



Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Performance Evaluation Report 2013–14

Neath Port Talbot County
Borough Council Social Services

October 2014

**This report sets out the key areas of progress and areas
for improvement in Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Social Services for the year 2013–14**

Local Authority: Neath Port Talbot County and Borough Council

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Summary

The council is clear about the development of the social care market and its expectations of those it commissions with to provide services. To support this it has developed commissioning strategies, together with market position statements, for a range of service areas. The market position statements cover residential care, domiciliary care, learning disability, supporting people, mental health and physical disability. These statements set out the council's vision for the future and are designed to provide a foundation for sustained change and improvement.

The council has maintained and promoted good engagement with carers and users of services. Its modernisation agenda in adult services is wide ranging and will require broad consultation if people are to understand the rationale behind such changes. People will require reassurance that where there is need it will be assessed, and services will be provided where indicated.

The performance of adult services is well monitored and effectively managed. The council's preparedness for the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 is implicit within its modernisation and integration programme. There is not, however, a specific plan of action in place to support the implementation of the Act.

The council has prepared an action plan to support the underlying principles of the Welsh Government's policy '*Mwy na Geiriau*', '*More than Just Words*', the strategic framework for the use of the Welsh language within the social care workforce. The council states that where Welsh language services are required it will endeavour to meet those needs.

The council's children's services continue to be subject to the CSSIW's serious concerns protocol which was invoked in November 2012 following three inspections between August 2010 and September 2012. The delivery of safeguarding services to children and young people was identified as being in significant need of improvement. Since November 2012, CSSIW has undertaken quarterly monitoring visits to assess the progress made by the council in delivering its strategic improvement plan for children's services.

In November 2013 CSSIW carried out a further inspection to establish whether sufficient progress had been made to improve the quality and consistency of services for the children and young people who are in need of support or protection. Following this inspection it was evident that the local authority was making progress in implementing its strategic improvement plan. While a significant amount of work had been carried out, the council will need to continue to evidence that they can deliver consistent improvement in performance and quality across the planning and delivery of children's services. CSSIW has therefore continued with quarterly monitoring to assess continued progress against the council's strategic improvement plan. This year's performance evaluation will not discuss or repeat in detail the findings of either the inspection or our quarterly monitoring visits. Further information can be found in the report of the November 2013 inspection. The council also took part in the national looked after children inspection. While this, too, found many positive developments in children's services, they need to be balanced against the areas for improvement – including the lack of evidence on case files of casework consultation about risk issues.

Response to last year's areas of improvement

Area for improvement identified last year	Progress in 2013 - 14
Progressing the older people's joint commissioning strategy.	A draft strategy has now been developed.
Development of the county wide reablement service. Corporate and political support will be vital to achieve this.	This has been achieved.
Capacity issues within the contracts and commissioning team.	Capacity has been increased.
Progress on developing services to younger people with a physical disability and for older people with dementia. The council should ensure it has sufficient capacity to move these service areas forward	The council has a strategic improvement plan in place for children's services which is being closely monitored.
The council needs to consider how best to establish a system of review within learning disability services that can monitor people's changing needs and respond accordingly.	Special review team implemented and is in place.
Further progress on the reduction in the	There is evidence of improvement in

rate of delayed transfers of care.	2013-14.
Ensuring that there is sustained improvement in the response to referrals in children's services both in terms of reliability, timeliness and quality of analysis and decision making.	There is evidence of improvement delivered through the remodelled access service.
Establishing a single assessment team.	This has been established.
The council needs to consider whether with the additional Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards responsibilities, the safeguarding team has sufficient capacity to meet current and future demand.	The capacity of the safeguarding team has been increased.
Work with partners to clarify roles and responsibilities where joint working in safeguarding.	The council has established a multi-agency safeguarding forum.
Staff training regarding the provision of carers assessments.	An e-carers package has been launched across the council.
Planning and social work support for looked after children.	A permanency strategy is in place and a specialist looked after children's service has been established
Timeliness and quality of the application child protection procedures.	Timeliness has improved, but achieving consistently good quality assessments remains an area for significant improvement. Continued monitoring is required.
Planning and support for children leaving care.	Some progress has been made, but this needs to be consistently delivered and sustained over an extended period of time.
The council must consider supporting the current quality assurance processes with effective IT support.	IT support has been improved.
Ongoing work in order to reduce the impact of sickness absence on the delivery of services is still required.	Dedicated HR support in children's services has been effective.

