

Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2010/2011

Local Authority Name: Carmarthenshire County Council

This report sets out the key strengths and areas for development / improvement in Carmarthenshire Social Services for the year 2010/2011.

1. Summary of overall evaluation:

In adult services there is evidence of improved leadership and direction. There is evidence of improving access arrangements. The single access point, Careline+ continues to provide a good base for further development for the council. There has been a significant improvement in reducing the delays in discharge from hospital for older people. This historically has been difficult to address and the recent improvement has been achieved by close working with colleagues in Hywel Dda Health Board. It has required the development of a range of new services which support and promote independence. There has been sound analysis of systems to understand and deal with the causes of delays and improved efficiency in processes. The reduction in older people who enter residential care is another area of improvement. The council now faces the challenge of continuing to deliver and further improve on this performance.

Learning disability and safeguarding services are also on an improvement journey. There has been a positive response to CSSIW inspection in both these areas and the council has worked hard to deliver the necessary changes. Progress has been made, particularly in safeguarding practice where the newly established team shows strong potential and improvements have already been demonstrated. Modernising learning disability services is a longer term task and the council is now beginning to demonstrate some progress. It is important that it maintains momentum, as historically changes have been very slow in coming to fruition. A priority across the whole of adult services identified in this report is to improve on the timeliness of assessment and review of care plans. The council will want to ensure that it has the necessary plans and resources in place to address these delays in 2011/2012.

Children's services have continued to perform well across most areas. There is evidence of strong effective leadership following the appointment of a new corporate director for children, and an established management team which has a focus on quality in addition to performance management. There is a proactive approach to analysing trends and managing any issues impacting on efficient service delivery. This has assisted the council to act effectively to address growing demands on resources. Given the growth in referrals, child protection cases and an increase in the looked after child population this approach will need to be a continued focus for the future.

2. The key strengths and areas for development / improvement identified in the review and analysis of evidence available about Carmarthenshire are set out, by theme, below.

GETTING HELP

Overall evaluation on this theme:

Adult's services

The council has made good progress in improving access arrangements for older and disabled people. A single point of access called Careline+ continues to be developed, integrated with services from the Hywel Dda Health Board. There are plans for learning disability services to be able to use the centre in the next stage of its development. Access routes for people with mental health needs are also being addressed, as the council reports that current arrangements do not provide easy access for people with both social care and health needs. There has been an intensive training programme for staff in the Careline+ team which has resulted in improvements in this service. The CSSIW inspection of learning disability services undertaken in 2010 identified the need for professional support for contact centre staff, particularly when dealing with potential safeguarding issues, and this has now been put in place.

Performance in delayed transfers of care was a priority for improvement last year and considerable progress has been made. Last year 15 people aged 75 per 1,000 population experienced a delay in social care arrangements upon discharge from hospital. It is very positive to be able to report that this has now improved to 9 people.

CSSIW inspection of learning disability services in 2010 found evidence of a lack of systems to monitor the people waiting for an assessment. The council reports that this position has improved and managers have better monitoring arrangements in place. They were able to report eleven people waiting for an assessment and 281 people requiring a review. There is a system in place to manage the risks whilst the outcome of a review is reported. The risk management of people waiting for an assessment is not yet standardised and the council needs to prioritise this following the completion of the fully electronic care management system.

The number of older people waiting for an assessment was not provided. This continues to be an area identified for improvement. Systems are now reported to be in place to manage risk for people waiting for an assessment, but CSSIW have not been able to verify this. Work has been ongoing to improve the quality of assessment, but the council needs to prioritise action to address the continued backlog. Learning disability services have created a practice development programme to support key staff to improve their practice in outcome-focussed planning, person-centred approaches and overall quality. This is a positive development which was required following the findings of the CSSIW inspection, where the quality of assessment and care planning was an area for improvement.

In older and disabled people services there has been a significant move towards integrated assessment through the establishment of new locality based community resource teams. It is planned that a formal Section 33 agreement between health and social services in 2011/2012 will contribute to the ongoing aim of providing a

seamless service, regardless of whether someone has a health or social care need. The council reports this agreement will include services for older people with a mental health need. A professional practice training programme for all care managers has also led to an improvement in the quality of assessments and care planning. The work on outcome focussed training for care managers last year is reported to have produced improved quality of assessments with the desired increased focus on outcome.

