



# Estyn

*Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

## Using data to plan strategically for children and young people



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

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- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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## Introduction

### Purpose

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Welsh Assembly Government with a position paper on the extent to which local authorities and their partners use data to plan strategically for children and young people.
- 2 The report evaluates the range and impact of data used by local authorities and their partners to meet the needs of children and young people. It analyses the use of data to inform planning, and looks in particular at how local authorities and their partners share intelligence to better plan through the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 3 In addition, the report illustrates examples of good practice, specifically where individual local Children and Young People's Partnerships have used data well to plan targeted services for children and young people and improve outcomes for them.
- 4 Recommendations from this remit work supports the Welsh Assembly Government in achieving its objectives in Learning Country: Vision into Action and the Children Act 2004. In particular, the findings and the good practice drawn from the evaluations of inspectors will help local authorities and their partners to further improve outcomes for children and young people.
- 5 The evidence base includes:
  - inspection reports of eight local authority education services and five youth support services between September 2007 and July 2008;
  - visits to a sample of five local authority areas; and
  - an analysis of all draft Children and Young People's Plans.

### Background

- 6 Estyn's findings from inspections of local authority education services and youth support services show that there is too much inconsistency in the use of data to effectively plan services for children and young people at a strategic level.
- 7 This report builds on the report published by Estyn in February 2008 on the use of performance data by local authorities to support school improvement.
- 8 This report also compliments another report to be published shortly in 2008-2009. This evaluates the use and impact of management information in the local authority youth service.

## **Main findings**

- 9 Overall, local authorities and their partners use a wide range of data to assess trends and children's and young people's needs across their local areas. Through strategic partnerships such as the Children and Young People's Partnership, providers are increasing their use of data to inform planning of services to children and young people. However, there are only very few partnerships who can currently produce figures to reflect outcomes for children and young people effectively.
- 10 Children and Young People's Partnerships are currently working at getting better at using a wider range of data to inform their planning. However, it is too early for this report to judge the effectiveness and impact of this work.

## **Availability of data**

- 11 There are gaps in the data required by and used by local authorities and their partners. This is a challenge for most partnerships. This is mainly because the data required is not available at a local level or for the specific age group targeted.
- 12 Local authorities and their partners are slow to find solutions to collating data on outcomes for children and young people other than data on school examination and teacher assessment.
- 13 There are limited national data sets to help partnerships and providers analyse trends in year on year. For example, there is little data available for all ages and all target groups, especially that focusing on more vulnerable groups such as those disadvantaged by poverty, ability or ethnicity. In particular, there is no data for informal and non-formal learning, such as occurs within youth support services. In addition, there are no national comparators in place to enable local authorities and their partners to benchmark outcomes against each other.

## **Using data to inform planning**

- 14 Many partnerships use external agencies to collate and analyse data on their behalf. This can lead to the analysis process being separate to the process of planning and allocating resources.
- 15 Often, local authorities and their partners know the priority areas where services are required, but do not use the available information to align the delivery of services to children and young people.
- 16 Specific targeted projects, initiated in collaboration with other partners, are usually based on a good analysis of need. Staff plan these projects well, and use data to focus on services and to collate outcome data.

<b>Impact</b>
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- 17 Children and Young People's Partnerships and most of the individual providers within them do not have measures of impact and outcome that are mature enough to be effective.
- 18 Providers are therefore providing duplicated and unnecessary services, and do not have a clear idea on the value for money of these.
- 19 There is a need for clearer of leadership from the Welsh Assembly Government in advising and guiding providers and partnerships on useful outcome measures. At present, too much time is wasted seeking relevant measures rather than having a clear focus on outcomes.

## Recommendations

### **The Welsh Assembly Government should:**

- R1 provide leadership and resources in those areas where data is unavailable;
- R2 support the development of useful outcomes measures building on existing performance indicators;
- R3 develop guidance on the scope of data to be used for need analysis to gain greater consistency across Wales (therefore enabling benchmarking); and making sure that this information is available as trends over time; and
- R4 determine baseline data prior to initiating new initiatives so that a common approach can be developed across Wales to measure impact.