Stabilising the workforce in children's services and ensuring that staff are competent and feel supported.	While there has been significant improvement – with only two current vacancies reported in children's services – this needs to be sustained over an extended period of time to deliver the stability in the workforce necessary to support the required service improvements.

Visits and inspections undertaken during the year

The council participated in a thematic review across all councils in Wales for both commissioning arrangements for older people and arrangements for the operation of the deprivation of liberty safeguards under the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

CSSIW undertook a number of site visits to adult services this year. These included the new integrated services based at Cimla Hospital, the community gateway project, adults safeguarding, contracts and commissioning, the pathways to independence programme, the modernisation of adult services, progress on the carers measure and councils implementation of the mental health measure.

These visits were in addition to the annual programme of inspections carried out on regulated services, whether provided by the council or by the independent sector. Meetings with both heads of service and quarterly meetings with the strategic director and the senior management team have been held.

In children's services an inspection was carried out in November 2013, this has been followed up by quarterly monitoring by CSSIW. The council was also part of the national Inspection of safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviour ('looked after children inspection').

Areas for follow up by CSSIW next year

A number of specific areas for improvement have been identified in the body of this report and are listed below. The council's progress in relation to these will be discussed during regular engagement meetings, and site visits in the coming year.

- Progress with the modernisation and integration of adult social care.
- Early intervention and preventative services for children.
- Overview and scrutiny arrangements.
- Response to the recommendations of the looked after children inspection.
- Monitoring the implementation of the council's children's services strategic improvement plan.

- Progress with the outcomes from the visits, inspections and reviews undertaken by CSSIW during 2013-14
- Outcomes from the Western bay health and social care programme.

Performance

Shaping services

Adults

The council is clear about the direction of the social care market and its expectations of those it commissions with to provide services. It has developed market position statements for a range of service areas, including care homes, domiciliary care, learning disability, supporting people, mental health and physical disability. These statements are intended to be a tool for existing and potential providers of services to make informed decisions about developing their business. They set out the council's vision for future service delivery and provide a foundation for sustained change and improvement in the marketplace. Supporting this are clear commissioning strategies which provide a framework for modernisation and service delivery.

As a result the council has made significant progress in achieving the full integration of health and social care in the intermediate care services in the community resource team and in the integrated management of long term health and social care for older people within the community networks. This has led to improvements in performance in both the timeliness of assessments and achieving an appropriate and desired service outcome. This is supported a sustained reduction in the rate of delayed transfers of care, which is now at 3.49 per thousand population aged 75 and over. Considerable progress has also been made in working collaboratively to lead health and social care services across the Western Bay region.

The pathways to independence programme continues, with clear assessment and review in place which is fully implemented into care management arrangements. While initially launched to review the residential placement sector, this has now been extended to supported living provision. Whilst CSSIW inspectors are aware of some disquiet amongst providers regarding the move to a new model of support, care managers are positive that this work is improving the lives of people they support. It is regarded as further improving people's independence and ability to lead more fulfilled lives within the community.

The council is engaged in a wide ranging consultation on a number of core service areas. The modernisation agenda is ambitious and will require alignment with care management arrangements in order to ensure that people's access to services meet assessed need and expectations. The council continues to make progress with an ambitious programme of change. It is a strong partner of the Western Bay

health and social care collaborative which aims to bring together the City and County of Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend County Borough Councils and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board. This programme was established in 2012 and is underpinned by the principles of shared best practice models and the pooling of resources and expertise to deliver savings. The focus last year was to make progress with joint business cases and reviews to test the case for collaborative working. The joint integrated services model that the programme is working towards should deliver innovative and cost effective services. The work programme has numerous separate projects including adult learning disability, adult mental health, community services for older people and a cross cutting project focussed on contracting and procurement.. It is a complex and very ambitious programme which will require full commitment from all partners in order to realise its objectives.

Not only has the council been successful in promoting good practice and encouraging the development of the market, it also manages poorly performing providers effectively. CSSIW inspectors report that concerns are addressed by the council in a clear and planned way.

Children

The council has restructured its early intervention and prevention services through the 'think family' partnership. Staff are informed of progress and briefings through newsletters and staff meetings. A review of the team around the family service has indicated that it is receiving a significant amount of referrals from the education service in relation to children's behaviour. The council has recognised a need to build trust between children's services and the team around the family service and that a greater proportion of referrals from health visitors is required to promote more effective early intervention. A service mapping exercise has been undertaken and an early intervention and commissioning strategy has been written. However, commissioning arrangements for children's services are underdeveloped.

