

Progress on Proposals for Improvement / Recommendations - Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report (2017-18)

Local work 2017-18						
Work area / issue date	Brief description	Proposal for improvement	Officer	Accepted	Not accepted	Not formally considered
Overview and Scrutiny: Fit For the Future? July 2018	Review of how well placed Councils' overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges	P1 The Council's scrutiny committees should ensure that, where appropriate, Cabinet members rather than council officers are held to account for the efficient exercise of executive functions in accordance with statutory guidance (<i>National Assembly for Wales, Guidance For County And County Borough Councils In Wales On Executive And Alternative Arrangements 2006, July 2006, Paragraph 2.1.8</i>)	KJ	P1 to P6: Meeting scheduled 30.08.18 to discuss way forward on proposals with the relevant scrutiny champion Member		
		P2 The Council should consider the intended role of scrutiny committees in pre-decision scrutiny activity and ensure current arrangements enable sufficient time for scrutiny				
		P3 The Council should review its arrangements for planning and undertaking scrutiny, and consider different ways of working that best suit the topic area and desired outcome				
		P4 The Council should strengthen scrutiny committee ownership of forward work programmes, ensuring that there is a clear rationale for topic selection				
		P5 The Council should strengthen the arrangements for engaging the public in scrutiny				

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		P6 The Council should put in place arrangements for assessing the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny				

Reviews by inspection and regulation bodies 2017-18						
Regulation body / date	Brief description	Recommendation	Officer	Accepted	Not accepted	Not formally considered
Estyn December 2017	Estyn inspection of local authority education services for children and young people	R1 Improve standards in primary schools	CM	Yes Progress has been reported in June		
		R2 Improve the quality of self-evaluation, improvement planning and risk management across all education services				
		R3 Ensure that pupils in key stage 4 follow suitable learning pathways that enable them to progress into appropriate further education, employment or training				
		R4 Take action to address the safeguarding management issues identified during the inspection				

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October 2017	<u>Public Procurement in Wales</u>	R3 Review procurement strategies and policies during 2017-18 and on an annual basis thereafter to ensure that they reflect wider policy and legislative changes (e.g. WBFG (Wales) Act 2015) and support continuous improvement	GG	<p>The Corporate Procurement Unit are presently implementing such a review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date the Council has complied with Welsh Government Procurement Policy and wellbeing provisions, for example, by ensuring that contracts over the value of £1,000,000 include community benefits clauses • In line with good practice, when embarking on tender exercises via Sell2Wales, consideration is now being given for all tenders to determine whether community benefits should be utilised and can be generated for the type of contract being considered thereby ensuring benefits to the organisation, society and economy • Consideration is given to all contracts now advertised on Sell2Wales as to whether contracts should be split into “Lots” or smaller arrangements to facilitate the opportunity for smaller organisations to bid for elements of contracts if they are unable to 		

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				<p>bid for larger packages, thereby enabling smaller and local organisations to play an active role in procurement processes and allow more development to SME's and local organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also contracts and tender documents have now been simplified to allow all organisations regardless of size and experience in tendering to have the opportunity to take part in processes • During 2018/2019 and onwards, a review of the Contract Procedure Rules will be undertaken to ensure compliance with all legislative and policy requirements, which the Council are to date complying with but need to document the processes and ensure standing orders are up to date • A procurement strategy will also be developed setting out the Council's strategic objectives for corporate procurement and ensuring compliance with all policy/legislative requirements 		

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Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation	Officer	Accepted	Not accepted	Not formally considered
January 2018	How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness	<p>R1 We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure their staff are sufficiently skilled to deal with the new demands of mediating, problem solving, negotiating and influencing with homeless people; and • Review and reconfigure their services to engage more effectively with homeless and potentially homeless people to prevent homelessness 	AT	<p>A review of how we are preventing and responding to homelessness has been undertaken and a consultation on our draft homelessness strategy is underway</p> <p>This recommendation will be taken forward as part of the action plan</p>		
		<p>R2 Review funding of homelessness services to ensure that they can continue to provide the widest possible preventative approach needed. Reviews should consider use of Supporting People as well as General Council fund monies to support delivery of the authority's homelessness duties</p>	AT	<p>A review of how we are preventing and responding to homelessness has been undertaken and a consultation on our draft homelessness strategy is underway</p> <p>This review included Supporting People services. R2 will be taken forward as part of the action plan, additional RSG has been allocated to the service to provide more resource to help to support the growing demand for the service</p>		

