

Organisational Capacity Overview

This is the first Organisational Capacity Overview report produced as part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework for Social Services. This aspect of the report focuses on the generic elements of delivering social services plus crosscutting organisational issues that also impact on services.

The evaluation is based on a range of information including performance indicators, anecdotal evidence, inspections and feedback from users and carers.

Each area is evaluated in terms of how we think we are doing followed by identification of priorities for improvement. There are overlaps between areas and issues and so some repetition is present.

Performance Management and Quality Assurance

Our aim is to have a robust performance management framework that is understood and embedded across the directorate that supports continuous improvement.

We produce a range of performance reports including information on key services, performance indicators, complaints and customer feedback, plus specific feedback derived from our Community Care questionnaires. Performance reports are reviewed at regular quarterly and 6 monthly intervals by the Directorate Management Team and Select Committee. In addition, Group Managers in Adult Care have quarterly budget and performance management team meetings and Children's Services are increasingly acting on performance information a significant gap that has been addressed by the new Head of Service.

We have a quality assurance framework that seeks to bring together relevant information to assist in service improvement and development that is reviewed six monthly by DMT. DMT take action in response to performance information received but a performance management culture has not yet been fully embedded across the directorate ie so that consistently annual appraisals are linked to service, directorate and organisational objectives/outcomes.

Select Committee's scrutiny of performance has become more focussed, particularly the scrutiny provided through the Children and Young People's Select Committee, whilst not directly altering practice it is applying pressure that may be contributing to a "Hawthorne" effect on performance in that the fact Children's Services are being examined regularly, is driving improvement.

The local authority has a performance management framework that clearly aligns organisational and individual objectives. However, whilst staff acknowledge that the organisation has a vision they are not always able to articulate it.

Within the directorate there is a strong culture of staff supervision and appraisal although the former is more consistently applied. In addition poor performance, where identified, is addressed through the supervision and appraisal process.

We have corporate Customer Care Standards that are published and monitor performance against them, however we do not tell our citizens how well or how badly we are doing and improvement actions are inconsistently applied.

We actively encourage users to tell us what they think about our services and we have a designated complaints officer who is engaged in raising the profile of complaints within the directorate and improving the way we deal with them. A customer feedback report is produced for DMT on a quarterly basis. However, although recommendations for improvements are made following a complaints investigation, these are not always consistently actioned.

Individual comments received via the Community Care questionnaire are followed up by the Customer Relations Manager and improvement actions are identified as a result.

We are starting to introduce an outcome based approach to performance management, building on the existing outcome based approach to planning that already exists.

Judgement

We have a sound approach to improving our performance and have the foundations in place to support a performance management culture within the directorate. However, we need to ensure that all the elements are knitted together and embedded within the directorate in order that service improvement and development is continuous and linked to the delivery of Citizen Centred outcomes.

Requires significant improvement	Inconsistent	Mainly good with some gaps	Well established and effective across the board
		✓	

Priorities for Improvement

- Develop an outcome based Accountability Performance Management framework to include work with partners.
- Strengthen the links between individual performance and service performance through use of the Annual Employee Review scheme.
- Aim to identify and publish standards for all services. Provide feedback to users on actual performance and any actions required.

Information Systems Management

We have a range of systems that are used across the directorate to capture information about the services we deliver. The main information system used to capture data relative to community care and Children's Services is SWIFT. A number of other systems are used to monitor community meals, protection of vulnerable adults and youth offending as these cannot be accommodated on SWIFT. As with any information system the information produced relies on the data input and whilst we have significantly improved in this area, improvements can still be made. Currently, the balance of time spent imputing data compared to dealing with service users is an issue that frustrates staff.

We are in a consortium with 5 other local authorities who also use the SWIFT platform and have identified 80 common processes and have as part of the consortium successfully implemented the integrated Children's system and we are moving forward with implementing the Unified Assessment process. Our work with the consortium also includes the Interconnect project which is looking at how we can share information between authorities in the first instance, followed by health and other partner agencies. Whilst the project is still in its infancy it is testament to the success of the consortium in that we continue to work together successfully.

We use the SWIFT database in conjunction with business objects as our main data/reporting tool. The system is also used by some of our colleagues in health and the voluntary sector to deliver more seamless services.

We continue to review our systems to ensure that they operate as efficiently as possible. A recent project used lean techniques to identify ways to improve the provider payment process. The project resulted in the creation of an E-form which, when fully implemented will remove a significant amount of unnecessary waste from the system.