CSSIW regulatory inspectors report that assessments in some care home inspections had been found to be out of date and did not reflect the current needs of service users. For older people, when registered providers have made application to CSSIW for a variation in registration to accommodate specific service user (whose needs are beyond that covered by the main category of the home), inspectors have needed to establish the requirement for an assessment to be in place before changes in registration can be considered. The council needs to ensure that in every case an assessment is in place before the application is made so that the particular circumstances can be fully considered.

The percentage of service users across adult services with a care plan which had been reviewed was 23% last year this has improved to 57%. This is a significant improvement and the council has approved funding for three additional staff to review care plans. It therefore anticipates further improvement next year. This is important as the inspection of learning disability services found evidence from both interviews with staff and case files that the longstanding delays in completing reviews often resulted in the need for a new assessment. Regulatory inspectors have now noted an improvement in the number of reviews being completed by the learning disability service. In addition work is ongoing to support and develop individual person centred plans for people who are currently using day services. This area of work was seen as a priority following the learning disability inspection.

Children's services

Last year's performance in relation to access arrangements was mainly an area of strength. The number of referrals received during 2010/2011 increased from 3249 the previous year to 3493. The percentage of referrals that resulted in initial assessments remained stable. The increase in volume did not affect the performance on the percentage of referrals on which a decision was made within a working day which improved slightly to 98%. The percentage of re-referrals was reported as 7% which is the lowest across Wales. The percentage of referrals allocated to a social worker also improved which was an area identified for development last year. Overall this performance indicates a picture of continuous improvement and is identified as a strength.

Last year the council was asked to evidence that children referred who did not receive an initial assessment, were appropriately sign posted to preventative community services. An audit of referrals that did not proceed to initial assessment has been completed and work is underway to capture data more systematically. A higher level of referrals relating to children exposed to domestic violence was identified and specific work to address some of the issues has been commissioned. All families referred who do not receive an assessment are now sent a booklet on services available, and then followed up by the family information service. This piece of work evidences the council's proactive approach to prevention and managing early identification of need.

Timeliness of initial and core assessments also improved in 2010/2011, this performance is in the top quartile across Wales. The quality of core assessments was identified as an area for development during the adoption and permanency planning inspection carried out in February 2010. This area of work has not been reviewed by CSSIW since that period. The council has completed a number of initiatives to improve the process and had delivered training related to carrying out assessments. A revised assessment format has been designed to improve the recording of the child's story, analysis and decision making. The effectiveness of the new template will be monitored closely by the senior management team. Auditing of assessments is systematic with regular reporting and feedback to managers and their staff. Social workers have accessed specific training on assessment using a model developed by the council which is to be implemented for staff across Welsh councils. The quality of core assessments will be monitored by CSSIW in 2011/2012.

Carmarthenshire did not report on the number of children in need reviews it had carried out in 2009/2010, this has been addressed in 2010/2011. The national children in need census carried out by CSSIW in March 2010 reported that Carmarthenshire children's services was working with 1,135 children in need. This number included 245 looked after children and 95 whose names were on the child protection register. The council reports that all of the 'looked after' children and child protection cases are allocated to social workers and the percentage of children in need cases allocated to social workers had increased to 63%. The remainder of child in need cases were allocated to unqualified workers. The reviews of 82 % of child in need plans are reported as having been completed either through individual supervision sessions with workers or multi agency meetings.

The rate of children becoming 'looked after' increased by 7% during 2010/2011 which equates to a 'looked after' child population of 261 at the end of March 2011. This rise which has been growing over the last six years is reported to be putting an increasing strain on resources and the capacity of staff. Performance for the timeliness of statutory visits and looked after child reviews remained consistent which is a positive indicator of performance given the increased number of 'looked after' children. The timeliness of looked after child procedures is monitored and reported on a monthly basis to the senior management team. The recording of the views of service users on their plans and reviews was identified as an area for development in last year's evaluation. The council report that there has been an increase in service user's engagement which has been evidenced through audit. This area of work will be monitored by CSSIW in 2011/2012.