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	<u>How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness</u>	<p>R3 We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design services to ensure there is early contact with service users • Use ‘triage’ approaches to identify and filter individuals seeking help to determine the most appropriate response to address their needs • Test the effectiveness of first point of contact services to ensure they are fit for purpose 	AT	<p>A review of how we are preventing and responding to homelessness has been undertaken and a consultation on our draft homelessness strategy is underway</p> <p>Taking into account the new strategy findings and proposals the service will be working with external organisations and partners, trying to prevent more cases needing support from the service by means of earlier intervention</p> <p>The service runs a duty service which is regularly reviewed and discussed with staff to ensure it is running effectively and efficiently</p>		
		<p>R4 We recommend that local authorities publish service standards that clearly set out what their responsibilities are and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive and what they must do for themselves. Service</p>	AT	<p>Service standards are due to be reviewed, updated and re published.</p>		

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		<p>standards should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be written in plain accessible language • Be precise about what applicants can and cannot expect, and when they can expect resolution • Clearly set out the applicant’s role in the process and how they can help the process go more smoothly and quickly • Be produced collaboratively with subject experts and include the involvement of people who use the service(s) • Effectively integrate with the single assessment process • Offer viable alternatives to the authority’s services • Set out the appeals and complaints processes. These should be based on fairness and equity for all 				

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		involved and available to all				
	<u>How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness</u>	<p>R5 To improve current performance we recommend that local authorities make better use of their websites to help manage demand by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing the usability and effectiveness of current website information using our lines of enquiry set out in Appendix 5 • increasing and improving the range, quality and coverage of web based information • Making better use of online applications • Linking more effectively to information from specialist providers' and advice specialists, such as Citizens Advice 	AT	<p>Current web site pages and external housing website to be reviewed and updated</p> <p>On line applications to be added to the website</p> <p>Links to be added to website of partners and support organisations</p>		

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		R6 We recommend that local authorities set out and agree their expectations of partners identifying how they will work together to alleviate homelessness. The agreement should be reviewed regularly and all partners' performance reviewed to identify areas for improvement	AT	<p>A review of how we are preventing and responding to homelessness has been undertaken and a consultation on our draft homelessness strategy is underway.</p> <p>An action plan with key partners will be developed to take forward the recommendations of the review once the homelessness strategy has been agreed</p>		
	<u>How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness</u>	R7 We recommend that local authorities address weaknesses in their equalities monitoring, and ensure that their homelessness service accurately records and evaluates appropriate data to demonstrate equality of access for all service users that the local authority has a duty towards	AT	<p>Accurate records are kept of every service user, information includes, gender, disabilities, ethnicity</p> <p>Records to be updated to include religion, sexual orientation and national identity</p>		
		R8 We recommend that local authorities use the checklist set out in Appendix 10 to undertake a self-assessment on services, to help identify options to improve how they	AT	The checklist will be used periodically to assist the development of the service and help to identify where improvements are needed		

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		can help manage demand				
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>R2 We recommend that local authorities work with partner agencies (health bodies, housing associations and Care and Repair) to strengthen their strategic focus for the provision of adaptations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting appropriate strategic objectives for adaptations that focus on wellbeing and independence • Improving the quality of information on the demand for adaptations by using a wide range of data to assess need including drawing on and using information from partners who work in the local-authority area • Linking the system for managing and delivering adaptations with adapted housing policies and registers to make best use 	AT	<p>The service works closely with health in providing grants to assist and speed up discharges</p> <p>A number of different grants are available from very low value - quick service to high value grants - more complex</p> <p>Additional funding has been secured to invest in quick preventative works helping the home owner to remain in their homes for longer and maintain their independence</p> <p>NPT does not have its own council stock, therefore we do not hold a register of adapted houses</p>		

