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Auditor General for Wales

Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of Early intervention and prevention to ensure that children are safe and supported – **Isle of Anglesey County Council**

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Alan Hughes, Euros Lake and Jeremy Evans under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Summary report

Summary

Why we undertook the Examination

- 1 In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Auditor General for Wales (the Auditor General) is statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when:
 - a. setting their well-being objectives; and
 - b. taking steps to meet them.
- 2 The Act defines the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner: ‘...which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.
- 3 The Auditor General must provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The first such report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election.
- 4 The Auditor General has undertaken examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly during 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- 5 The findings in this report are based on fieldwork that we undertook during the period July 2019 to October 2019.
- 6 This report sets out our findings from our examination of Early intervention and prevention to ensure that children are safe and supported, a step the Isle of Anglesey County Council’s (the Council) is taking to meet its Wellbeing Objectives.
- 7 It also sets out the Council’s initial response to our findings.

What we examined

- 8 We examined the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in Early intervention and prevention to ensure that children are safe and supported.
- 9 In order to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle public bodies must take account of the following ‘ways of working’:

Exhibit 1: the 'five ways of working'

The table below sets out the 'five ways of working' as defined in the Welsh Government's **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials**¹ document.

The Five Ways of Working
Long term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
Prevention How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
Integration Considering how the public body's wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the wellbeing goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its wellbeing objectives.
Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

- 10 Our examination found that: The Council has considered and applied the sustainable development principle in developing the 'Early intervention and prevention to ensure that children are safe and supported', but there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working.

¹ Welsh Government, **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials**, 2015.

Detailed report

Part One: Examination Findings

The Council has considered and applied the sustainable development principle in developing the 'Early intervention and prevention to ensure that children are safe and supported', but there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working

The Council has sought to design services with a view to encouraging individuals to engage with services early in order to reduce longer-term demand and the need for higher levels of intervention, but it is unclear if funding is sustainable in the long term

What we looked for

- 11 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of current and long-term needs and the associated challenges and opportunities;
 - planning over an appropriate timescale;
 - resources allocated to ensure long-term benefits; and
 - appropriate monitoring and review.
- 12 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for the 'long term' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.²

What we found

- 13 We identified the following strengths:
- the Council has a thorough understanding of current and long-term needs and the associated challenges and opportunities; and
 - the step / service contains several elements that are aimed at deescalating demand in the short to medium-term, but it is unclear what the long-term vision is.

² See Appendix 1

14 We identified the following opportunities:

- the Council's resources are channelled into the short and medium-term rather than long-term. There are benefits from the initiatives that the Council has invested in, but the exit strategy when grant funding ceases in 2020 and 2021 is unclear;
- the Council needs to identify and collect data and evidence that will allow it to measure current service demand, and ongoing demand on the service and the effectiveness of preventative activities. Whilst officers articulate an understanding of the causes of demand, there needs to be documented argument of the demand on services to inform future Council plans; and
- officers within the Council have identified 'principal indicators' such as employment opportunities and location, but it is unclear if these factors have influenced council planning.

The Council has sought to understand the factors that impact on children but needs to continue to further analyse data to understand root causes and inform its preventative activities

What we looked for

15 We looked for evidence of:

- thorough understanding of the nature and type of problem the step could help prevent from occurring or getting worse;
- resources allocated to ensure preventative benefits will be delivered; and
- monitoring and review of how effectively the step is preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.

16 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'prevention' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.³

What we found

17 We identified the following strengths:

- officers have a good understanding of the nature and type of problem it is attempting to de-escalate;
- the Council is working with internal Council departments, public sector partner organisations, and third sector organisations to identify preventative opportunities;
- the Council is aware of the preventative benefits of supporting children early – to make them more resilient, and offer a service that increases the level of

³ See Appendix 1

early intervention and prevention, with better access to information and community resources with a view to reducing the need for intensive managed support;

- the Council through Teulu Mon is seeking to reduce the short and medium-term demand on its service through extensive promotion of the 'front door' (Teulu Mon) designed to reduce stigma of engaging with the Council's children's service the Council encourages people to present earlier with lower level issues, so they can intervene preventatively;
- information and advice is provided by Teulu Mon operators and those who do not meet the threshold for statutory care are signposted to community preventative services as appropriate to reduce the likelihood of their needs escalating; and
- the inclusion of the council solicitor in pre-proceeding meetings with families on the cusp of formal intervention has strengthened arrangements to allow a final opportunity for the family to address matters and avoid formal intervention.