What the Local Authority does well:

Adult's services

- Continuously improving integrated access arrangements via Careline+;
- Very positive improvement to reduce delayed transfer of care;
- Taking forward the integration of social and health care assessment, particularly for older people;
- Progress in developing care planning and review for learning disability services.

Children's services

- Continuous improvement in access arrangements;
- Timeliness of initial and core assessments;
- Development of specific assessment training to meet identified needs;
- Proactive approach to identifying needs and addressing gaps in services.

What the Local Authority needs to develop/improve:

Adult's services

- Continue to develop access arrangements particularly for people with a mental health need;
- Improve timeliness of assessments, particularly for older people;
- Ensure that reviews are undertaken in a timely manner meet the requirements of the unified assessment process guidance;
- Continue to develop the quality of care management and assessment;
- Continue to develop the use of person centred planning and integrate with care management in learning disability services.

Children's services

- Consistency of reporting on timeliness of 'children in need' reviews;
- Quality of core assessments;
- Evidence that service users' views are recorded and they have copies of assessments and care plans.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Overall evaluation on this theme:

The CSSIW learning disability inspection found that progress to address the longstanding need to develop and improve the range of services available for people with a learning disability has not been timely. The council has been working to address this situation through further implementation of the commissioning intentions set out in the 'Big Plan'. Progress includes an increase in the number of supported living arrangements and ongoing work to develop the Coleshill Centre for Economic Inclusion. There is now a business plan in place and building work on the centre has commenced. Adult placement is a key part of the future plans for promoting and supporting independence and the number of available placements is continuing to increase.

For other adults there is an increasing range of services that reflects the work which has been carried to facilitate timely hospital discharge and promote independence. This includes a range of intermediate care services e.g. acute response team, convalescence beds, the telecare service and the extra care facility in Llanybydder. Inspectors have visited the integrated community equipment store and observed evidence of integrated working. Some services have been recommissioned e.g. luncheon clubs, which were previously provided by the council. These are now supported by community groups and available to a wider cross section of people, thus providing part of a more preventative model. There are two new extra care

schemes planned over the next two years intended to provide a service for people with dementia. The development of specialist services for people with dementia is a priority area which the council will consider in accordance with the Welsh Government's dementia action plan.

The percentage of complaints resolved within ten working days has improved across mental health and learning disabilities from 33% last year to 58%. It has deteriorated for older and disabled people from 79% last year to 57% for 2010/2011. An increase in the number of complaints has been recorded in this service. CSSIW regulatory inspectors have found that local resolution for concerns received has been used for two settings. These were dealt with speedily and well within the required timescales. There are now improved links between the safeguarding team and the complaints service. An improvement was seen in the care planning in one home following scrutiny through the escalating concerns procedures. The consistency and detail of care planning in this setting became simpler and more effective but other settings have not adopted this approach.

Advocacy can be an important element to support an individual in challenging quality. The adult placement scheme has been seen to be very active in promoting the use of advocacy for its users. People First (the council's advocacy service) is involved in supporting both adult placement users and in supporting users who are involved in the safeguarding process.

Children's services

Carmarthenshire has developed an integrated community strategy which includes the children and young people's plan and the child poverty strategy. The consultation on the strategy has been concluded but the finalised document was not available on Carmarthenshire's website at time this report was completed. The summary outlines the framework for supporting children and young people to achieve their best outcomes but it was not possible to reach any conclusions about the linkage with the family support strategy that has been developed. The family support strategy was developed last year with a high level of consultation with service users. The council report that the 'team around the family' model is being rolled out across the county and two co-ordinators have been appointed. Additional Welsh Government funding has been granted to enhance this model as Carmarthenshire together with two neighbouring councils has been a pilot area for a 'families first' project. There has also been a successful cross regional bid to fund integrated family support services which is underpinned by guidance outlined in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010). Both these additional initiatives together with the existing family support services will provide a good range of intensity and models, which once fully implemented, should considerably increase the council's capacity to improve outcomes for children in need.