Judgement

Whilst we have a range of systems in place to generate the information, we need the balance of input v output to be improved so that our systems support practice more effectively.

Requires significant improvement	Inconsistent	Mainly good with some gaps	Well established and effective across the board
		✓	

Priorities for Improvement

- Implement Unified Assessment process.
- Review systems to identify improvements, particularly around ICS and debt recovery.

Workforce Management and Development

Our aim is to have a workforce that is fit for purpose to deliver quality services.

Corporately all new employees are given the opportunity to undertake an induction to the organisation and its main policies and procedures. Specific training is offered to support the induction. However, take up is inconsistent.

The authority has a corporate training plan which has been developed in response to identified needs. We have developed E-learning capability which is currently being launched within the organisation and this provides the opportunity to ensure that a range of skills and knowledge can be consistently embedded across the organisation.

The annual staff conference focussed on becoming a learning organisation where innovation, creativity and risk taking were encouraged in order to improve and develop services. A Bright Ideas scheme is in operation to encourage innovation, however not all staff feel empowered to do so.

Within the directorate we have responsibility to develop the workforce both within the organisation and within the independent sector. There is a requirement for certain staff groups to attain various qualifications and these are being successfully delivered and maintained, (INSERT current qualification levels) although due to the high turnover in the independent sector this is more difficult. Foster care training continues to be an area where we cannot improve take up, however, we continue to look for solutions to improve the situation.

Basic skills needs have been identified in some areas and training has been developed to assist in ensuring people have the basic skills needed to do their jobs.

A social care workforce development plan is produced every year and social care staff have individual staff development pathways. This workforce development plan covers issues of qualification requirements and attainment. However, broader workforce planning is ad hoc and linked to specific service developments for example upskilling our home care staff to deliver a more targeted service directed at more personalised needs. Succession planning is not practised and whilst we are aware of the problems that recruitment to certain posts presents, plus the problem that an aging home care workforce creates, actions taken to address the issues are reactive and could be improved through improved workforce planning.

Staff sickness across the directorate has varied between 6-8.5% and we are working much more closely with occupational health to ensure that staff on long term illness return to work as quickly as possible. Turnover has increased to 16.8% overall and we have experienced significant problems, this year, within Children's Services in being unable to recruit to key roles. Turnover this year being 17.9%, a problem we have not encountered previously.

Judgement

Overall, the directorate aim of ensuring we have a workforce that is fit for purpose is being met.

Requires significant improvement	Inconsistent	Mainly good with some gaps	Well established and effective across the board
		✓	

Priorities for Improvement

- Continuing to proactively address sickness.
- Develop workforce planning processes.
- Ensure Annual Appraisals are completed within set timescales each year and are linked to our outcome based performance management system.

Resources

We operate a devolved approach to budget management and tighter control has been evidenced through less variation between forecast expenditure and actual expenditure.

In terms of budget setting and financial planning, we have a corporate Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which covers the period 2010/11 to 2012/13. Evidence based pressures within Social Services are identified and considered corporately for additional funding within the planning process.

Each year we produce a budget plan in terms of how we plan to bring the budget into line with our funding allocation. We operate commitment accounting in order to improve the financial control and ensure we remain within budget.

We aim to improve efficiency and value for money wherever we can as demonstrated by the intended move to a flat rate for domiciliary care plus utilising geographic information to group services to minimise mileage costs.

Pressures continue to exist within some areas, namely, the Children's Services specialist placement budget and also the Adult Services budget. Within Adult Services we are reviewing and developing services to ensure that they support independence and provide better value for money where possible in partnership with health and other local authorities.

The areas of overspend impacting on this year's budget will be partially addressed through some additional funding for specialist placements, learning difficulties and demographic and above inflationary fee increases as part of the MTFP. However, robust control of expenditure will be required to ensure we remain within budget.

Judgement

We have a good record of sound financial management. However, with increasing external funding pressures this needs to continue and we must look for more cost effective ways of meeting needs and delivering services.

Requires significant improvement	Inconsistent	Mainly good with some gaps	Well established and effective across the board
		✓	

Priorities for Improvement

- To identify more efficient ways of delivering services where possible through collaboration and partnership work.
- To introduce debt recovery procedures for cost centre managers.

Leadership, Culture, Management Structure and Corporate and Political Support

We have a directorate structure which aims to clarify roles and responsibilities across the directorate with clearly recognised leadership provided by the directorate's management team. There is a strong culture of supervision and annual appraisal that makes links between individual, directorate and corporate aims and objectives. We have a good track record of working in partnership and we always consider working collaboratively to achieve benefits for citizens whenever possible.

