WAO Annual Improvement Report 2017 - 2018

Flintshire County Council Local Reports (excluding the Annual Improvement Report and Certificates of compliance with the Local Government Measure)

Reflecting on Year One: How Have Public Bodies Responded to the Well-being of Future Generations - Published: May 2018

http://www.audit.wales/publication/reflecting-year-one

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement.	None required	N/A

Wales Audit Office - National Studies

Savings Planning in Councils in Wales – Published: May 2017

http://www.audit.wales/publication/savings-planning-councils-wales

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement, although proposals for improvement were included in local reports issued to each Council.	None required	N/A

Public Procurement in Wales - Published: October 2017

http://www.audit.wales/publication/public-procurement-wales

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
The report contained seven recommendations. Six of the recommendations were for the Welsh		
Government, one of the recommendations was for public bodies:	The Procurement Strategy is currently being reviewed with the aim of a revised	
R3 It was clear from our sampling that some procurement strategies are out of date and there has also been a mixed response to new policy and legislation, such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.	and updated strategy being adopted by the end of March 2019. The Strategy	Green
We recommend that public bodies review their procurement strategies and policies during 2017-18 and on an annual basis thereafter to ensure that they reflect wider policy and legislative changes and support continuous improvement.	will be considered by CROSC prior to Cabinet endorsement.	

Good governance when determining significant service changes – National Summary - Published: October 2017 www.audit.wales/publication/good-governance-when-determining-significant-service-changes

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement, although proposals for improvement were included in local reports issued to each Council. The report was designed primarily to provide insight, share existing practice and prompt further conversations and discussions between councils and other organisations.	None required	N/A

Local Government Financial Reporting 2016 -17 - Published: December 2017

http://www.audit.wales/publication/local-government-financial-reporting-201617

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement.	None required	N/A

http://www.audit.wales/publication/how-local-government-manages-demand-homelessness

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
R1 Implementing the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to develop services which are focussed on preventing homelessness and reducing demand. These are very different to traditional casework led homelessness services, and prevention work requires new skills and early interaction with users and potential users. We found local authorities' progress in revising and strengthening services is variable (paragraphs 1.12 to 1.20). We recommend that local authorities: - 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.	Currently have The Wallich working with the team one day per week to provide specialist mediation. The Wallich are a Homeless Charity that receive funding from Welsh Government to provide mediation for Flintshire Residents facing homelessness. Training for FCC staff in this area to commence 2019/20 Ongoing – A number of reviews are ongoing into the provision of services to increase engagement. We have a Planned Outreach Worker Pilot to commence Q4 2018/19 to increase engagement with rough sleepers and also clients accessing emergency bed provision. We are also implementing a Housing Solutions Pilot to deliver a more joined up service for clients with multiple and complex needs. This is planned to commence in 19/20.	Amber
R2 The Welsh Government provided funding to support local authorities to implement the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and this funding has been critical in enabling new preventative services to be developed. The funding is in place until 2019-20 but authorities need to ensure they use headspace provided by these resources to revise teir services to deliver their responsibilities in the future (paragraphs 1.21 to 1.28). We recommend that local authorities review their 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.	To be completed as part of restructure currently underway. SP Funding is currently used to support delivery.	Amber
R3 How services are configured and managed at the first point of contact can significantly influence how effective local authorities are in managing and reducing demand. Easy to access services which maximise usage, avoid gate keeping and focus on early solutions can significantly improve the prospects for successful	Housing Intervention Pilot commenced in September 2018. This team consists of income officers and support workers	Amber

http://www.audit.wales/publication/how-local-government-manages-demand-homelessness

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
homelessness prevention. We found that some authority point of entry systems are poorly designed which reduces the authority's prospects for early intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring (paragraphs 2.4 to 2.11). We recommend that local authorities: - 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; and - test the effectiveness of first point of contact services to ensure they are fit for purpose.	working together to identify and tackle rent arrears at an early stage and put support in place to address and enable tenants to sustain their tenancies and reduce the risk of becoming homeless. This pilot has been successful and will be rolled out further in 2019/20. Triage service has been in place since 2015. A review this year has identified some changes to provide improvements and more consistency to this service and a pilot of new working methods will be in place Q4 2018/19.	O. Cartaro
R4 Establishing clear standards of service that set out what the authority provides and is responsible for is critical to ensuring people know what they are entitled to receive and what they need to resolve themselves. We found that authorities are not always providing clear, concise and good quality information to help guide people to find the right advice quickly and efficiently (paragraphs 2.12 to 2.17). 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 standards should: - 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	Service standards are currently being developed and will be implemented 2019/20.	Amber

http://www.audit.wales/publication/how-local-government-manages-demand-homelessness

