

Improving Social Care in Monmouthshire

Director's Annual Report 2011
Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Our Annual Report describes how well we have delivered services in the past year and our priorities for improvement in 2011/12. It is a really important document that ensures we are accountable for the services we deliver.

The Direction for Social Services in Monmouthshire

The purpose of our service is to support people to live safe and fulfilled lives within their communities. We want to make sure that people who use social services:

- Are clear about what is on offer and find it easy to access advice and support
- Feel safe and have confidence in services
- Have more control and choice over the services they receive
- Feel part of their community and take more responsibility for themselves
- Experience more joined up services



We are determined to improve services despite the difficult financial climate and recognise that we can only deliver excellent social care by working well with others and ensuring that the focus of the whole organisation must be on the strengths and needs of the individual as illustrated in the diagram on the left of this page. We will judge ourselves and be judged on the difference we make to people's lives.

How well are we doing?

Children's Services

The last twelve months has seen us get a lot busier. The number of referrals to Children's Services increased by 80% from 739 to 1343. Despite the increased workload we are dealing with over 98% of referrals within one working day.

We have changed the way in which our teams work. Rather than a north/south split we now have one team that focuses on early involvement and assessment and another focusing on longer term support for children and families. Assessment is the first stage in helping vulnerable children and families. We exceeded our target by carrying out 76% of Initial Assessments within 7 working days.

Like all local authorities we carry out Core Assessments when children are subject to child protection procedures, become looked after or have more complex needs. We more than doubled the amount of Core Assessments we completed but the timeliness declined slightly with only 58% of these being completed within our target of 35 working days.

Safeguarding vulnerable children is one of Monmouthshire's three corporate priorities and we are fortunate to enjoy good working arrangements with our colleagues in The Police. Our key performance indicators show that the timeliness of our child protection work has improved over the past year. For example only one child protection conference was held outside the agreed timescale while all of the 145 child protection reviews that were held were carried out on time.

Sadly there was a tragic death of a young child in Monmouthshire in the autumn of 2010. A serious case review has been carried out by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and we will ensure that all recommendations are implemented.



We continue to work hard to ensure that only those children most at need are taken into local authority care with effective family support services. The number of children looked after has been relatively stable over the past 12 months. All children who have been looked after receive consistent support from qualified social workers.

We have been working to reduce our use of costly external foster placements and are planning more work on a regional basis. This means that more children are able to stay within Monmouthshire. We have increased the allowances paid to foster carers to make sure we can recruit and retain the right people. However a recent CSSIW Inspection report noted that there is still work to be done to improve this service to provide, amongst other things, better advice, support and training

Our annual Pride Awards helps celebrate the achievements of children in care. We run quarterly Independence workshops to support those who are about to leave care and continue to support them for up to six years after leaving care.

We have developed a shared adoption service with Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils. This will help us to improve post adoption support and services to birth parents.

Our Youth Offending Team is also run jointly with Torfaen. Its aim is to prevent offending and re-offending. The service recently received a positive inspection report and was assessed as having a committed and competent staff team with good prospects for the future.

Over the past year much progress has been made in improving service delivery and making it more consistent. We consider services to be

safe and mainly good and we will now focus our attention on improving outcomes for children and young people.

How well are we doing?

Adult Services

Adult services work with over 2000 vulnerable people. Over the past year we have focused particularly on closer working with the Health service to make sure that peoples receive a better and more co-ordinated service through the new Gwent Frailty Project.

In 2010-11 we saw an increase in the number of people delayed in hospital because social care arrangements were not in place but are still well within our agreed targets. However the made significant improvements on the timeliness of our service user reviews.



Our Short Term Assessment and Reablement Teams act quickly to help people at times of crisis. Around half of the 500 people who used this service last year regained their independence within 6 to 8 weeks.

We have set up a new home care service for people with dementia and re-tendered for independent domiciliary care providers to improve quality and get better value for money. A review of Mardy Park Resource Centre will see it transform into a health and social care hub for older people in the Abergavenny area.

There have been a number of developments for people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments including creating a multi-agency planning forum for sensory impairment and increasing the number of services delivered to people with Asperger's Syndrome.

Over the past year we have completed a review of services for people with learning disabilities. The changes are being developed around themes of My Day; My Work; My Home and My Parent Carer. A new flexible respite care model has been developed and we are working with all providers to improve day services value for money. Throughout these changes satisfaction levels have remained high amongst this client group.

A number of service changes for people with mental health problems have been delivered including new collaborative Home Treatment Services. We will move to a more integrated approach with Health in 2011-12.

Carers play a crucial role in supporting people with health and social care needs and over the past year we have been working with them to develop our carers strategy. Alongside this we have continued to deliver assessments and informal support to carers across the county.

The protection of vulnerable people is one of the council's priorities and we have continued to manage increasing numbers of complex investigations including managing the closure of two independently run homes where that been escalating concerns. We have also set up a multi-agency group to share information and ensure early intervention in the protection of vulnerable adults.

Through times of change it is important to keep an eye on the quality of services. In 2010-11 close to a thousand users and carers responded to our community care questionnaire and it is pleasing to see that satisfaction remains above 90%. However we need to continually monitor our performance in key areas and build engagement with service users into everything we do. In summary services for adults are considered to be safe and mainly good.

How well are we doing?

Organisational Capacity

During times of change it is important to show the leadership and organisational capacity to deliver high quality services and provide the direction to shape new services.

It is a difficult time for social services as we face budget reductions and demographic pressures caused by an ageing population. It is however pleasing that the Council has identified support for vulnerable people as one of three priorities alongside education and enterprise which is an illustration of our leadership at officer and political level.

We have a 'can-do' attitude and work well with our partners. We have a good culture of staff supervision. Sickness levels have reduced and there has been a significant reduction in turnover in children's services in the past year.

We produce a range of reports to help us manage our services but must do more to publicise our standards and make our monitoring information available to the people who use our services. Although we have some concerns with our social services data systems we are benefitting from the Shared Resource Service that has been created with Torfaen Council and Gwent Police

The coming year will not be an easy one. On balance we have the caliber of staff, the strong corporate and departmental leadership and productive relationships with partners that will enable us to continue to improve services. In the words of a Chinese Proverb "When the strong winds blow some people build shelters, others build windmills."

Our priorities for Improvement in 2011-12



We have produced detailed reports for children, adults and organisational issues. These have more detail on the priorities for improvement listed below as well as a range of other improvements.

We used our website and the local press to consult staff, partners and citizens about our priorities for improvement. This found widespread agreement that the following areas were the correct priorities for social services.

1. Implementing the Frailty Programme to ensure health and social care services act quickly and in a co-ordinated way to keep people independent
2. Improving Access, Quality and Responsiveness within Children's Services
3. Integrating Mental Health services to provide a consistent and high quality service
4. Protecting vulnerable children and adults from harm
5. Developing social work practice
6. Strengthening the fostering service
7. Restructure our commissioning team to improve the range, value for money and quality of services we buy from other providers
8. Implementing the review of learning disability services
9. Establishing the joint adoption service
10. Engaging at a national and regional level to take forward the findings of the Sustainable Social Services for Wales report.

The full report can be downloaded from www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/socialservicesreport. To keep up to date with our progress and all the latest news about our services visit our website www.monmouthshire.gov.uk or follow us on Twitter @MonmouthshireCC