

Corporate Improvement Plan: Stage 2 Review of progress 2014-15

Feedback – Monmouthshire County Council

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Did the authority make arrangements for the publication of its assessment of performance during 2014-15?

- Did the authority's publication include an assessment of how it has discharged its general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for the previous year?
- Did the publication include an assessment of performance in meeting the authority's improvement objectives?
- Did the publication include assessment
 - by reference to performance indicators specified by Welsh Ministers (NSIs); and
 - by reference to self-imposed performance indicators applicable to that year?

Did the authority make arrangements for the publication of its assessment of performance during 2014-15?

- Did the publication make comparisons with performance in previous financial years?
- As far as was reasonably practicable, did the publication compare performance with other Welsh improvement authorities or other public authorities that exercise similar functions?
- Did the publication include details of how it has collaborated in discharging its improvement duties?
- Did the publication include details of the information the authority has used to assess its performance?
- Was the assessment of performance for 2014-15 published before 31 October 2015?

Summary of findings

- The Council has published its assessment of performance in accordance with its general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.
- The publication sets out a clear direction of travel of performance measures although it needs to ensure clearer links between high-level priorities and measures of delivery.

We came to this conclusion because:

- The Council has discharged its general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15.
- The publication includes an assessment against a wide range of performance indicators and actions although clearer links between these and high level priorities would help demonstrate progress better.
- The publication includes an assessment against performance indicators specified by Welsh Ministers (NSIs) and by reference to self-imposed performance indicators applicable to 2014-15.

We came to this conclusion because:

- There are no performance standards specified by Welsh Ministers (NSIs) and no self-imposed performance standards applicable to 2014-15.
- The publication does include performance for previous financial years although performance is not Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rated to highlight extremes of performance.
- The publication compares performance against all Welsh improvement authorities by reporting the NSI/PAM data set although the rationale for selecting specific comparator councils is unclear.

We came to this conclusion because:

- The publication includes some information of how it has collaborated in discharging its improvement duties.
- The publication includes details of the information the authority has used to assess and compare its performance.
- The assessment of performance was published before 31 October 2015.

Detailed feedback

- The compliance certificate was sent to the Council on 13 November 2015 – this was the formal output from our audit of Monmouthshire County Council’s assessment of 2014-15 performance.
- The remaining slides in this pack provide a commentary from our audit that may help the Council further improve the quality of improvement arrangements.
- ✓ *We have indicated with a tick particular positive aspects of the assessment of performance.*
- *We have indicated, with an arrow, aspects of the assessment of performance that the Council might want to consider improving when reviewing its improvement arrangements.*

The Council has discharged its general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15

- ✓ The publication sets out the Council's three priorities and four improvement objectives.
- ✓ The publication refers to links with the Single Integrated Plan.
- ✓ The Council has devised and used six-level criteria to evaluate the performance of each improvement objective.
- ✓ An improvement objective template is included to explain:
 - ✓ the individual sections;
 - ✓ the type of information and evidence to be included;
 - ✓ how the information should connect together; and
 - ✓ how the information will be used to inform the overall evaluative assessment.

The Council has discharged its general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15

- ✓ Good structure for the narrative sections as follows:
 - ✓ Why the Objective was chosen;
 - ✓ What we will do;
 - ✓ What we have done; and
 - ✓ What difference has it made.
- ✓ Twenty-six actions in the 'What we will do' section which correlate with the Improvement Plan 2014-17.
- ✓ The Council assesses its performance against the four improvement objectives and has evaluated two as 'good' and two 'adequate'.
- The publication does not refer explicitly to the seven aspects of improvement as cited in section 2.2 of the local government measure.

The publication includes an assessment against a wide range of performance indicators and actions although clearer links between these and high-level priorities would help demonstrate progress better

- ✓ Performance is measured against 49 targets.
- ✓ The 49 targets have actual figures to inform performance and state for each target whether:
 - ✓ Improved/Met target – 47 per cent (23);
 - ✓ Improved/Missed target – 18.5 per cent (9);
 - ✓ Declined/Missed target – 18.5 per cent (9);
 - ✓ Declined/Met target – 2 per cent (1);
 - ✓ N/A – 12 per cent (6);
 - ✓ Maximum – 2 per cent (1).

The publication includes an assessment against a wide range of performance indicators and actions although clearer links between these and high-level priorities would help demonstrate progress better

- ✓ All 26 actions have progress updates:
 - ✓ On target – 84 per cent (22)
 - ✓ Achieved – 4 per cent (1)
 - ✓ Not started – 4 per cent (1)
 - ✓ Behind target – 8 per cent (2)
- ✓ The narrative explains ‘what we will do’, ‘what we have done’ and ‘what difference has this made’.