Education and health services for 'looked after' children are reported to be a focus of the corporate parenting team. The percentage of 'looked after children' who have received a health assessment improved to 92% but there was some inconsistency in educational achievements.

The council continues to be successful in recruiting foster carers to meet the increasing number of 'looked after' children. The inspection of the fostering service completed in December 2010 reported that there had been considerable shortages of staff in the previous year. This lack of capacity in the team had not impacted on the

recruitment of new carers but had affected the completion of the annual quality of care review which seeks the views of carers and stakeholders. Training for staff and carers had also been affected including that for mother and baby placements which had been delayed. Developing a community model for mother and baby assessments has been identified as an improvement priority for 2011/21. The capacity of the fostering service overall had been reviewed and additions to the staff establishment of the team agreed. An area for development identified in the 2009/2010 was for the council to evidence more involvement from foster carers in service planning and review. This has not been reviewed by CSSIW in 2010/2011 and remains an area for development.

The percentage of assessments of young carers known to the council and those receiving a service both improved in the last year. The links between children and adult services in relation to identifying and working with young carers was an area identified for development in last year's review. This area of work will be monitored by CSSIW in 2012.

The council provides a multi-agency service for children with disabilities including a good range of respite provision. The 'children in need' census completed in March 2010 reported that Carmarthenshire were working with 265 children with disabilities. Work has been completed on person centred planning and engaging parents and children in the process. The results are promising and there is a plan to extend this approach to work with 'looked after' children on their personal education plans. The council developed a transition team a year ago and reports there is an improvement in the services for young people in transition planning. A communications protocol has been agreed between children's and adult's services and work is on going with health to secure specialist support for the transition team. A gap in services has been identified for young people diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder when they move to adult services. The council have a proactive approach to managing transition, and planning for further improvements. There is evidence that considerable progress in planning and delivering transition services has already been made. This will be an area for review by CSSIW during 2011/2012.

The inspection of the council's adoption service carried out in 2010 evidenced a strong service resulting in good outcomes for children needing permanent alternative care. At the time of the inspection Carmarthenshire council was a member of the West Wales adoption services consortium together with Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion county councils. The adoption service is run in partnership with the two neighbouring councils, with one team manager and a shared adoption panel. When the inspection was carried out there were plans to integrate the three services which would have increased capacity overall and made more effective use of resources. However the integration has not been progressed as funding arrangements were not agreed. The council needs to consider the arrangements for accountability as it employs the manager of the service who line manages workers employed by councils within the cross regional partnership. The council has identified the restructuring of this service as a priority for the coming year, and the progress of this will be monitored by CSSIW in 2011/2012.

What the Local Authority does well:

Adult's services

- Increasing range of services for older people which support and promote independence;
- Use of advocacy to support service users with a learning disability;
- Improving performance in the resolution of complaints.

Children's services

- Developing range of family support services to meet identified needs;
- Recruitment of foster carers;
- Effective adoption service;
- Proactive planning for transition services for children with disabilities.

What the Local Authority needs to develop/improve:

Adult's services

- Consistency in care plans in older peoples care homes.

Children's services

- Protocol between children and adult services to promote identification of young carers, and their needs;
- Evidence that the views of carers including foster carers have an impact on the development of services;
- Effective accountability arrangements for the line management of staff across the west Wales adoption service.

THE EFFECT ON PEOPLES LIVES

Overall evaluation on this theme:

Adult's services

The council has undertaken a considerable amount of work to develop its response to safeguarding. There is now multi-agency adult safeguarding board which has further developed its three year business plan. The board has evaluated its effectiveness using a self assessment tool as part of on going Social Services Improvement Agency project. The safeguarding board will monitor the future plan for improvements for 2011/2012. The inspection of learning disability services undertaken by CSSIW in October 2010 identified that progress against the identified improvements had been made but structural changes and staff appointments were not complete at that time. Since then the outstanding actions have been completed and the council is now able to demonstrate continuous improvement in this service.