18 We identified the following opportunities:

- the Council's Teulu Mon Strategy is aimed at preventing the situation getting worse (secondary prevention), and the Council needs to ensure that the Council Plan contributes to tackling the root cause of the problem (primary prevention), by for example introducing measures to reduce / eliminate what it believes to be the most influential prevalent indicators (root causes); and
- the Council's quarterly corporate scorecard is not aligned to the Council's annual delivery document.

The Council has considered how its step has contributed to its well-being objectives but a more widespread knowledge of the definition of integration under the Well-being of Future Generations Act may help to realise operational benefits

What we looked for

19 We looked for evidence of consideration of:

- how this step could contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals;
- how delivery of this step will impact on the Council's wellbeing objectives and wider priorities; and
- how delivery of this step will impact on other public bodies' wellbeing objectives.

20 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'integration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁴

What we found

21 We identified the following strengths:

- the Council has considered how the step contributes to its well-being objectives; and
- officers have an understanding of the contribution that internal council departments, other public service bodies and the third sector have in delivering the service.

22 We identified the following opportunities:

- there are opportunities to consider how the step could deliver a wider range of benefits by using the seven national well-being goals to consider the potential positive and negative impacts delivering the goals over time; and
- the Act was not seen as a driver for this step and consequently understanding of the principle of integration could be further strengthened. Council and partners describe an organic approach to harmonising aims and objectives – but concede they are unable to demonstrate their efforts to integrate effectively. The Council has not formally considered how the development will impact other public bodies' well-being objectives.

The Council has taken steps to collaborate with partners and reflect the needs and wishes of local communities, but could improve how it reviews the effectiveness of collaboration

What we looked for

23 We looked for evidence that the Council:

- has considered how it could work with others to deliver the step (to meet its wellbeing objectives, or assist another body to meet its wellbeing objectives);
- is collaborating effectively to deliver the step; and
- is monitoring and reviewing whether the collaboration is helping it or its stakeholders meet wellbeing objectives.

24 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'collaboration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁵

⁴ See Appendix 1

⁵ See Appendix 1

What we found

25 We identified the following strengths:

- the Council has taken steps to collaborate internally with Council departments, externally with public sector bodies, third sector organisations, individuals and communities;
- internally, officers describe a positive shift in how various services collaborate. Partners also describe a very positive working relationship with the Council, including in comparison with other councils in the region; and
- joint training has taken place and provided to Council staff and partners, which includes information on how to navigate service access routes and using a generic template for referring to children's services (template reflects some of the 'what matters conversation').

26 We identified the following opportunities:

- there is little evidence to suggest the Council is reviewing the effectiveness of partnership working and learning lessons from its approach;
- collaboration is leading to increasingly appropriate referrals from partners to the children's department. In some cases, this involves gathering details to inform 'what matters conversations' prior to referring. Despite this, the Council acknowledges that this is an on-going effort and not all partners are yet referring as appropriately as they could; and
- the Council's newly-appointed local asset coordinators provide an opportunity to further improve collaboration with public and third sector partners across the county.

The Council has involved stakeholders in the shaping of the service, but needs to review the effectiveness of its approach to identify good practice and see if there are lessons to be learnt

What we looked for

27 We looked for evidence that the Council has:

- identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
- effectively involved key stakeholders in designing and delivering the step;
- used the results of involvement to shape the development and delivery of the step; and
- sought to learn lessons and improve its approach to involvement.

28 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'involvement' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁶

What we found

29 We identified the following strengths:

- the Council has identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
- the Council involves the public sector, third sector and individuals shape the service delivery;
- the step has been designed following multitude of delivery options driven from a 'what matters conversation' with individuals. The 'what matters conversation' is key to the identification of the needs of individuals; and
- Medrwn Mon has provided numerous opportunities to engage with the full diversity of the population including hard to reach individuals.

30 We identified the following opportunities:

- the Council should implement the service satisfaction questionnaire for users of the Intensive Intervention and Provision of Care services to gather feedback from individuals who have used the service; and
- the Council could review the effectiveness of its approach to involvement to identify good practice and see if there are lessons to be learnt.

⁶ See Appendix 1

Part Two: Council's response

- 31 Following the conclusion of our fieldwork we presented our findings to the Council at a workshop in October 2019. At this workshop the Council began to consider its response to our findings and as a result of discussions at the workshop and further reflection on our findings the Council has developed the following actions.