The publication includes an assessment against a wide range of performance indicators and actions although clearer links between these and high-level priorities would help demonstrate progress better

- Six targets/measures are deemed 'Not Applicable'. These targets/measures do not demonstrate improvement, therefore uncertain as to the rationale for including these in the publication.
- The publication does not highlight specific good performance or areas of concern – for example, through a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating system.
- The publication does not always make clear connections between high-level improvement objectives and set out how performance measures and actions directly support their delivery.

The publication includes an assessment against performance indicators specified by Welsh Ministers (NSIs) and by reference to self-imposed performance indicators applicable to 2014-15

- ✓ The NSI and PAM figures are included.
- ✓ Within the table, each NSI and PAM indicator is listed and the following information is provided:
 - ✓ 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 actual performance and 2014-15 target;
 - ✓ Whether the indicator has improved or declined;
 - ✓ Quartile 2013-14, 2014-15 and quartile shift;
 - ✓ Wales average 2014-15 and position in Wales 2014-15; and
 - ✓ 2015-16 Target.
- ✓ Inclusion of two previous years of performance, quartile position over two years and targets for 2015-16 helps demonstrate progress.
- ✓ Over 80 per cent of NSIs and PAMs have improved or are at maximum level.

The publication includes an assessment against performance indicators specified by Welsh Ministers (NSIs) and by reference to self-imposed performance indicators applicable to 2014-15

- The Council ranked its position in Wales for the percentage of all pupils that leave compulsory education, training or work-based learning without a qualification as 10th. Data Unit Wales ranks Monmouthshire as joint 6th.
- The Council ranked its position in Wales for the percentage of young people formerly looked after with whom the authority is in contact at the age of 19 as 19th. Data Unit Wales ranks Monmouthshire as joint 16th.

There are no performance standards specified by Welsh Ministers (NSIs) and no self-imposed performance standards applicable to 2014-15

- ✓ Currently, there are no performance standards issued to the Council by Welsh Ministers.

The publication does include performance for previous financial years although performance is not RAG rated to highlight extremes of performance

- ✓ Comparative data is available in the publication showing performance for 2012-13 and 2013-14 as well as the 2014-15 target and actual performance for all 49 targets.
- Performance is not RAG rated.

The publication compares performance against all Welsh improvement authorities by reporting the NSI/PAM data set although the rationale for selecting specific comparator councils is unclear

- ✓ For each improvement objective there is a section 'How we compare with others'.
- ✓ Sixteen graphs are presented, four for each improvement objective.
- ✓ Comparisons are shown in bar charts against all authorities in Wales.
- ✓ Five councils are highlighted for specific comparison.
- Different councils are selected for different improvement objectives.
- The rationale for highlighting comparator councils is not stated.
- Within the publication, there are nine NSI/PAM indicators used to support the performance of the four improvement objectives, however, the document does not make it clear that these are NSIs/PAMs and are therefore capable of comparison against the national average and ranking to provide more context.

The publication includes information setting out how it has collaborated in discharging its improvement duties

- ✓ The publication includes a specific section on Partnerships and Collaboration.
- ✓ The publication refers to collaboration with:
 - ✓ Local Service Board;
 - ✓ Education Achievement Service;
 - ✓ Project Gwyrdd; and
 - ✓ Shared Resource Service.
- ✓ Key partnership programmes have been developed to deliver outcomes attached to priorities.
- ✓ The publication includes a web link to an audit undertaken by the Council on partnerships.

The publication includes details of the information the authority has used to assess and compare its performance

- ✓ The publication contains a range of national and local data on which it has assessed performance.
- ✓ In addition to general comparisons of performance across Wales, the publication highlights specific councils against which it has compared service performance.
- ✓ The publication includes six-level criteria to evaluate the performance of each Improvement objective.
- The publication does not explain the rationale for selecting some councils against which it has compared performance.

The assessment of performance was published before 31 October 2015

- ✓ The Council published an English version of 'How we performed 2014-15 – Improvement Plan – stage 2' on its website on 29 October 2015.
- ✓ A summary of the publication is accessible on the Council's website in English and Welsh and was published on 29 October 2015.
- ✓ The Council used Twitter to inform the public of its performance for 2014-15.
- The publication was not available on the home page but was accessible by searching the Council pages of the internet.

General comments/findings

- ✓ The publication includes references to work by the Wales Audit Office, CSSIW and Estyn.
- ✓ The publication includes graphs demonstrating spend and performance for each of the four main service areas of Education, Social Care and Health, Enterprise and Operations.
- ✓ The document invites comments and requests for information.
- ✓ The Council has produced a two-page summary document with a short summary paragraph for each of the four improvement objectives.
- ✓ All web links within the publication work.
- ✓ Language used is clear with no unexplained acronyms.