Of the 504 protection of vulnerable adults referrals received, 316 were deemed to be inappropriate. This confirms the need for the safeguarding team to work closely with Careline+ staff and partner agencies to improve their understanding of protection of vulnerable adults. There is also a need for stakeholders to have confidence in the

initial contact process. Regulatory inspectors have observed that the safeguarding process has undergone changes in the last year with the appointment of additional safeguarding co-ordinators, and new procedures in place. There has been some lack of clarity around the issue of threshold, but the arrangements for protection of vulnerable adults meetings are much improved. It would aid other agencies understanding of the thresholds used in assessing referrals if the newly established coordinated team approach and risk assessment matrix was communicated to all parties involved in the safeguarding process. The process is more focussed and preparatory work is assisting clearer outcomes. However, there remain concerns that roles and responsibilities in relation to the planning of an investigation are unclear. It is important to ensure that this responsibility is completed by the participants of the strategy meeting rather than the safeguarding team.

The integration of commissioning, contracting, safeguarding and complaints under a single manager is reported to be improving the links between all of these services and resulting in better outcomes for service users. Overall the work which has been completed and the future planned actions are seen as good performance. There has been ongoing improvement in the trend of supporting people within the community. The rate of older people aged 65 and over who are supported in the community is 76% compared to 60% last year. For younger adults this percentage has risen from 87% to 91%. The rate of older people who are supported in a care home remained fairly stable. In addition 206 people are receiving direct payment in 2010/2011 compared to 195 last year. Overall this indicates a good performance.

The percentage of carers offered an assessment or a review of their needs was reported as 41%. The council reports that 56% of those offered went on to receive an assessment. This is an improvement on last year's performance but remains an area for development. However, the council was able to evidence a range of services which it provides for carers and some progress can be seen. A register of respite and short term breaks is now on the council's website, a range of carer support groups has been developed and there has been investment in Eiriol a advocacy service for carers of people with an enduring mental illness.

Children's services

There was a significant rise of 39.6% in the number children's names being added to the child protection register during 2010/2011. This equates to an increase from 95 at the end of March 2010 to 135 this year. An analysis of the possible reasons for the increase has been carried out, and the lowering of thresholds was believed to be a possible cause. Work has been carried out with partner agencies to address this issue. Despite the rise in numbers, all cases on the child protection register remained allocated to social workers. The timeliness of initial and review case conferences remained consistently good. The percentage of core groups held within ten days of the initial case conference was identified as an area for development in last year's review. Performance in this area has improved to 85%, when the rise in numbers of children's names added to the child protection register in that year is taken into account, and this is a positive performance.

Last year the council was asked to give consideration to the cases where children's names had remained on the child protection register for over two years. Evidence was presented of the systematic review carried out by management which led to positive interventions for this small group of children. There is a proactive approach to monitoring and analysing trends in managing any issues which emerge from

practice. This has assisted the council to act effectively to address growing demands on resources. Given the growth in referrals, child protection cases and looked after children this approach will need a continued focus for the future.

Although performance for promoting independence and social inclusion has remained consistent in some areas there has been a decline in performance in others. School attendance for looked after children is high for both primary and secondary pupils but days lost to time limited exclusion increased, and the percentage of children experiencing an unscheduled change schools also increased to 10%. Pupils' attainment at key stage two declined, and only one out of ten children eligible for assessment at the end of key stage three achieved the core subject indicator. These are areas of performance which are dependent on some factors which are more difficult for social services to influence. Work on improving quality in supporting children's educational achievement is being carried out by an addition of an extra post. Performance for the average points awarded for external qualifications for 16 year old looked after children which is a national strategic indicator declined to 158 which is below the Welsh median of 184.

Performance in national strategic indicators for care leavers remained positive for keeping in touch with the service, and although the percentage of young people living in suitable accommodation declined from 100% to 75%, this equated to two young people. Funding has been identified to increase support for care leavers with the provision of additional personal advisors. Promoting opportunities for economic independence was an area identified for development last year. The percentage of young people in education, training or employment improved from 41% the previous year to 63% in 2010/2011. An apprenticeship scheme is being developed by the council and the 'Coastal' funding will provide additional opportunities. There is evidence that improvements have been made in this area and progress will be reviewed by CSSIW during 2011/2012.

What the Local Authority does well:

Adult's services

- Ongoing analysis and development of the role of the adult safeguarding board;
- Progress in developing the safeguarding structure and process;
- Ongoing improvement in maintaining people of all ages within the community;
- Reducing number of older people supported in residential care settings.