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		of already adapted homes				
	<u>Housing Adaptations</u>	R3 We recommend that delivery organisations provide information on housing adaptations in both Welsh and English, and accessible formats including braille, large fonts, audio versions and other languages. Information should be promoted widely via a range of media including social media, websites and published information, and also through key partners. Preferably, information should be produced jointly and policies aligned between delivery bodies to improve coverage and usage	AT	<p>All information is available in alternative formats on request</p> <p>Services are advertised on websites and posters and leaflets are located at doctor’s surgeries, and other community buildings</p>		
		R4 We recommend that delivery organisations streamline applications by creating single comprehensive application forms covering all organisations within a local-authority area that are available via partners and online	AT	<p>The application form for a DFG and process has been reviewed and streamlined, on receiving a referral the adaptation team gather and complete the required information for the applicant</p> <p>A single form covering all grants is not a suitable option as varying grants have different conditions and values</p>		

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				A DFG form is required by legislation, which is not necessary the case for other grants		
		<p>R5 We recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities provide or use home improvement agency services to support disabled and older people to progress their DFG applications efficiently • Delivery organisations work with planning authorities to fast track and streamline adaptations that require approvals • Delivery organisations use Trusted Assessors to undertake less complex adaptation assessments 	AT	<p>The adaptation service carries out the whole DFG process in-house with a single point of contact for continuity. This person will carry out all the required paperwork including any drawings that may be required, cost the works and supervise the works when on site</p> <p>The service works closely with planning and building control to streamline as much as possible the process and the biggest delay is dealing with Welsh Water.</p> <p>Working closely with Care & Repair, minor adaptations are assessed and installed using the agencies Trusted Assessors and handy man service</p>		

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	Housing Adaptations	<p>R6 We recommend that delivery organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce formal systems for accrediting contractors to undertake adaptations. <p>These should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of customer care such as keeping to appointments, keeping the site tidy, controlling noise etc. • Vetting of financial standing, tax and VAT status • Promoting good health and safety practices • Requiring the use of warranty schemes • Ensuring that adequate insurance is held • Requiring references • Use framework agreements and partnered contracts to deliver adaptations 	<p>AT</p>	<p>The service holds a “select list” of contractors to deliver the adaptation works</p> <p>All contractors have been through an application process and vetted in the key areas</p> <p>Up to date and valid insurance documents are requested annually when due</p> <p>Each contractor is closely supervised and any issues such as quality or customer service are discussed with the contractor immediately</p>		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address weaknesses in the contracting of adaptations, updating Schedule of Rates used to tender work and undertaking competitive tendering to support value for money in contracting • Develop effective systems to manage and evaluate contractor performance by: setting an appropriate range of information to judge performance and delivery of works covering timeliness of work; quality of work; applicant/ tenant feedback; cost of work (including variations); health and safety record; and customer feedback • Regularly reporting and evaluating performance to identify opportunities to improve services • Providing formal feedback to contractors on their 				

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		performance covering key issues such as client satisfaction, level and acceptability of variations, right first-time work, post-inspection assessment and completion within budget and on time				
	<u>Housing Adaptations</u>	R7 We recommend that local authorities work with partner agencies (health bodies, housing associations and Care and Repair) to develop and improve joint working to maximise both take-up and the benefits of adaptations in supporting independence by pooling of resources, co-locating staff and creating integrated delivery teams	AT	<p>The service works closely with ABMU, RSL's and Care & Repair ensuring best use of all adaptation budgets</p> <p>Demand for the DFG's is far higher than the budget allocated to deliver DFG's</p> <p>Additional budgets are used to deflect smaller adaptations away from DFG's. These budgets are intended to assist with hospital discharges, providing quick small adaptations to allow a service user to remain independent in their own homes for longer</p>		
		R8 We recommend that delivery organisations jointly agree and publish joint service standards for delivery of adaptations within each local	AT	The service has service standards with ABMU and Care & Repair for the delivery of minor adaption work		

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		<p>authority area. The service standards should clearly set out how each agency approaches delivery of adaptations and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive. Service Standards should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be written in plain accessible language • Be precise about what people can and cannot expect to receive • Be produced collaboratively to cover all adaptations services within an area • Set out the eligibility for the different funding streams, application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes • Offer the viable options and alternatives for adaptations including linking with adapted housing registers 				