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
R5 Local authorities need to design services to engage with service users effectively and efficiently, but current standards are too variable to ensure service users are getting access to the advice they need (paragraphs 2.18 to 2.24). To improve current performance we recommend that local authorities make better use of their websites to help manage demand by: - 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; and — - linking more effectively to information from specialist providers and advice specialists, such as Citizens Advice	Website content currently under review to ensure information is up to date, easy read and customer friendly. Triage service to be made available online in 2019/20 Corporate customer portal being introduced in 2019/20. Plans are to include access to housing and homeless applications further down the line, likely to be 2020.	Amber
R6 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduces a new duty on social services and housing associations to collaborate with local authority homelessness services in preventing homelessness. We found that these arrangements are not operating effectively and service responses to prevent homelessness and assist homeless people are not always being provided, nor are they consistently effective (paragraphs 3.13 to 3.25). 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.	A number of collaborative projects already in place including: • Integrated Young Person Team (Dedicated Social Services and Homeless Officers) • Early Help Hub – Housing, Police, Health and Social Services • Specialist housing Group – Social Housing providers across the county, housing representatives and social services. Continuation of reviews and identification of wider opportunities to work more effectively in partnership will continue throughout 2019/20	Amber

http://www.audit.wales/publication/how-local-government-manages-demand-homelessness

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
R7 Local authorities monitoring systems and evaluation approaches to ensure compliance with their responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty are not working as well as they should (paragraph 3.35 to 3.39). 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.	ICT developments currently underway to capture more equalities data at first point of contact. Due to be implemented Q4 2018/19. Further work is required and has been built into the Council's Strategic Equality plan to ensure progress is monitored.	Amber
R8 Managing demand can be challenging for local authorities. There are some clear lessons to be learnt with regard to the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and homelessness prevention duties that can be applied to managing demand in other services (paragraphs 4.24 to 4.27). 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 can help manage demand.	Checklist completed and will be used to inform priorities for 2019/20	Green

Housing Adaptations - Published: February 2018

http://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
The report contained eight recommendations. One of the recommendations was for the Welsh Government,		
seven of the recommendations were for local authorities and/or delivery organisations		
R2 Most public bodies are clear on how their work on adaptations can positively impact on disabled and	There is currently a monthly monitoring	
older people, and have set suitable aims that provide focus for action. For adaptations, having the right	meeting chaired by Flintshire Council's	Green
strategic goals also establishes a clear basis for decision-making on who should be prioritised for services and	Regeneration Team and attended by	0.00
how and where to use resources. However, we found that current policy arrangements have a number of	Occupational therapists, Flintshire's social	
deficiencies and public bodies are not maximising the benefit of their investment (paragraphs 3.8 to 3.15).	housing allocations team and Care and	

Housing Adaptations - Published: February 2018 http://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
Ve 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: - 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; and - linking the system for managing and delivering adaptations with adapted housing policies and registers to make best use of already adapted homes	Repair North East Wales. It was agreed that these meetings would be expanded in April/May 2019 to establish a new Housing Adaptations Best Practice Group (HABPG) for the Flintshire Authority area. The new group meetings will include all our partner agencies who are delivering Adaptions, sharing best practice, monitoring timescales, capacity etc. Care and Repair North East Wales currently have a member on the Welsh Governments steering groups on Enable Adaptations and will provide support ensuring outcomes are in line with WG's agendas. Cases are reviewed to provide the best possible outcome for the referrer.	Status
	Partnering is currently taking place with Care and Repair North East Wales completing some of the Enable adaptations on behalf of the Flintshire Council.	
R3 Ensuring that all those who might need an adaptation have all the information they need in order to apply for and receive an adaptation is important. Good-quality and accessible information is therefore essential for delivery organisations to demonstrate fair access and transparency. However, we identified weaknesses in the quality and coverage of public information relating to housing adaptations (paragraphs 2.6 to 2.15).	The new group will investigate the option to co-produce information, providing a consistent approach and message to the public.	Green
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.	A service user group will be engaged through Care and Repair to discuss content and ease of use Invites are prepared for the new Housing	

