

# Social Services - Annual Council Reporting Programme

## Frequently asked Questions (FAQs)

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### 1. What is the purpose of the project?

- ADSS Cymru and the Social Services Policy Group of the WLGA has decided that each social services authority in Wales will produce an Annual Report, showing how the full range of social services for adults, children and families is delivered
- It will include assessments of performance in terms of both statistical indicators and qualitative measures and will pay particular attention to the views of service users and the wider community (softer measures)
- The report will include the authority's priorities for improvement action and clear plans to deliver them
- Producing a report is only one part of the exercise. The various activities proposed will strengthen all aspects of operational practice and performance management

### 2. Why is the reporting framework being introduced?

- FLSC sets out the need for authorities themselves to report on their own performance and includes this as a core responsibility of the director. (pages 16 and 25). This fits within the overarching framework for local authority performance reporting. Robust reporting arrangements will also link in to the modernised framework for local authority social services Inspection, review and evaluation being proposed by CSSIW,
- This reflects the growing emphasis on local accountability, greater maturity in relations between councils and regulators and improved arrangements by authorities for local performance management
- The authority will produce its own Annual Report on Performance, and will give CSSIW the opportunity to comment on their assessment during drafting. The report will provide core evidence for CSSIW in the development of the authorities inspection and review plan.

### 3. Who is responsible for the report?

- The Report will be brought together by the person holding the statutory role of Director of Social Services in each authority and will reflect their remit across the full range of social services, but will require strong input from all those with senior management responsibility for the services
- There will of course be arrangements for the full Council to approve the document and for elected Members and the corporate management team to contribute. In particular there will be opportunities for challenge and scrutiny at key stages

#### 4. How is the approach being developed?

- ADSS Cymru and WLGA Social Services Policy Group (SSPG) through the SSIA, are working with WAG and CSSIW to develop the approach, involving other partners as necessary
- Structured project oversight arrangements have been agreed, and a Programme Board, including representatives from these agencies, is responsible for delivery. The Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA) has the project management role
- The Programme Board has agreed that the approach should be developed in 2 "pilot" authorities in 2008/9 and "rolled out" to all authorities the following year. In addition, consultants have been appointed to support the two pilots and to draw up recommendations for the extension to all authorities
- Torfaen and Wrexham are the two authorities selected and SCP Consult the appointed consultants

#### 5. When will all this happen?

- The two pilots are committed to producing their pilot Annual Reports by July 2009, with detailed work started in September 2008. It is intended that work for the project planning will fit in as far as possible with existing authority business planning, budget preparation and decision making processes
- Under current plans, all authorities will follow a similar timetable the following year, from September 2009 onwards, producing their first full round of reports in the late summer of 2010;
- This timescale will be closely monitored by the SSIA who will advise the Programme Board of any necessary issues or adjustments needed, based on lessons learned in the pilots

#### 6. "Producing a report is only one part of the exercise". What else is involved?

- The consultants have recommended three streams of activity:
  - producing an overview report
  - establishing an evidence trail
  - refining business planning systems to support the process
- They have set out their ideas in a draft "toolkit" to assist the pilot authorities in their work. Once it has been tested for practicality and refined, it will be circulated more widely
- The "report" may in fact cover a range of material, including a brief version intended for the wider stakeholder community, with more detailed information in different formats, for example on the internet.
- require strong input from all those with senior management responsibility for the services
- There will of course be arrangements for the full Council to approve the document and for elected Members and the corporate

management team to contribute. In particular there will be opportunities for challenge and scrutiny at key stages

- However, authorities will be encouraged to focus on the top priorities for improvement in any year (strategic objectives). They will be expected to make judgements based on clear evidence
- This will be drawn from the "evidence trail" and the pilots will explore how the relevant information can be obtained, stored and analysed. Information technology will assist this task, and the pilot authorities will be exploring the fitness for purpose of their current systems, and the scope for using new approaches
- CSSIW are keen to promote the Ffynnon system as a suitable IT tool, and Data Unit Wales who host the system, will be conducting a parallel development programme to support the Ffynnon pilot activity and subsequent rollout process.
- The refinement of business planning systems may prove to be the element of most lasting value to each authority. It provides the vehicle for securing improved performance across the organisation, with commitment at all levels and opportunities for other partners and stakeholders to engage at key stages

#### 7. How will CSSIW discharge their regulatory role?

- CSSIW will consult on a new framework for local authority social services inspection, evaluation and review in November.

The new framework will deliver a proportionate and integrated approach to the inspection, evaluation and review of local authority social services and;-

- i) the authority themselves will report annually on progress and outcomes and their plan for improvement.
- ii) the Inspectorate will undertake a review and analysis of evidence underpinning the annual report including evidence from other inspectors and regulators.
- iii) the analysis will result in an individual Inspection and Review Plan for each authority.

- The Inspection and Review plan for each authority will be proportionate to the needs of citizens, service users and carers and the strengths and areas for improvement identified. It will deploy a range of inspection and review methodologies such as document review, file analysis, surveys, meetings, focus groups and observation of practice. These will be packaged to deliver the necessary level of public assurance and this will range from a short reality checking programme to a full service review..

However there will always be a minimum level of fieldwork in each authority in every year. This will be delivered through a short

- **fieldwork programme** - minimum three days - designed to provide a focussed 'reality check'
- As a first step, it has been agreed in principle that the pilot Annual Reports will have headings similar to the service "domains" used by CSSIW.

8. You said you will "pay particular attention to the views of service users and the wider community". How will you do this?

- We recognise that meaningful engagement with people may be a significant challenge and that more work needs to be done in this area. The work in the pilot authorities will therefore provide a foundation for further development rather than a fully developed approach
- Data Unit Wales will support authorities in surveying their service users and carers as well as reviewing routine monitoring of service delivery if required.
- We have already found some useful initiatives in the pilot authorities and are keen to learn from the experience of other authorities in drawing up recommendations for future years

