a carers' forum, carers' advocacy / training and the carers small grant fund.

Children

The council reports that a review of all commissioned services has taken place to ensure that services are targeted at children and families most in need. This was a result of the revised Family First funding criteria. The expansion of the Flying Start scheme in Wales will also see services extended to the additional ward areas within Barry in the future.

The inspection of the council's Fostering Service found it to be operating well and since inspection a manager is now in place. Kinship care and Independent Fostering Agencies are used. The council's strategy to reduce the number of looked after children by 10% over the next two years includes their plan to change the legal status of placements to residence orders or special guardianship orders where assessed as appropriate. It is anticipated that this will in turn reduce the pressure on social workers, independent reviewing officers and support staff.

Adoption placements are progressed through in-house adopters, consortium arrangements and the National Adoption Register. An action plan is in place to address the compliance issues identified at the triennial inspection of the council's adoption service. CSSIW will want to monitor improvements made.

The council actively promotes children's rights and the contract for independent advocacy was awarded to the National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS) in early 2011.

The council has a cross-party Corporate Parenting Panel whose role includes promoting the needs of looked after children. The panel includes a young person as a representative for looked after children in the Vale in an effort to ensure that the views of service users are heard.

Area of progress

- Innovation in supporting people with Autism including awareness raising in staff and facilitating access to transport.

Area for development

- Commissioning person centred services for younger adults with complex mental health problems which are age appropriate.

Effect on people's lives:

There is a programme of consultation with service users in place to gather views regarding their experiences when they access services. The council reports that this has been reviewed this year.

Adults

The council's promotion of rehabilitation and reablement is having a positive effect. The performance indicators suggest that people in the Vale of Glamorgan are being assisted to live independently; the numbers funded by the council to live in residential care services remains comparatively low which is in line with the council's strategic direction.

However, the number of people who have experienced a delay in discharge from hospital has increased which the Director's report has acknowledged to be a matter of concern. The council is investigating the matter and will want to work with its partner agencies to understand the reasons and reverse this trend. People with dementia who are able to benefit receive the opportunity of reablement and intermediate care services to enable earlier discharge from hospital. .

The council has strengthened its adult safeguarding arrangements through the appointment of a principal officer for safeguarding. CSSIW's experience is that the safeguarding of adults processes are effective, supported by other agencies and communication between agencies is good.

Children

As highlighted earlier although the council has put in place a strategy to reduce the number of looked after children, there has been further increase this year. However the rate of children accommodated is similar to other councils. The Director's report indicates that children who are looked after are well supported and educational achievement is above the Welsh average. The council has identified that where children have to be accommodated, a focus on finding placements that will offer stability and permanency as a priority is an area for development.

The percentage of young people formerly looked after with whom the authority is in contact, who are known to be engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19 is below the national average. The council reports that this is because, in

part, some young people no longer want to engage with the council. However, the Director's report states that children leaving the care system remain in contact with the council and receive good support with housing. A site visit to the 15+ team was undertaken by CSSIW and evidenced that young people are supported earlier in the Vale through transition to ensure a more seamless service. The 15+ team is made up of young people's advisors and social workers. One team member also provides support to the One Stop Shop, where Llamau are commissioned to provide advice on matters such as housing and tenancy rights.

The Director has identified the need to improve support given in training and employment opportunities to young people in transition.

Performance indicators suggest a timely response to incoming assessments and response to child protection concerns, with good performance in holding case conferences within 15 days, completing reviews and core assessments. The council has provided evidence of ongoing reviews and development in relation to children's safeguarding for example the development of the Sexual Exploitation Protocol.

Areas of progress

- Support for children leaving care.
- Timeliness of responding to children's referrals and safeguarding concerns.

CAPACITY

Delivering Social Services:

In general terms, the council's investment in social services is broadly in line with comparable authorities. The medium term financial plan presented to scrutiny committee has identified very significant financial pressures, which will result in a marked overspend in years to come. Although the council has plans to address this, the increasing demand to support looked after children and older adults in particular will sustain pressure on the budget.

There is evidence to suggest that in recent years there has been significant decrease in expenditure to support families, to compensate for the increase in expenditure for looked after children. The challenge for the council is to reverse these trends in order to deliver the vision of wider preventative services. The council reported an over spend in children and young peoples services where a significant cost arising from placing a small number of looked after children looked after in specialist placements.

The cost per person of older adults' residential care has increased significantly in recent years and is much higher than other authorities. Contributing factors may be the on going maintenance of a service at Bryneithen Care Home which is still accommodating a very small number of service users and a general increase in

fees. The council has responded to a legal challenge regarding the 'home for life' clause in service users' contracts but the delayed closure of the home is clearly impacting upon a strained financial position.

The Director's report indicates positive progress with staff sickness rates, a good investment in performance and continued investment in workforce retention and development. The performance information supplied by the council however, shows an increase in social workers leaving children's services between 2011 and 2012. Given the importance for clear and timely decisions to be made on the front line and for providing a strong safe guarding service, this is an area that the council will wish to give some attention to. In spite of a year on year increase of social workers the caseloads of staff in the Vale remain high when compared with other authorities. This will be something the council will wish to explore in relation to the retention of workers.

Area of progress

- Leading on a number of partnership / integrated working strategies

Areas for development

- Recruitment and retention in children's services
- Expenditure on residential care placements for adults and children.

Providing direction:

There is stability in the corporate team, and there has been good support for social services. Changes are anticipated when the Chief Executive leaves during the coming year. The importance of consistent oversight of social services has been acknowledged and the need for consistency and stability was recognised in the corporate restructuring, with no major changes made to social services senior management team.

The council has an experienced Director of Social Services. There is clear, realistic direction for social services based around the need to provide sustainable social services in a challenging financial climate.

The senior management team reflects partnership working with the health board with a joint appointment in adult services to the post of Head of Health and Social Care. There is good alignment with key partners, and the council continues to take forward good collaborative arrangements with Cardiff council and key stakeholders.

The council reports having a very proactive Corporate Parenting Panel.