The council is making good progress in promoting participation for children and young people. Progress has also been made in agreeing definitions with partner agencies with young people having been involved in designing a website to provide information on services, and a wider evaluation of service provision.

Induction training for social workers and elected members has been revised to include information about children's rights, advocacy and how to make representation to the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

The council has decided against joining a proposed regional advocacy service and will be recommissioning an advocacy service from a current provider. The participation, engagement and advocacy protocol is being reviewed with young people to ensure that it is "child friendly" before it is implemented.

Areas of progress

- The pathways to independence programme.
- The development of market position statements and clear commissioning strategies which embed expectations and desired outcomes.
- The integration of community services.

Areas for improvement

- The continued development and commissioning of alternative models of care and support to support the outcomes of the pathways to independence programme.
- The alignment of the modernisation programme with arrangements for assessment and review, in order to ensure that people's access to services meet assessed need and expectation.
- The harmonisation of thresholds work being completed by the 'think family' partnership should be defined and clearly communicated.
- To develop commissioning strategies with partners to shape and support the delivery of services that meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people with complex needs.

Getting help

Adults

People are able to get help from all adult social care services and community health services through one access point. The community gateway was established this year to build on the good service provided by the contact and access team. People benefit from a service that is now able to provide a multi-disciplinary assessment and triage at the first point of contact. The gateway comprises council, health and third sector staff in order to provide a more holistic and effective service. CSSIW observed the operation of this service and met motivated and committed staff intent on delivering a good quality service. This is part of a council wide access to services project which aims to modernise access to all council services. Alongside the community gateway, people with a learning disability are able to access information regarding specialised services through service information on the council's website or leaflets at public contact points. There is a website for service users which uses inclusive communication and facilitates sharing of information about the services available. Through consultation with carers' and user groups the effectiveness and appropriateness of information is being actively considered and the need to develop a more effective communication format has been identified.

In response to the need to improve access to mental health services, required by the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010, the council, together with its health

partner, has seen the development of enhanced primary care services focused on access, assessment and early intervention. This is reported to be working well and the commitment of both council and health staff was very evident at CSSIW site visits and meetings with staff. This is supported by evidence of effective collaborative working across the western bay.

Performance indicators for the rate of older people helped to live at home increased from 100 per 1000 aged over 65 for 2012-13 to 107.8 in 2013/14. This is very positive in terms of maximising independence. The rate of older people supported in residential care has remained steady, increasing very slightly to almost 24%. Similarly, the percentage of adults aged 18-64 and those 65 plus supported in the community has increased from just over 91.2% to 92.4%. This may reflect the initial impact of the council's modernisation programme.

Children

The council has drafted an inter-team case transfer policy, but the full implementation of this essential practice is yet to be achieved. There is an expectation that the quality of care plans will be reviewed during supervision and a small sample of plans will be audited quarterly by senior staff. The conference and reviewing service will have a significant role in monitoring the quality of plans. A number of independent audits of children in need cases have been undertaken, the outcome of these audits should assist senior officers with the improvement of services

A community support services strategy is under development. It is hoped that it will have a similar outcome in reducing demand for statutory services as achieved by the early intervention and prevention strategy.

The council is committed to the smooth transition of children into adult services. It has produced a draft document 'modernising transition to adulthood' which sets out the plans for a project to improve transition arrangements for young people aged 14 years.

Areas of progress

- Community gateway service which will be a single point of access for community health and social care services developed and launched Jan 2014.
- The Signposting role of the third sector within the gateway team
- Effective collaborative working across western bay to implement all aspects of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 in a consistent way.

Areas for Improvement

- To continue to monitor and evaluate processes in the community gateway.
- To ensure that public information across all service areas continues to be reviewed and updated through the access to services corporate programme.
- To develop a more effective communication format for use by carers.
- Social workers need further guidance in the consideration of risk and how information collected is validated and recorded.
- Urgently establish arrangements to audit contacts which do not proceed to referrals and referrals which result in no further action following initial assessment.
- Maintain a strong focus on work to promote the consistency in the quality of assessments.