Opportunities	IoACC response / Action points
Long Term	
<p>The Council's resources are channelled into the short and medium-term rather than long-term. There are benefits from the initiatives that the Council has invested in, but the exit strategy when grant funding ceases in 2020 and 2021 is unclear.</p>	<p>Core funding from Welsh Government and its associated programmes and projects initiate a short to medium term thinking amongst public sector organisations.</p> <p>To alleviate this tension the Council is currently developing a corporate Prevention strategy which will provide direction and outline specific work-streams if as a Council we are to succeed in the longer term. These work-streams will clearly identify the key strategic programmes currently being realised and clarify the expectation post grant funding.</p> <p>Point to note – operationally in an organisation which is bound by democratically elected members being elected every five years, testifying success 'longer-term' is a more challenging task to realise.</p>
<p>The Council needs to identify and collect data and evidence that will allow it to measure current service demand, and ongoing demand on the service and the effectiveness of preventative activities. Whilst officers articulate an understanding of the causes of demand, there needs to be documented argument of the demand on services to inform future Council plans.</p>	<p>As noted, the collection and collation of data is ingrained in the mind-set of services through the annual realisation of the corporate planning and performance management framework established and embedded within the work of the services.</p> <p>The Council's developing corporate prevention strategy aims to establish a corporate outlook with regards to prevention and one of the outputs envisaged as part of its associated work-streams will be an increased understanding of the causes of demand which will assist the prevention agenda and inform future corporate planning.</p>

Opportunities	IoACC response / Action points
Prevention	
<p>The Council's Teulu Mon Strategy is aimed at preventing the situation getting worse (secondary prevention), and the Council needs to ensure that the Council Plan contributes to tackling the root cause of the problem (primary prevention), by for example introducing measures to reduce / eliminate what it believes to be the most influential prevalent indicators (root causes).</p>	<p>As part of the corporate prevention strategy it is envisaged that data is to be reviewed in order to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • duplication is kept to a minimum; and • Council work isn't centred around the outputs of grant funding schemes but rather the individuals themselves <p>An example of where this works well currently is around the early intervention hubs which may need to be expanded to reduce / eliminate the root causes.</p>
<p>The Council's quarterly corporate scorecard is not aligned to the Council's annual delivery document.</p>	<p>This was identified as an opportunity for improvement by the Council during its evaluation of scorecard monitoring during 2018-19.</p> <p>Following workshop with SLT and elected members from the Executive and shadow Executive the alignment of the scorecard with the Council Plan and Annual Delivery Document has since been implemented.</p>
Integration	
<p>There are opportunities to consider how the step could deliver a wider range of benefits by using the seven national well-being goals to consider the potential positive and negative impacts delivering the goals over time.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>
<p>The Act was not seen as a driver for this step and consequently understanding of the principle of integration could be further strengthened.</p>	<p>The principle of integration is evident within the early intervention hub.</p> <p>The opportunity exists now to expand this principle further by realising existing plans of creating an integrated team in collaboration with the regional Health Board.</p>
<p>Council and partners describe an organic approach to harmonising aims and objectives – but concede they are unable to demonstrate their efforts to integrate effectively. The Council has not formally considered how the development will impact other public bodies' well-being objectives.</p>	<p>This is viewed as a challenging opportunity going forward bearing in mind different planning timescales realised by different public bodies.</p> <p>This opportunity rests on gaining greater clarity of direction via the Public Services Board and the North Wales Leadership Group.</p>

Opportunities	IoACC response / Action points
Collaboration	
<p>There is little evidence to suggest the Council is reviewing the effectiveness of partnership working and learning lessons from its approach.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of partnership working is reviewed on an annual basis. Partnerships have been defined, a clear policy for entering into partnerships has been adopted and partnerships are identified as being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory • Key or • Delivering a Service <p>The Partnership and Regeneration scrutiny committee scrutinise all strategic partnerships dependent on risk which is managed on a quarterly basis.</p>
<p>Collaboration is leading to increasingly appropriate referrals from partners to the children's department. In some cases, this involves gathering details to inform 'what matters conversations' prior to referring. Despite this, the Council acknowledges that this is an on-going effort and not all partners are yet referring as appropriately as they could.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The early intervention hub has been set up to address these elements.</p>
<p>The Council's newly-appointed local asset coordinators provide an opportunity to further improve collaboration with public and third sector partners across the county.</p>	<p>The Council agrees with this finding and is in agreement that the work of the LAC's should enable greater collaboration and integration between public and third sector partners across the county.</p>
Involvement	
<p>The Council should implement the service satisfaction questionnaire for users of the Intensive Intervention and Provision of Care services to gather feedback from individuals who have used the service.</p>	<p>The Council already collates a number of questionnaires within its Team Around the Family and IFSS initiatives. The opportunity exists to expand this provision to the wider provision of social care so that feedback from individuals who have used the service is collated and their findings used accordingly.</p>

