

Our Children and Young People

Protecting and fulfilling lives and futures

Information Booklet

Excellence Wales National Open Day
18th – 19th November 2008, Venue Cymru, Llandudno



Highly Commended
Protecting and Fulfilling Lives and Futures

Clod Uchel
Diogelu a Chyflawni Bywydau a Gobeithion

Our Vision...

is to be an innovative and integrated department that supports all children and young people and encourages lifelong learning

This supports the vision in the Children & Young People's Plan:

*Putting children and young people at
the centre of everything we do*

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Introduction

I hope that the information in this booklet is helpful to our colleagues across Wales. It attempts to capture key elements of our original submission for Excellence Wales status in the Our Children and Young People Category, presented under the four sub-themes of:

- Partnerships & strategy
- Participation & citizenship
- Prevention
- Protection

Carmarthenshire County Council was delighted to be recognised with a Highly Commended Award. It was just reward for the hard work put in by many people within the Council and our partner organisations.

Leading up to the award, the principal change (from 2004/05), was to begin to **integrate** children's social care and education services, with the overall aim to improve outcomes for children and young people in Carmarthenshire.

Carmarthenshire's approach is intended to **break down silos** of practice across all disciplines, not just within education and social care.

We aim to achieve this by:

- providing integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of services;
- improving multi-disciplinary working
- removing duplication
- increasing accountability
- helping every child and young person to achieve his or her potential
- early intervention to remove difficulties and shift the balance towards effective prevention

There is a broad agreement with partners on the direction of travel with a real **commitment** to working closer together to meet the needs of children. There has been a strong commitment to developing both **universal** and **targeted services** under the Children and Young People's Plan. We are confident this positive direction of travel will continue.

The key challenge for the council has been to continue to drive forward integration and better joined up services, without compromising or 'undoing' the excellent practice and services that already exist.

Achieving improved outcomes for children and young people is a longer term investment. Certainly the council can measure tangible improvements already in some processes, although **better outcomes** are largely perhaps 3-5 years away, and in some cases longer.

Vernon Morgan

Vernon Morgan

Director of Education & Children's Services



Sub-theme: Partnerships & Strategy

Our strong sense of strategy is underpinned by a **clear vision** and sense of direction, and a clear plan of how we intend to get there. This applies equally to the partnerships we are engaged in as well as within our own organisation. We are focussed on outcomes. Our partners are focussed on outcomes.

We have firmly established our **Children & Young People's Partnership**, and our partners have demonstrated that they are committed to the partnership. We have strengthened our Partnership Support Team to ensure that progress continues to be made on developing the Partnership, and in implementing the Children & Young People's Plan 2008-11.

We have a long history of **joint working, planning, commissioning** and **partnership** arrangements working across many services for children and young people. We are engaged in numerous partnerships which span the continuum from sharing information to fully integrated services, and just a few of these are given as examples below.

Teams around Pupils, Parents & Schools

We have established area based teams of professionals, including school improvement, inclusion, social care and health staff, focussed on parents, pupils and schools. The aim is to provide a single point of contact and closer working arrangements across the County based in 'virtual' teams with identified lead officers.

Healthy Schools

The Healthy Schools Steering Group has overseen the development of this initiative, and the percentage of schools taking part has risen incrementally from 44% to 87% over four years and our target for 2008-09 is 98%.

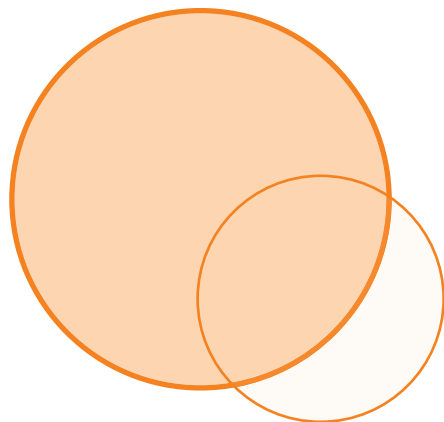


Joint Working with Neighbouring Authorities

Examples include developing a model of consortium working across South West and Mid Wales (swamwac), collaborating with Ceredigion County Council for Continuing Professional Development, and with Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion through the West Wales Adoption Service, and supporting shared delivery of 14-19 Learning Pathways in the Teifi Valley area through the 14-19 Networks.

Family Centres

We have a total of nine community run Family Centres, developed through the Sure Start programme in partnership with Plant Dewi, which are an excellent model of utilising small amounts of grant funding to instigate a County wide network of services. The number of families attending has been increasing year on year.



Sub-theme: Participation & citizenship

We have been successful in developing the **School Councils** in primary and secondary schools, reaching the 100% target in November 2006. The focus now is on ensuring these councils are effective. We have utilised technology to gain the views of as many young people as possible, for example using **Viewpoint** and **Textline**.

Under the wider remit of Carmarthenshire Young People's Partnership (YPP), six **local YPPs** have been established. To devolve access to funding down to local groups, some Cymorth funding is allocated across the six local YPP areas annually. This innovation has made it much easier for local groups to access funding.

Carmarthenshire Youth Service supports a wide range of participation activities that facilitate children and young people's involvement in decision making in the County. For young people aged 11-25, a County wide **Youth Forum** has been established that enables young people's views to be heard. Beneath the County-wide forum there are **six local youth fora**, mirroring the areas covered by the local YPPs.