Staff within the directorate are generally well motivated and morale is good, although the corporate restructure that is about to commence, led by the new Chief Executive, plus the impending implementation of job evaluation and a move to agile working, means that staff are anxious about what the future holds.

We have completed and partially completed reviews of day activities, domiciliary care and direct care, all of which will lead to changes in structure to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. The reviews have been undertaken sensitively and effectively project managed within limited resources to deliver the necessary changes.

The changes have been well supported by the Executive Member for Adult Care, who continues to fly the flag for social care within the political arena. However, the Executive Member is due to step down after an extensive period which will leave a significant knowledge gap with the executive. In addition, we more recently have an Executive Member specific to Children, who has responsibility for children from an educational and social care perspective.

Historically, scrutiny has not been very effective. However, we now have designated scrutiny support in place and improvements are beginning to be seen with scrutiny inquiry focussing on aspects of both Adults' and Children's services.

Judgement

The authority is in a period of significant change and the directorate has responded positively to this and to the continued resourcing pressures that impact on it. Within this context the directorate has managed to develop and implement significant service reconfiguration aimed at delivering better quality cost effective services.

Requires significant improvement	Inconsistent	Mainly good with some gaps	Well established and effective across the board
		✓	

Priorities for Improvement

- To manage the impact of the corporate restructure, the move to agile working and the implementation of job evaluation to ensure that service continuity is maintained.
- To ensure that social care remains high on the political agenda, given that the current Executive Member will be stepping down after a significant period of representation.
- To ensure that the Medium Term pressures that will impact on the service are identified, evidenced and inform the MTFP.

Equality and Diversity

We aim to ensure that our services are fully accessible. Our public information can be provided in multiple formats, our website is fully accessible to people with a visual impairment and all our One Stop Shops are fully DDA compliant.

The number of ethnic minority groups within Monmouthshire is very low and hence, there is a low representation of ethnic minority groups amongst the workforce. We provide basic staff training for those employees who have a need in this area and we have a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled people who meet the person specification.

We have 2 established social enterprises in place for people with learning disability and we support requests from Scope and similar organisations, to support work placement opportunities.

We are currently using the future jobs fund to offer employment opportunities to unemployed 16-24 year olds and we are developing a scheme to offer employment to young people who have been in the Looked After system.

We recently received praise from Sense for our services for people with a deaf/blind impairment and have developed a transition service for people with learning disabilities.

Whilst we no longer expect staff to retire before 65, we are now supporting requests for flexible retirement opportunities, thereby ensuring that valuable experience is not lost and staff can continue to work appropriately.

We have effectively provided services to a dramatic increase in Asylum Seekers that have become our responsibility

Judgement

We have a range of facilities and services that seek to ensure equality of access and delivery. However, we need to continue to develop these.

Requires significant improvement	Inconsistent	Mainly good with some gaps	Well established and effective across the board
		✓	

Priorities for Improvement

- To implement an employment scheme for young people leaving the Looked After system.
- To provide employment opportunities to other disadvantaged groups.
- To identify the numbers of ethnic minority groups that are employed in the independent sector.

Commissioning

The aim of our commissioning team is to review, respond to and commission services that meet the needs of our citizens by working in partnership with key stakeholders, including community groups and, most importantly, the citizens themselves.

We have an integrated health and social care planning and commissioning team which has strong links with public health and the voluntary sector.

The team have been successful in developing locality profiles for children and young people and we are engaged with public health in developing the Frailty Project.

We recognise the significant contribution that carers make and we aim to support them as much as possible and have developed a number of specific projects to support their needs.

We aim to ensure that we maximise value for money however whilst we undertake strategic reviews they have to date been bounded by historical budgets that have grown incrementally. Our approach to tender and contracting is outcome focused. We have led work across Gwent to develop a holistic contract monitoring reporting framework for nursing care homes and domiciliary care agencies. We look to involve users and carers whenever possible and have some good examples of their involvement.

Requires significant improvement	Inconsistent	Mainly good with some gaps	Well established and effective across the board
		✓	

Priorities for Improvement

- To cross reference multiple needs assessments to better inform commissioning practise.
- To ensure that team members keep pace with developments around commissioning.
- To continue to develop our user and carer involvement practices so that they become embedded within the commissioning services.
- To align the allocation of budgets to meet specific needs and not historical funding patterns.