

Isle of Anglesey County Council – Workforce Planning

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Detailed Report

Having experienced workforce challenges in the Children and Families Service, the Council is now more focused on workforce planning and has further opportunities to realise benefits across all services

The Council developed a Workforce Strategy in 2012 but did not embed it across all services

- 1 In 2012, the Council approved a Workforce Planning and Talent Management / Succession Planning Strategy. The Council seconded an officer in 2013-14 to develop the workforce planning approach further.
- 2 Although, the Council had created an overall workforce planning strategy, individual departments had not formalised, approved, or implemented workforce plans. Officers told us that whilst they discussed workforce plans in conversations with HR support officers, there were no live, formal documents in place.
- 3 In the Council's [Annual Improvement Report 2014-15](#), we concluded that, 'The Council's approach to the planning and management of its workforce is not sufficiently strategic to mitigate the significant risks to future capacity and capability.'
- 4 In March 2017, a report by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) reviewing the Council's [Children and Families Service](#) recommended that a robust workforce strategy should be developed urgently to include short, medium and long term aims for recruitment and retention of social workers.

The approach to workforce planning taken by the Council's Children and Families Service helped it respond to the challenges it faced

- 5 In 2017, the Children and Families Service had trouble in recruiting and retaining a skilled and suitably qualified and experienced workforce. It also found it challenging recruiting to posts with Welsh Language requirements. The service had high absence rates and was reliant on short-term agency staff. This resulted in inconsistencies in practice and decision making. As a result, in their report CIW recommended that the Service produce a robust workforce plan.
- 6 The Children and Families Service and the Council's HR team acted together to address the issues. The scope of the plan would cover the whole service area.
- 7 In tackling its workforce issues the Children and Families Service:
 - analysed its current workforce using HR data metrics;

- investigated trends in performance data, such as the number of looked after children;
- reviewed the wider environment to understand workforce issues and the wider labour market;
- re-structured the service to introduce a new model of working where Practice Leaders were responsible for Practice Groups to strengthen supervision, direction, and learning;
- increased flexibility by introducing generic job descriptions for Social Workers to allow them to move more easily between teams in response to changes in caseloads or team remits;
- worked in partnership with Bangor University to support social work students with placements; and
- focused on ‘growing its own’ talent by providing traineeship opportunities for non-qualified social workers, offering qualifications via the Open University gain as people worked.

8 As a result of this work, the turnover in the Children and Families Service decreased by nine percentage points between 2017 and 2020.

Exhibit 1 : Children and Families Service staff turnover

The turnover in Isle of Anglesey’s Children and Families Service since 2017

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Children and Families Service staff turnover	20%	18%	13%	11%

9 Whilst the Council’s response was reactive, it is clear the Children and Families Service improved its workforce position. Had the Council implemented its 2012 workforce planning approach and/or taken heed of external comment the difficulties it experienced may have been avoided. Effective workforce planning actively identifies changing needs to enables the service to proactively adapt to demand.

10 Learning from this, the Children and Families Services’ Strategic Plan 2017-2020 focuses on having ‘a confident and competent workforce with sufficient capacity to provide a consistent and effective service’. Elements of workforce planning are included in the strategy. A focused Children and Family Services Workforce Strategy 2019-2022 sits behind the Strategic Plan. This document identifies national workforce issues in the sector, explains key trends faced by the Council in the Children and Families Service and the impact of those trends on the workforce for the Council. It also describes the workforce profile and identifies three workforce priorities for the service, with short (0-6 month) medium (6-12 month) and longer (12-18 month) term actions with their associated anticipated outcomes.

The Council is now more focused on workforce planning and by maintaining this focus it can realise more benefits across all services