Children's services

- Continuous improvement in timeliness of initial and review conferences;
- Identification and analysis of issues affecting performance;
- Consistently good performance for allocation of child protection cases;
- Consistent performance for promoting social inclusion.

What the Local Authority needs to develop/improve:

Adult's services

Implement priorities identified by the council for improvement in safeguarding practice;
Continue to improve the performance on carer's assessments.

Children's services

Continue to promote education achievement for 'looked after' children.

DELIVERING SOCIAL SERVICES

Overall evaluation on this theme:

In adult's services the council reports that the target set for staff to achieve the qualification standards has been exceeded. Regulatory inspectors confirm that the number of care staff achieving NVQ level 2 has exceeded the national minimum standard. Training is provided by the council's in-house training section but a restriction on the number of staff attending from each residential home is impacting on the service's ability to meet regulatory requirements. Consideration of the use of external specialist trainers could further benefit service development in this area of work. Positively, where a training need for care staff is identified via a safeguarding issue or complaint, this is speedily put in place by the council, and numerous specialists have been brought in to support particular services. The council reports a high number of organisations from the independent sector contribute to the annual training needs survey and attend the wide range of training delivered.

Inspectors have found a significant number of temporary contracts in place for managers across older people's care homes. Although CSSIW are aware of the wider context of change in the provision of residential care, this is not good practice and can have a negative impact on continuity, retention of staff and succession planning. The council needs to consider how these arrangements can be effectively addressed.

Recruitment of social workers continues to be strong in children's services. The council was a social care accolade finalist for "First Year in Practice" programme for newly qualified social workers. Although turnover of staff reduced in both adult and children's services during 2010/2011 there remained a 10% vacancy rate in children's services at the end of March 2011. This was identified as an area for improvement in last year's review. The council reports that 100% of social workers in children's services received an annual appraisal. In adult services, 48 % of all staff received an annual appraisal, which was an improvement of 12% compared to the previous year. Supervision is monitored and reported on systematically in children's services and maintains a high level of compliance. Rates of supervision within adult services are not reported. Work with human resources to improve the efficiency of processes, including monitoring of data and management of sickness absence, was an improvement action for the council in 2010/2011. Reporting of sickness in children's services is now available for the last year; absence in adult service remains an issue and is identified as a priority area by both CSSIW and the council.

Children's services continue to operate a framework of performance management and quality assurance with a well established system of audit and evaluation. The head of service also sample audits supervision files, and provides feedback for social workers and staff. There is systematic reporting to the scrutiny committee and the corporate parenting group by theme. It is difficult to evidence the impact of the committees from the record of the meetings, clearly any issues with performance are followed up but a system of recording would aid review of progress and allow outstanding issues to be tracked more easily. The council report that an audit tool has been piloted in some areas of service which will be rolled out across adult services. Quality standards are not established in all areas and work is ongoing.

What the Local Authority does well:

- Recruitment and induction of social workers;
- Providing specialist training for identified needs;
- Performance management and quality assurance in children's services.

What the Local Authority needs to develop/improve:

- Improvement in the corporate human resource support through both the development of practice and processes;
- Working to reduce the number of temporary manager appointments across in-house care services;
- Establishing quality assurance framework across adult services;
- Record of the impact of scrutiny committee on performance.

SHAPING SERVICES

Overall evaluation on this theme:

As referenced earlier in this report there have been examples of improving partnership working and integration, especially in services for older people. The establishment of joint occupational therapy and physiotherapy appointments within the community resource teams is a good example of strong partnership work in progress. This allows all enquiries for these services to be received through Careline+. Further integration of these services is being planned. The appointment of three joint locality managers who will lead and manage services for both the council and Hywel Dda Health Board is driving the integration agenda. A joint management structure is already in place between the council and the health board which has enabled the achievements in integration of community services. The managers are intending to further challenge traditional ways of working. This will be strengthened through the now approved section 33 agreement which is a significant step forward from the previously informal arrangements which were in place. The challenge for both partners is to further demonstrate positive outcomes for the citizens of Carmarthenshire.