The services provided

Adults

Key to the success of the council's modernisation programme in adult social care is the review of social work systems and practice. The knowledge, skills and capacity of staff in the assessment of service users needs, the commissioning of appropriate support packages and the support for families and communities in order to enable people to remain within those families and communities is integral to the council's vision, and its alignment to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. People are being well supported through a revised outcome focused assessment framework, which in turn is promoted by more robust supervision, quality assurance, and review framework.

The council are engaging effectively with both carers and user groups and this is helping shape a more effective and meaningful service for the users of adult social care. The council has responded well to improving the review of older peoples' needs. The dedicated team and the improvements in the use of ICT have proved effective. In 2012/13, timely reviews were completed in 76% of cases, rising to almost 82 % for 2013-14. The need for the review process to capture the outcomes achieved from packages of care and support is recognised.

The council, with its health partner, has achieved a fully integrated intermediate care service based in Cimla. The success of this project and the benefits of the approach have been recognised through CSSIW's site visit and regulatory inspection programme. Staff report that this has enabled the occupational therapy service to take a great step forward. It has improved integrated working, better links to the reablement service and improved satisfaction for users. The success of this venture and the improved outcomes for people using the service has led to the council moving swiftly to further develop community hubs.

Co-location of staff and closer working with health is well established in learning disability services. There is well developed person centred assessment and care planning, and whilst the allocation of assessments is timely, timescales can be delayed in service delivery. Integration between health and social care is also well established within mental health services. Evidence of good working, joint development and the provision of a comprehensive, holistic service has been observed by CSSIW.

The council has overseen improvements in its own homecare service and this is reflected positively in CSSIW's inspection reports. The benefits of investing in an electronic call monitoring system, the harmonisation of contracts and the continued focus on sickness management is helping the service become fit for the future. In April 2012 the council's long term residential care homes and one short term respite care home were transferred to Grwp Gwalia. This is one aspect of a 25 year partnership which will also see the development of four new care homes in the county borough over the next three years. While the council has strong contractual and management oversight arrangements in place, the partnership with Gwalia has been tested this year with the ending of the TUPE plus arrangement which governed the transfer of staff. This resulted in both the council and CSSIW receiving a number of concerns from staff and relatives of users regarding the proposed changes to staff pay and conditions planned to be implemented by Grwp Gwalia. Following negotiations, the period of protection for staff transferred from the council has been extended by a further 18 months.

An area for development last year, assistive technology continues to develop and is being included into more care packages for people with dementia and in considering the need for specialist domiciliary provision. An integrated business case has been developed which will hopefully see a major investment in assistive technology across western bay.

Children

The authority has greatly improved the ability to gather data and report on the performance of key indicators. This should put it in a stronger position to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of its children's services. The improved timeliness for the completion of both initial and core assessments is an indication that there is better management of the volume of referrals and of workflow. There has also been improvement in all but one of the other national performance indicators reported to the Welsh Government. The council is aware that the percentage of children seen by a social worker during their initial assessment has reduced from 79.2% in 2012/13 to 68.3% in 2013-14, and work is underway to improve this.

A performance and quality assurance framework has been developed and a programme of monthly audit has been introduced. The council report incremental improvements in this area. However, it needs to ensure that this process is

undertaken by all teams. The findings of the completed audits were analysed by the council and a range of both positive and negative findings emerged, which will shape service development. A new complaints' procedure has been developed. It emphasises complaint avoidance and early resolution and will be introduced from June 2014 onwards.

Areas of Progress

- The continued modernisation of in-house homecare service including electronic call monitoring and harmonisation of contracts for community care assistants.
- The integrated intermediate care service.
- The new complaints procedure.
- Overall performance and quality assurance framework.

Areas for Improvement

- To ensure the review system reflects the outcomes of support packages in order to promote independence and identify outcomes.
- The council should improve the delivery of timely assessments to determine eligibility for care and support from services for people with a learning disability.
- Ensure that all teams contribute to the quality assurance framework.
- The continued monitoring of the timeliness of assessments.

Effect on people's lives

Adults

Adult safeguarding continues to be strengthened with more targeted awareness raising and training for both external and internal partners, and improved links with the independent mental capacity advocacy service. There is increased involvement of the user and family where appropriate, with an improved follow up process which now ensures that all actions for all agencies are monitored and tracked. It is recognised that adult protection action plans need to be made more explicit. This will aid the final follow up and closure process and improve outcomes for users in the safeguarding process.