- 11 Following the success of the work in the Children and Families Service, the Council has continued to improve workforce planning processes across the organisation. The Director of Social Services presented key learning on workforce planning to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- 12 The Council revised its Workforce Planning Strategy in 2019, and defined its vision as, “Getting the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time.” The Strategy includes a ‘Five Step Approach to Workforce Planning’ which mirrors the good practice identified by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD):
 - Defining the plan;
 - Understanding the current workforce;
 - Defining the required workforce;
 - Gap analysis and action plan; and
 - Implementation, monitor and review.
- 13 The Council’s People Strategy 2020-24 recognises the need to, “ensure effective workforce planning is an integral part of the Council’s business processes”. The Council’s HR Service has worked with Heads of Service to identify five, key priorities for workforce planning. All services must:
 - formalise their workforce plans in a written document;
 - ensure alignment between staff needs and workforce plans and create staff development plans;
 - consider ‘new blood’ by using the range of recruitment and retention options provided in the ‘Denu Talent’ programme;
 - identify the issues that make recruitment difficult; and
 - create and open, flexible, and moving culture to support recovery planning and shape future ways of working.
- 14 The Council’s ‘Attracting and Developing Talent 2021-2022’ strategy demonstrates, and highlights efforts made to ensure “that the people of Anglesey can thrive and realise their long-term potential” via the range of recruitment opportunities and activities undertaken by the HR Service. It defines a suite of opportunities that covers a broad range of ages, skills, and abilities. It also states talent management should be fully integrated with Business Planning Processes and workforce planning as well as all the employee related processes of the organisation.
- 15 The Council recognises the need to give more focus and commitment to workforce planning in the Children and Families Service and across the Council. The councillors and officers we spoke to expressed a clear commitment to achieving the Council’s vision and strategic priorities.

- 16 There is positive indication that workforce planning is now becoming an ongoing process rather than a one-off event. HR officers meet quarterly with Heads of Service to discuss workforce issues. In these meetings, actions are agreed and recorded and then reviewed in the following meeting.
- 17 There is an immediate opportunity for Adults Social Services to capitalise on the workforce planning work already completed in the Children and Families Service. The Director for Social Services told us that he intends to develop a Workforce Strategy and Succession Plan for Adults' Services. This would provide consistency across the whole of the Social Services Directorate.
- 18 The Council has found it increasingly difficult to appoint suitably qualified professional staff in several areas across the Council. The Council is now more able to proactively consider emerging risks to the workforce across the whole Council. For example, officers told us parts of Public Protection and Environmental Health Service are at risk of their workforce moving to other organisations where the salaries are more competitive.
- 19 In its meeting in January 2021, the Council's Executive approved a budget of £250,000 for the appointment of between eight and 10 trainees which would provide opportunities for local people to start a career in local government and help address future skills shortages the Council faces.
- 20 At present workforce planning process tend to involve senior managers only. The Council should consider ways to further engage and train all levels of the organisation in workforce planning and share good practice.
- 21 The Council has identified the importance of monitoring and reviewing workforce plans as one of the steps in its five-step approach. The Council should design and embed clear evaluation processes into all stages of the process to assure itself that it is considering and responding to workforce planning and service demand issues appropriately and thereby managing its risks effectively. The officers we spoke to told us that workforce planning should be an ongoing process and that future workforce plans would be 'living documents', updated as they are reviewed.
- 22 In addition, during 2020 the Council focused on improving the quality of its employee appraisals documents. Building on feedback it had already received, the HR service's revised appraisal documents were trialled in Social Services. This engagement provided opportunity to for Social Services department to shape the documents and ensure it was relevant and useful. This approach supports the improvement of workforce planning. For example, as part of the appraisal process, the Council is monitoring and reviewing Welsh Language ability. The new appraisal document requires any training related to Welsh Language skills to be included in the training needs section. This will support improvement in terms of assessing Welsh Language ability and improve workforce planning by helping to identify areas of strength and weakness in providing Welsh speaking employees.
- 23 In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on the Council. The Council has worked hard to deal with the pandemic whilst maintaining momentum on delivery of key services. The pandemic highlighted workforce issues

to the Council, such as the limited availability of Welsh language agency staff, and the need to adapt the existing staff employment contract to facilitate redeployment during a crisis.

- 24 The COVID-19 pandemic has also presented opportunities to work differently, and the Council now needs to consider its future workforce needs. As the Council reshapes its business, it has opportunities to be ambitious and set out what the future workforce might look like. It is important the Council considers the long-term demand for services. An embedded workforce planning process will help all Council services set out what the future looks like.

Recommendations

Exhibit 2: recommendations

Recommendations	
Workforce plan implementation	
R1	The Council needs to ensure that departmental workforce plans are formalised, adopted and implemented across all services.
Assurance that Workforce Plans are living documents	
R2	The Council must design and embed clear evaluation processes, with performance measures, into all five stages of the process to assure itself that it is proactively considering and responding to workforce planning and service demand issues appropriately and thereby managing its workforce risks effectively.



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