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		to maximise use of already adapted homes				
	Housing Adaptations	<p>R9 We recommend that the Welsh Government and delivery organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set appropriate measures to judge both the effectiveness and efficiency of the different systems for delivering adaptations and the impact on wellbeing and independence of those who receive adaptations • Ensure delivery organisations report against their responsibilities in respect of the Equalities Act 2010 • Ensure performance information captures the work of all delivery organisations – local authorities, housing associations and Care and Repair agencies • Annually publish 	AT	<p>The service reports on the performance of all of the different type of grants that are offered. This information includes, end to end time, average cost of works and amount of jobs carried out for the allocated budget</p> <p>A satisfaction survey is also sent to the grant recipient</p> <p>Care & Repair provide regular updates on performance for the grants they administer on behalf of the service</p>		

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		performance for all delivery organisations to enable a whole systems view of delivery and impact to support improvement to be taken				
April 2018	<u>Speak my language: Overcoming language and communication barriers in public services</u>	R1 We recommend that public bodies regularly review the accessibility of their services to people who do not speak English or Welsh as a main language including Deaf people who use sign language. This assessment can include using our checklist	Equalities & Community Cohesion Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are a member of the Welsh Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS), which provides access to BSL and other language interpreters • Language Line - all services can access Language Line through the Social Services or Access to Services 'gatekeepers'. There has been a slight change as this service is now accessed through WITS and so an access code is provided to the 'gatekeepers' for contacting the interpretation service. Nothing has changed for services requiring this service • Further promotion of the other WITS services is required • Community Profile – this has been undertaken by the BME Community Association and a number of issues in accessing services including the language 		

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				barrier were identified. An 'access card' has been developed by the BME Community Association, which will identify the language required, ease the request for a language and provide more accessible services as well as building confidence amongst BME communities to access services independently		
May 2018	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R1 We recommend that local authorities continue to focus on preventing people becoming dependent on more expensive placements in care homes by providing effective support at home and a range of step up accommodation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the evaluation of prevention activity so local authorities understand what works well and why Utilising the mapping of prevention services under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 that covers other agencies and service 	AT	<p>We have published a learning disability delivery plan setting out how we intend to meet the needs of people with a learning disability. This includes focusing on preventing people from becoming dependant on more expensive placements in care homes</p> <p>We have established a new 'outcome focussed assessment team' who will be reviewing our more complex packages of support to help identify ways of supporting them to progress into greater levels of independence. This includes monitoring how providers are supporting service users to achieve outcomes and develop</p>		

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		<p>providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the signposting of additional help so carers and support networks can be more resilient and self-reliant. This should include encouraging carers to make long-term plans for care to maintain and protect their dependant’s wellbeing • Sharing risk analysis and long term planning data with other local authorities, service providers, and partners to agree a shared understanding of the range of options 		<p>independence</p> <p>We will be developing a market position statement for learning disability services over the next 18 months. This will include market mapping of services that will prevent people from being dependant on more expensive placements in care homes. Market mapping also informed our learning disability delivery plan</p> <p>We have commissioned an information and advice officer for carers.</p> <p>The Commissioning for Complex Care Western Bay sub-group has been established to discuss commissioning activity</p> <p>Commissioners frequently meet and share information on planning and risks and work together to resolve shared issues. Good lines of communication and joint working are already established</p> <p>We have submitted an Integrated</p>		

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				<p>Care Fund bid to Welsh Government to develop a new supported living scheme that will support people to move from residential homes.</p> <p>In addition we are actively working with providers and RSLs to develop new models that reduce the need for residential care</p>		
	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R2 We recommend that local authorities improve their approach to planning services for people with learning disabilities by building on the Regional Partnership Boards population assessments for people with learning disabilities and agreeing future priorities</p>	AT	<p>The Western Bay Area Plan and Action plan is a response to the local population needs assessment and has been agreed by all Western Bay local authorities.</p> <p>Bids for Integrated Care Fund monies are based on supporting the priorities of the Area Plan</p> <p>The Western Bay Commissioning for Complex Care sub-group supports a regional approach to commissioning and planning</p>		
		<p>R3 We recommend that local authorities do more to integrate commissioning arrangements with partners and providers and take account of the work</p>	AT	<p>The Commissioning for Complex Care Western Bay sub-group supports integration of commissioning and exploring opportunities for joint</p>		