Opportunities	IoACC response / Action points
<p>The Council could review the effectiveness of its approach to involvement to identify good practice and see if there are lessons to be learnt.</p>	<p>The Council's revised corporate planning and performance framework (CPPMF) has identified the need to better testify its approach to involvement by increasing the examples of good practice in order to share lessons in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner.</p> <p>It currently happens at a project management level but a greater degree of emphasis is being integrated into the service reviews (an integral part of the CPPMF) scheduled for November / December 2019.</p> <p>The revised template for Executive meetings (to be introduced Jan 2020) also outlines the requirement to identify how citizens have been involved in the decision-making process.</p>

- 32 We will continue to monitor the Council's progress in implementing these actions, and the extent to which they address the issues we have identified in our findings.

Appendix 1

Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

Exhibit 1: Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

The table below sets out 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working that we have identified. We have not used the indicators as a checklist. They should be viewed as indicators. They helped us to form conclusions about the extent to which a body is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its Wellbeing Objectives.

What would show a body is fully applying the long-term way of working?

- There is a clear understanding of what 'long term' means in the context of the Act.
- They have designed the step to deliver the well-being objective/s and contribute to their long-term vision.
- They have designed the step to deliver short or medium-term benefits, which are balanced with the impact over the long term (within the project context).
- They have designed the step based on a sophisticated understanding of current and future need and pressures, including analysis of future trends.
- Consequently, there is a comprehensive understanding of current and future risks and opportunities.
- Resources have been allocated to ensure long-term as well as short-term benefits are delivered.
- There is a focus on delivering outcomes, with milestones/progression steps identified where outcomes will be delivered over the long term.
- They are open to new ways of doing things which could help deliver benefits over the longer term.
- They value intelligence and pursue evidence-based approaches.

What would show a body is fully applying the preventative way of working?

- The body seeks to understand the root causes of problems so that negative cycles and intergenerational challenges can be tackled.
- The body sees challenges from a system-wide perspective, recognising and valuing the long-term benefits that they can deliver for people and places.
- The body allocates resources to preventative action that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and use of resources over the longer term, even where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs.
- There are decision-making and accountability arrangements that recognise the value of preventative action and accept short-term reductions in performance and resources in the pursuit of anticipated improvements in outcomes and use of resources.

What would show a body is taking an 'integrated' approach?

- Individuals at all levels understand their contribution to the delivery of the vision and wellbeing objectives.
- Individuals at all levels understand what different parts of the organisation do and proactively seek opportunities to work across organisational boundaries. This is replicated in their work with other public bodies.
- Individuals at all levels recognise the cross-organisation dependencies of achieving the ambition and objectives.
- There is an open culture where information is shared.
- There is a well-developed understanding of how the wellbeing objectives and steps to meet them impact on other public sector bodies.
- Individuals proactively work across organisational boundaries to maximise their contribution across the wellbeing goals and minimise negative impacts.
- Governance, structures and processes support this, as do behaviours.

What would show a body is collaborating effectively?

- The body is focused on place, community and outcomes rather than organisational boundaries.
- The body has a good understanding of partners' objectives and their responsibilities, which helps to drive collaborative activity.
- The body has positive and mature relationships with stakeholders, where information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- The body recognises and values the contributions that all partners can make.
- The body seeks to establish shared processes and ways of working, where appropriate.

What would show a body is involving people effectively?

- Having an understanding of who needs to be involved and why.
- Reflecting on how well the needs and challenges facing those people are currently understood.
- Working co-productively, working with stakeholders to design and deliver.
- Seeing the views of stakeholders as a vital sources of information that will help deliver better outcomes.
- Ensuring that the full diversity of stakeholders is represented and they are able to take part.
- Having mature and trusting relationships with its stakeholders where there is ongoing dialogue and information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- Ensure stakeholders understand the impact of their contribution.
- Seek feedback from key stakeholders which is used to help learn and improve.

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