Housing Adaptations - Published: February 2018 http://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations		
Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
	Adaptations best practice group	
	A Draft Agenda has been prepared	
	Pre-meeting feedback will be requested to ensure the aims of the new group are understood.	
R4 Given the wide number of routes into services, delivery organisations need to ensure they have robust systems to deal effectively and quickly with applications. However, we found that the processes used by delivery organisations vary widely and often create difficulties for disabled and older people seeking assistance (paragraphs 2.16 to 2.19).	A single streamline application form will be discussed at the new Best Practice Group	Green
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.	A recent review has taken place of Flintshire County Councils own delivery methods and application forms, the results of the review will be shared within the new group. Care and Repair North East Wales are currently looking to resource a new data base with the option to include an online portal.	
R5 Delivery of adaptations can be delayed by a variety of factors (paragraphs 2.20 to 2.33).	Flintshire Council would welcome any	
To improve timeliness in delivery we recommend that: - the Welsh Government reviews whether local authorities should continue to use the means test for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs);	additional funding Welsh government could provide, such as an increased Enable provision, to support the removal of	Green
 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 	means testing. As part of the HABPG we will look into the support required for the DFG application	
require approvals; - delivery organisations use Trusted Assessors to undertake less complex adaptation assessments;	process. Home visits are being investigated as part of a learning visit to neighbouring	
and - the Welsh Government streamlines its approval processes for Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs).	authorities to share good practice Care and Repair have also offered to support	

Housing Adaptations - Published: February 2018 http://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations **Proposal For Improvement Progress** Response **Status** the process by completing home visits and operate as trusted assessors for less complex cases. HABPG will look at the College of Occupational therapists' guidelines for best practice "Minor Adaptations without delay " which is currently due to be updated this year. The Benefits section of Flintshire County Council have recently had part of the application process transferred to them to ease means testing and information gathering R6 Most local authorities, housing associations and Care and Repair agencies have established processes to This will be discussed at the HABPG appoint, oversee and manage builder and/or contractor performance. However, we found wide variations in Meetings and a common process Green how delivery organisations arrange, contract and deliver building works (paragraphs 2.37 to 2.44). developed for Flintshire as a whole. We recommend that delivery organisations: introduce formal systems for accrediting contractors to undertake adaptations. These should A review will take place of all our current include: practices including customer satisfaction standards of customer care such as keeping to appointments, keeping the site tidy, surveys to enable us to identify areas of controlling noise etc; weakness. vetting of financial standing, tax and VAT status; promoting good health and safety practices; HABPG to investigate the option of a cross requiring the use of warranty schemes; cutting framework agreement and/or ensuring that adequate insurance is held; and partnering contract, including joint requiring references. procurement methods. use framework agreements and partnered contracts to deliver adaptations; address weaknesses in the contracting of adaptations, updating Schedule of Rates used to tender Currently Flintshire County Council has a work and undertaking competitive tendering to support value for money in contracting; framework in place for DFG's which develop effective systems to manage and evaluate contractor performance by: provides for the recommendations in R6

Housing Adaptations - Published: February 2018 http://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
 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; and providing formal feedback to contractors on their 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. 	and can be used as a template for other organisations within the HABPG to measure and compare performance.	
R7 Maximising impact and value for money in provision of adaptations requires effective joint working between housing organisations and health and social care services to ensure the needs of often very vulnerable people can be met, and their quality of life improved. However, our findings highlight that delivery organisations continue to have a limited strategic focus on adaptations, concentrating on organisational specific responses rather than how best collectively to meet the needs of disabled or older people (paragraphs 3.16 to 3.21). 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.	The HABPG will look to establish a partnership approach with a common agreement to share resources and support each other to deliver a customer focused service. This method of working will take time to establish but will be written into the terms of reference of the group. By Summer 2019	Green
R8 Most public bodies recognise the value of adaptations in reducing the risk of falls, preventing hospital admissions and speeding up discharge from hospital. However, the importance of adaptations is not always reflected in local partnership arrangements and outside of Occupational Therapists, health professionals noted that the different local-authority and housing-association systems for administering, approving and delivering adaptations are difficult to navigate (paragraphs 3.22 to 3.24). To enhance take-up and usage of adaptations with health bodies we recommend that delivery	The HABPG will look to set out these standards in partnership with the new Enable funding guidelines A marketing and communication strategy	Green
organisations jointly agree and publish joint service standards for delivery of adaptations within each local-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:	to be developed to communication strategy to be developed to communicate the process and different approaches By Summer 2019	
 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; 		

Housing Adaptations - Published: February 2018 http://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations		
Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
 set out the eligibility for the different funding streams, application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes; and offer the viable options and alternatives for adaptations including linking with adapted housing registers to maximise use of already adapted homes 		

Speak my language: Overcoming language and communication barriers in public services - Published: April 2018 http://www.audit.wales/publication/speak-my-language-overcoming-language-and-communication-barriers-public-services

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
Ensuring that people who face language and communication barriers can access public services	None required	N/A
R1 Public bodies are required to ensure that people can access the services they need. To take account of the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and other legislation, 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. Developing interpretation and translation services in Wales	Flintshire County Council currently use Language Line to support people to access Council services when they do not speak English or Welsh. A review of the existing arrangements started in March 2019 and includes Wrexham, Conwy and Denbighshire	Amber

Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Service for Adult with Learning Disabilities - Published: May 2018 http://www.audit.wales/strategic-commissioning-learning-disabilities

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
R1 People with a learning disability have a right to live independently. The last 50 years have seen significant changes in the provision of accommodation and support, Service provision has moved to a model that enables people to live in the community in ordinary houses throughout Wales (Paragraph 1.3 to 1.10). We recommend that local authorities continue to focus on preventing people becoming dependant on more expensive placements in care homes by providing effective support at home and a range of step up accommodation by: - 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 providers. - 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 dependants' 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.	Significant work in progress in relation to support the progression / independence agenda for people with learning disabilities. The carer strategy and action plans cover the need to support carers including contingency planning. Improvements could be made in relation to sharing risk analysis – however work is being undertake in developing a domiciliary framework for learning disabilities.	Green
R2 Population projections show that the number of people with a learning disability will increase in the future, and those aged over 65 and those with a moderate or severe learning disability will rise significantly (paragraph 1.3 to 1.10). We recommend that local authorities improve their approach to planning services for people with learning disabilities by building on the Regional Partnerships Boards' population assessments for people with learning disabilities and agreeing future priorities	We are currently in the process and final draft of a North Wales commissioning strategy for all adults' with a learning disability services. The consultation process has been completed and final amendments are being made to the regional strategy. The expected final completion date is April 2019.	Green
R3 The Welsh Government produced guidance to local authorities, entitled 'developing a commissioning strategy for people with a learning disability' to support authorities in producing strategic plans for the commissioning of learning disability services. In conjunction with codes of practice developed following the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Welsh Government requires local authorities to develop integrated commissioning options with Local Health Board services. The aim is to provide a joined-up and cost-effective approach to the commissioning of services but our review-highlighted weaknesses in current arrangements (paragraph 2.4 to 2.12). We recommend that local authorities do more to integrate commissioning arrangements with partners	The regional transformational bid for Learning Disabilities hosted by Flintshire has appointed a project manager and we are in the process of appointing 8 regional coordinators to take forward 5 key transformational work streams to address the Transformation. Interviews are taking place week beginning	Green

Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Service for Adult with Learning Disabilities - Published: May 2018 http://www.audit.wales/strategic-commissioning-learning-disabilities

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
 and providers and take account of the work of the National Commissioning Board by: 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 to 3.14); establishing investment models and sustainable financial structures, joint workforce planning and multi-year budgeting; and developing appropriate governance and data sharing frameworks with key local partners that include a clear process for managing risk and failure. 	11 th March, there is an expectation that all 8 posts will be appointed to, with all successful candidates in post by mid to end of May 19. As part of the Transformation work the service will explore establishing investment models and sustainable financial structures, and joint workforce planning.	
R4 Local authorities' engagement with people with learning disabilities and their carers is variable. Whilst many authority services have positive relationships with advocacy groups, some are less successful in involving these groups and carers in evaluating the quality of services (paragraph 2.18 to 2.20). 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: - 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; and - ensuring communications are written in accessible and appropriate language to improve the understanding and impact of guidance and information.	We are currently doing this - no further actions required	Green
R5 Local Authorities could do more to involve service providers in commissioning and make the tendering process more effective by making it easier to navigate and more outcome focused. However, providers are not as effectively engaged as they should be (paragraphs 2.28 to 2.38). We recommend that local authorities collaborate with providers, the third sector and suppliers in understanding challenges, sharing data, and pooling expertise by: - improving the quality, range, and accessibility of tendering information; and - 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	Work is being undertaken to develop a domiciliary framework for learning disabilities. As part of the adults commissioning strategy we are speaking to care providers.	Green
R6 Most local authorities do not have effective arrangements to monitor and evaluate their commissioning		

Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Service for Adult with Learning Disabilities - Published: May 2018 http://www.audit.wales/strategic-commissioning-learning-disabilities

Proposal For Improvement	Response	Progress Status
of learning disability services (paragraphs 3.3 to 3.15). We recommend that local authorities develop a more appropriate set of performance indicators and	Work ongoing as part of the national and local performance indicator	Green
measures of success that make it easier to monitor and demonstrate the impact of service activity by: - co-designing measures, service and contract performance indicators with service providers, people	developments.	
with learning disabilities and their carers; - ensure commissioners have sufficient cost and qualitative information on the full range of	Details of performance also forms part of the specification in relation to the	
placement and care options available; - equipping commissioners with data to demonstrate the long-term financial benefits of	Domiciliary care framework .	
commissioning choices, this includes having the right systems and technology; - integrating the outcomes and learning from reviews of care plans into performance measures;		
 evaluating and then learning from different types of interventions and placements; and including learning disability services in local authority scrutiny reviews to challenge performance 		
and identify improvements.		