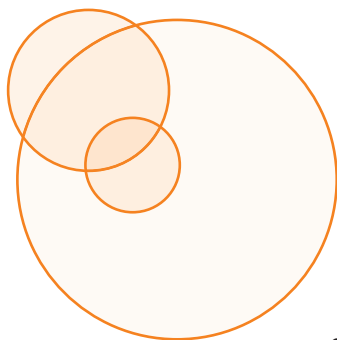
The work of the Participation Officer for **children aged 0-10** has focussed on the supporting development of school councils in Carmarthenshire primary schools, work with the 0-10 Looked After Children's Group, delivery of schools workshops on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and a pilot project focussed on democracy.

Following a pilot scheme in 2006, we have secured funding from the Electoral Commission for a pioneering **Democracy Project** in Carmarthenshire schools. This scheme aims to raise children's awareness of democracy, the importance of elections, introduce Carmarthenshire County Council services and encourage active citizenship via a dedicated project officer.

Children are consulted about and involved in the plans which affect them at all levels from Initial and Core Assessments through to planning their future within the **Looked After Children** system. Over 90% of all Looked After Children of sufficient age and understanding participated in the decision making process for planning and review last year.

We are also keen to see children and young people involved in **recruitment processes** for key jobs that affect them. Most recently the Local Health Board Youth Health Team involved young people in a recruitment exercise, which proved extremely successful.





Sub-theme: Protection

Our **Local Safeguarding Children Board** was established in October 2006.

Membership is at the highest level of most of the agencies operating within the county. The Operational Group has ensured excellent continuity from the work of the former Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC)

whilst the Executive Group has created a level of demonstrable senior ownership in relation to child protection and safeguarding which the ACPC was unable to achieve.

The **multi-agency public protection arrangements** (MAPPA) process operates effectively within the county. An external audit exercise is undertaken annually to ensure that our services to children at risk is safe - the audit carried out in November 2006 concluded that thresholds for intervention were at a safe level, which confirmed the view of the SSIW that services to children are effective in safeguarding children.

Children's Services were part of a very successful joint '**Hidden Harm**' conference with Barnardos and adult social services. Holistic assessments of Children and Families under the National Assessment Framework for Children in Need and their families has reached levels of over 90% and are among the best in the UK.

Children aged 0-3 in the most vulnerable areas of the county are now receiving an enhanced health visiting service through **Flying Start**.

Since 2002 a **multi-agency Assessment Monitoring Group** has met regularly to consider response to referrals and work carried out by front line assessment workers within Children's Services, to ensure high standards are maintained.

Social care staff and the Police deliver **child protection training** to other statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and local authorities. A detailed programme of basic and specialised training is delivered annually.

Multi-agency training with both statutory and voluntary organisations has been undertaken with the pilot for the **Common Assessment Framework**.

As the ways of the world change so do our policies and procedures to accommodate new technology, for example an **internet and mobile phone policy for LAC** has been developed. A programme of child protection training for school governors is delivered annually in addition to multi agency training offered to school staff.



Sub-theme: Prevention

The Carmarthenshire social care service has completely re-focused from being an investigative and challenging service, to being one which **supports families** to offer better care for their own children. This has resulted in a high proportion of families taking up preventative early intervention services provided within their communities in order to alleviate stress and prevent a crisis requiring statutory intervention.

There has been a dramatic refocusing of services resulting in less **Looked After Children (LAC)**, less children on the **child protection register**, and more **children supported in their families** whilst maintaining safe services. This has been a county wide achievement with limited resources, producing exceptional outcomes for children and families. Of those children who have to be looked after 86% were placed last year within 20 miles of their home address – no mean feat in a large rural area like Carmarthenshire.

Numbers of children on the Child Protection Register are at an all time low showing a reduction of over 27% in the time period. Staff retention and recruitment has shown significant improvement with 100% front line managers in post and 95% of qualified front line posts filled.

We have had a stable and low LAC. This has created a virtuous cycle of investment in preventative services. We now spend **53% of our budget on preventative services** (2nd highest in Wales). We deliver exceptional value for money. Funding per head of child population places us as **20th out of 22** Welsh local authorities.

We have a joint team with health and education staff to deliver services for children with disabilities, operating a **multi professional key worker system** which utilises direct payment facilities to families, to help prevent children becoming looked after.



We have an extensive range of **community family support services**, many developed under the Sure Start and Flying Start programmes. This includes volunteer, home based support, parenting education, a network of 12 Family Centres and two mobile Family Centres (buses), two family groups, a community outreach team, and a new Integrated Children's Centre. A significant proportion of these services are delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector.

Carmarthenshire remains the biggest provider of respite care for children in Wales. A range of provision is used, both residential, family care and direct payments. Children with disabilities benefit from a family link scheme, with £200,000 spent on domiciliary care and a wide range of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with the voluntary sector.

The Youth Offending Service run a **Splash holiday activity programme** in conjunction with the youth service to engage young offenders or those at risk of offending in worthwhile activities. The Youth Service has also run a programme of activities for LAC over the summer which included a week spent on a Tall Ship.



Useful information & contact details

Excellence Wales Good Practice Case Study

www.wlga.gov.uk/english/case-studies-our-children-and-young-people/carmarthenshire-county-council-our-children-and-young-people/

Carmarthenshire County Council

www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Carmarthenshire Partnership

(including Children & Young People's Partnership pages)

www.thecarmarthenshirepartnership.org.uk

Carmarthenshire Children's Partnership

www.carmarthenshirechildrenspartnership.org.uk

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