Improved links between safeguarding and care management have been established, there is wider awareness of safeguarding across service areas with contract monitoring closely involved. Deprivation of liberty safeguards awareness under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 with adult services is reported to be good. The council has specifically targeted improving understanding of the safeguards in the independent provider sector. This is hoped to be addressed by the provision of an

additional post within safeguarding which will have a responsibility to raise awareness.

CSSIW regulatory inspectors have confirmed that the effectiveness and timeliness of the response to safeguarding concerns by the review team has better protected vulnerable adults. The council's joint work with health partners in this regard is also worthy of note. The Western Bay safeguarding adult board was initiated in April 2013. All partners are reported to be strongly committed to leadership of safeguarding through the regional board.

CSSIW highlighted the carers' service as an area for observation and further evidence gathering this year and met with the leads for the council, the health board and the third sector. The carers' service has been commissioned to undertake carer's assessments on behalf of the council. There is a positive relationship developing between care management teams and the carers' service, with teams now ensuring that the provision of a carer's assessments and service is part of the package that is offered to people using adult social care. Further work to improve the uptake of assessments is necessary, but there is strong evidence of carer's involvement in the assessment of the person they care for. The service, together with the carers' champion supports regular carers' forums, holds coffee mornings and engagement events. The number of carers known to the carers' service has increased considerably with particular success in encouraging hard to reach groups to use the service.

An area of development is recognised as being with in children's services it is recognized that the level of awareness about the needs of young carers needs to be improved. Both the council and the health board have used staff events to raise awareness. Good partnership working and support is very evident. The depth and breadth of consultation with carers during the creation the strategy and its implementation is worthy of note.

An area of significant development has been the work with GP's. Funding has been made available in order to support practice managers, to receive training and awareness raising about the needs of carers. To date over 50 referrals have been received from GP's, with 14 of the 23 GP practices having completed their carers' action plan. The councils contract with the carers' service is renewed on an annual basis which is felt to have a significant impact on funding applications and staff recruitment and retention. The importance of training across all sectors is recognised. An excellent e – learning package has been adopted, and this will form part of all staff induction. Student social workers take part in carers' assessment training and focus on wider signposting to capture a range of needs not just those pertaining to health and social care.

Children

The council has developed good systems for gathering and sharing information in respect of their most vulnerable and complex children and young people. This is demonstrated through information sharing between children's services, the youth offending team and the education directorate in the development of the vulnerable assessment profile.

The percentage of child protection reviews carried out within statutory timescales has increased from 87.2% in 2012-13 to 97.5% in 2013-14.

The council has invested in training for all social workers in assessment, safeguarding, care planning and analysis with comprehensive policies and procedures being introduced. A practice improvement group has been introduced to influence the strategic direction of the service. The council has also introduced a quality assessment framework where the conference and reviewing service have a significant role in monitoring the care plans.

The looked after children inspection found that the corporate parenting panel did not provide sufficient challenge to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved for looked after children and care leavers, including the most vulnerable and challenging.

Areas of progress

- Evidence of risk assessment and the effective introduction of a risk analysis tool throughout the adult safeguarding process.
- The promotion of the role and recognition of carers across the council.
- Partnership working with education and children's safeguarding.

Areas for improvement

- The closure of safeguarding investigations, ensuring that all agencies complete their actions within the agreed timescales.
- Increasing the awareness of deprivation of liberty safeguards under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 within the provider sector.
- The recording of the offering of carers' assessments and recording what is delivered.
- The raising of awareness within children's services of the role of young carers and the service offered by the carers' service;
- To consider the impact of the current funding arrangements for the carers' service.

Capacity

Delivering Social Services

Adults

The council's modernisation of adult services was further enhanced by a programme of consultations, launched at the beginning of 2014, in order to more effectively align the ongoing transformation of adult social care with the forthcoming implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. The policy *Connecting People and Communities* was approved unanimously by the council in December 2013. This modernisation programme, together with the council's commitment to the Western Bay health and social care partnership; its integrating community services programme; and its transforming adult social care programme; are both ambitious and challenging. The commitment, knowledge, and skills of both staff and members will be essential for its delivery.

The council has in place a range of methods to receive feedback regarding its own services, which include quality assurance groups which involve carers, service user councils and groups facilitated by advocacy services. The council's registered services are subject to inspection by CSSIW. The council responds positively and in a timely way to any recommendations made.