The council has a very active commissioning team which CSSIW regulatory inspectors find is keen to be involved in complaints and concerns regarding contracted services. CSSIW meetings with contracts and commissioning unit during the 2010/2011 have all been as a result of information sharing and where appropriate joint action planning in relation to the services highlighted above. There have been on going issues regarding one service commissioned by the council which does not

meet the conditions of registration and is now subject to escalating concerns. In another setting service users have been placed in a setting which was known to be a service of concern. The council provided evidence that commissioners and care managers work together effectively to monitor performance through completion of a provider performance monitoring protocol. While there is evidence that arrangements are improving there are still areas which require further development.

There is a clear strategic vision across the children and young people's partnership and children's services. The integrated community strategy referenced earlier in this report reflects the ethos of partnership being promoted. The strategy led by the local service board and the health board outlines a vision for working together across all sectors working in Carmarthenshire. A number of plans are incorporated into the strategy and the coordination of a cohesive effective delivery will be a challenge. There is evidence that local multiagency partnerships in children's services are effectively driving up quality and maximising financial benefits of working together. These arrangements are underpinned by a number of strategies and protocols but the council has identified the links between joint planning groups and individual departments could be improved.

A joint commissioning framework has been developed by the children and young people's partnership but will need to be implemented before any benefits can be evaluated. Commissioning arrangements are in place for externally contracted services but in house services are not subject to contract arrangements. This is an area for development in 2011/2012. The council reports it has developed a number of initiatives to facilitate opportunities for service users and providers to shape services. Young people have participated in the interviewing process for posts in children's services and a number of events have been organised to elicit the views of young people. A participation strategy is in place and a three year participation programme is being implemented. Overall the council is making good progress in this area, and should be in a good position to evidence how the views of service users have influenced the delivery of services.

Carmarthenshire's children's services have been recognised as being one of the most cost effective across Wales. There will need to be continued integration and maximising of joint funding in the face of growing demands and shrinking resources to maintain this position. Adult social care has been focussed on reshaping services with an 'invest to save' agenda. The Wales Audit Office report that there is a record of sound financial management corporately, but also identifies the challenges of modernising social care in the decision to maintain the status quo.

What the Local Authority does well:

- Achievement of formal partnership arrangements (section 33) to support joint working in adult services;
- Service development and improvement which demonstrate integrated partnership working;
- Partnership working to maximise benefits for children and young people;
- Facilitation of opportunities for participation for service users.

What the Local Authority needs to develop/improve:

- Improving commissioning and care management links to ensure any pre-placement knowledge is shared;

Evidence of how service user views are influencing service planning;
In house contracting arrangements in children's services.

PROVIDING DIRECTION

Overall comment on this theme:

In adult services there is evidence of improved leadership and direction. The positive benefits of having an integrated head of service for older and disabled people are allowing social services to drive improvement and innovation. There is now evidence that change is producing better outcomes for people who use services. Learning disability and safeguarding services are also benefitting from improved leadership. The improvement journey for this service will need to be sustained to ensure timely delivery of plans for change. Children's services continue to benefit from strong effective leadership which is evidenced from consistently good performance in most areas. Social services have a high profile corporately and this is evidenced by the investment in retaining staff and increasing posts to meet growing demands on services. Heads of service and members of the council visit front line staff and experience service delivery so that they are aware of the pressures and the demands on the service.

Social service's leadership has faced a particular challenge this year as proposals for changes to residential care provision for older people including the plan to close two homes were rejected by the council. This decision will have a major impact on plans to reconfigure services in the future, which promote and support independence. There is also the need to achieve the financial savings which the director has set out in his annual report. The council needs to ensure that it is providing the necessary support for social services to deliver modern services which promote and support independence for the citizens of Carmarthenshire now and in the future.

What the Local Authority does well:

Improving leadership with significant changes in some areas of adult services;
Strong effective leadership in children's services;
Good corporate engagement in the improvement agenda.

What the Local Authority needs to develop/improve:

Providing the political support for driving forward the modernisation agenda in older people's services and avoid reliance on the residential model;
Further development of a range of cost effective services to promote and support independence.