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		<p>of the National Commissioning Board by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the barriers that exist in stopping or hindering further integration • Improving the quality of joint strategic plans for learning disability services (see also paragraphs 3.11-3.14) • Establishing investment models and sustainable financial structures, joint workforce planning and multi-year budgeting • Developing appropriate governance and data sharing frameworks with key local partners that include a clear process for managing risk and failure 		<p>commissioning. This also includes understanding and exploring barriers for further integration.</p> <p>The Western Bay Area Plan and Action plan is a response to the local population needs assessment and has been agreed by all local authorities.</p> <p>Although we are not currently progressing integrated investment models or financial structures in learning disability services, we are progressing exploration of this area for older people care homes and are open to considering progression of this in learning disability services where this may be appropriate</p> <p>The Commissioning for Complex Care Western Bay sub-group has been established to discuss commissioning activity, including risks. Outside of this sub-group, commissioners frequently meet and share information on planning and risks and work together to resolve shared issues when they arise.</p>		

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				Good lines of communication and joint working are already established and we have a history of developing joint risk management/market failure plans where applicable		
	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R4 We recommend that local authorities do more to involve people with learning disabilities and their carers in care planning and agreeing pathways to further independence by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently including people with learning disabilities and their carers in the writing, monitoring and development of care plans • Systematically involving carers and advocacy groups in evaluating the quality of services • Involving people with learning disabilities in procurement processes • Ensuring communications 	AT	<p>All staff have been on 'outcome focused' training to ensure meaningful conversations with those that require services when developing and reviewing care plans</p> <p>Service users are asked for feedback on services as part of our contract monitoring, we are developing a new range of quality standards for all our services by April 2019 and will explore how we can involve carers and advocacy services in the evaluation of quality</p> <p>We will engage with people that use services whenever we undertake commissioning exercises to inform the procurement process and service modelling</p> <p>We are currently consulting on our</p>		

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		<p>are written in accessible and appropriate language to improve the understanding and impact of guidance and information</p>		<p>plans for adult social services and children and young people services</p> <p>We have developed easy read versions of these documents as well as Welsh language versions</p>		
		<p>R5 We recommend that local authorities collaborate with providers, the third sector and suppliers in understanding challenges, sharing data, and pooling expertise by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality range, and accessibility of tendering information • Working with providers to shape local markets by coming to a common understanding of the opportunities, risks, and future priorities in providing learning disabilities services 	<p>AT</p>	<p>Quarterly provider meetings are already established to discuss intelligence and information in order to shape the local market. Regular meetings with individual providers are also undertaken to discuss service delivery and service developments as part of the market management process</p> <p>We are intending to publish a market position statement for learning disability services in the next 18 months</p> <p>Market engagement events are always undertaken as part of any procurement exercise in order to shape the tender and to provide information to potential bidders regarding the tender</p>		

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	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R6 We recommend that local authorities develop a more appropriate set of performance indicators and measures of success that make it easier to monitor and demonstrate the impact of service activity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-designing measures, service and contract performance indicators with service providers, people with learning disabilities and their carers • Ensure commissioners have sufficient cost and qualitative information on the full range of placement and care options available • Equipping commissioners with data to demonstrate the long term financial benefits of commissioning choices, this includes having the right systems and technology • Integrating the outcomes and learning from reviews 	AT	<p>We are in the process of developing new quality standards for the services we commission and will explore how to take forward R6 as part of this process</p> <p>Commissioners evaluate tenders based on cost and quality as part of the procurement process. We are looking to establish a framework for learning disability services in the next 18 months</p> <p>The commissioning unit includes a performance analyst who gathers this information to inform commissioning so that business cases, including the financial benefits, are developed as part of the commissioning process</p> <p>We have agreed a delivery plan for learning disability services, performance against this plan will be reported to scrutiny</p>		

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		<p>of care plans into performance measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating and then learning from different types of interventions and placements • Including learning disability services in local authority scrutiny reviews to challenge performance and identify improvements 				