Good progress has been made in the implementation of all parts of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010. Integrated working has been successful. Increased awareness raising, especially with GP practices, has resulted in a significant increase in referrals from that sector. Mental Health services, whilst benefiting from a committed and integrated workforce are facing a number of challenges. The incompatible ICT systems, the meeting of the target for assessment, an overall increase in referrals and a perceived dip in the quality of care and treatment plans is causing concern. However, the Measure is felt to have driven a change in culture within mental health services, with work being more outcomes focused, and more meaningful to users. This was supported by a recent service user satisfaction survey which highlighted the quality of relationships between users and social workers. It is felt that the Measure has brought more 'power' to the service and raised its profile. The work across western bay has ensured better and more consistent overall governance over the region's response to the Measure and the integrated working with health, which is again felt to be very positive.

Adult social care is able to monitor, and develop good practice across its delivery and thereby provide a responsive and timely service to vulnerable people. This is achieved by a system of case file audit, the regular review of the quality of care plans, and the utilisation of safeguarding concerns, complaints and compliments. A quality assurance panel oversees the quality assurance framework.

The council is making good progress in developing and preparing for the funding of the COASTAL projects when this initiative comes to an end in 2014. The

identification of 'naturally occurring support' within communities, the need to make progress with transport and ICT training for users are recognised as priorities in order to prepare people for these changes. The work on providing and establishing employment support for people is well advanced and staff are clearly motivated and committed to the success of future models. Currently the council is supporting over a hundred people in employment placements.

Children

The director of social services reports a "major accomplishment" in having stabilised the workforce for the past 6 months; with just over 2.7 full-time equivalent vacancies and only two long term sickness absences at the end of March 2014. Dedicated HR resource continues to provide crucial support in implementing the workforce strategy in children's services. The council reports that all new staff under go an induction appropriate to their role, and that documents to record this are now available online.

Individual learning and bespoke training programmes are being developed for staff. The council is aware that the pace of implementation needs to be increased and that all staff should be able to evidence completion of both the mandatory training and their individual learning programmes. The training needs of the conference and reviewing service have been identified as a priority because of the reconfiguration of tasks and duties amongst staff in that team and the need to raise the quality of performance. It is important that the authority evaluate how the training initiatives are making a difference to the quality of care management, including child protection.

Timeliness of supervision has improved greatly in the past 12 months, consistency and quality across children's services still needs to be achieved. The roles and responsibilities of deputy team managers and consultant social workers, particularly in relation to supervision of staff, are under review.

Areas of progress

- Planning and development of service models after COASTAL.
- Implementation of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.

Areas for improvement

- The council, with its health partner, will need to consider the challenges facing its mental health service following the implementation of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.
- The consistency and quality of supervision in children's services;
- To evaluate the effectiveness of staff training on work practice.

Providing direction

The council recognises that social services have embarked on an ambitious and challenging programme of transformation on a number of fronts, and is making sound progress. This is against a background of legislative change being brought about by the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the financial challenges facing all councils this year. The support and commitment of members, senior officers and staff in achieving this transformation of services will be key to achieving success. The evidence from the work carried out by CSSIW through its inspection activity, site visits, regulatory inspection work and engagement with staff, all suggest that the necessary support and commitment to respond to future challenges is in place.

The post of director of social services remains as a fixed term appointment, to be reviewed in 2016. The continued stability and strong leadership within adult social care has ensured significant progress in the transformation programme, the integration of services with health and the collaborative working within Western Bay.

The director has confirmed the continuing corporate support for the improvement of children's services and elected Members remain committed to improving outcomes for children and young people. The council has continued to provide support for the budget in children's services. The council continues to implement the strategic improvement plan for children's services which was developed following CSSIW invoking the serious concerns protocol in 2012.

The council has made good progress in stabilising the workforce and significantly improving timeliness of children's services core business. There will need to be a continued focus on sustaining this progress. The authority should not lose sight of the need to evaluate the extent to which its actions are resulting in improved practice and better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Areas of progress

- The support and commitment of members, senior officers and staff in achieving the transformation of adult services.
- The continued stability and strong leadership within adult social care.
- The stabilisation of the workforce and the improving timeliness of children's service's core business.

Areas for improvement

- To continue to develop the strong corporate and political support to drive modernisation and to respond effectively to the requirements of the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.