### **Local authorities and their partners should:**

- R5 make sure that data collated for needs analysis and outcome measures are used to inform resource allocation and strategic planning;
- R6 use effective outcome measures and collate this information methodically; and
- R7 make use of detailed information to focus support and education services to those of greatest need.



## Availability of data

- 20 Overall, local authorities and their partners have access to a broad range of data sources to begin the process of identifying the needs of children and young people.
- 21 Currently, local authorities and their partners use data in aspects of their work for the following purposes:
- to identify some of the needs of children and young people;
  - to note the number of users within specific services;
  - to benchmark against similar providers where data is consistently available across Wales; and
  - to signify outcomes that demonstrate the impact of interventions on children and young people.
- 22 Local authorities and their partners are also collating data which presents perceptions or attitudes relating to a service or issue. This usually involves young people or the parents/carers of children and young people.
- 23 In the authorities visited or inspected, there is often some confusion as to the purpose and potential use of different data sets. Too often, for example, officers will use data which shows the number of service users to demonstrate the impact of services. The number of service users only shows the take up of services, not the impact. Similarly, perception surveys are used to signify the quality of service delivery, whereas they only give a user's observation.
- 24 Initially, most local authorities and their partners use information such as that provided by Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation and census figures to begin analysing trends for local needs. Where partnerships build on this process over a number of years, and use information used for needs analyses three or four years ago, this is more valuable to help inform planning than looking at data which is less than a year old.
- 25 Many partnerships engage external organisations to undertake the research and analysis on their behalf. This means that the work is completed within a fixed timescale. However, as a result partnerships do not build the capacity of their own staff to understand and gain knowledge of the analysis process so that they can build on it on a regular basis.
- 26 Our analysis of draft Children and Young People Plans show that only about a third of local authorities have used a comprehensive analysis of available data to guide their plans and priorities. Despite having a range of data available, the partnerships have not consistently used this information to focus on key areas of need or priorities.
- 27 A few local authorities have used the draft Children and Young People's Plan to review and revise the work they have done with other strategic partners. This has worked well where officers have been seconded from one partner to lead on data collation on behalf of the partnership. This means that the partnership makes best use of the expertise of key organisations.

### **Case study**

#### **Using expertise from one provider to develop practice across the partnership**

One local authority in North Wales has seconded a senior officer from the National Public Health Service to carry out work on behalf of the Children and Young People's Partnership.

This means that the partnership is building its own capacity and expertise in handling and making good use of data. As a result, children and young people will see targeted services where and when they need them.

- 28 In a few local authorities, there are effective protocols in place to share data across organisations. Often, where information sharing is successful, one key organisation has led and driven the work to encourage collaboration. This means that the responsibilities of different partners are clear, and partners find it easier to work together.

### **Case study**

#### **Sharing information, sharing responsibility**

A local authority in west Wales has successfully overcome the barriers linked to information sharing. The local authority and its partners have used their needs analysis well to develop joint projects which target children and young people in greatest need. Rather than refer individuals to different organisations, all partners share 'ownership' of the individual and the desired outcome.

This means that practitioners keep in close contact about specific young people and fewer young people are lost to practitioners without support or through badly organised referral.

- 29 Partnership officers find it difficult to get accurate information at a local authority level. This is a particular problem if an organisation such as the Local Health Board or Youth Offending Team crosses more than one local authority boundary. Similarly, the information on pregnant young women aged 16 and under is needed to plan for compulsory education, but this data is collected for pregnant young women aged 18 or less and aged 21 or less.
- 30 Sharing information across organisational boundaries is becoming easier as organisations and partnerships build trust between each other, and develop a greater understanding of each other's responsibilities and strengths. However, partnership officers<sup>1</sup> still find it difficult to access data on key groups of children and young people.

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<sup>1</sup> Local partnerships co-ordinating children and young people's services often employ officers to work for the partnership.

- 31 There are key gaps in data which currently hinder the work of partnerships. These include information about:
- the numbers of young people in need of support, but not receiving any, from the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS);
  - children and young people affected by obesity;
  - lone parents in employment;
  - access to and use of leisure centres and similar facilities by children and young people;
  - the effect of rural deprivation and poverty on children and young people; and
  - play services.
- 32 After identifying gaps and areas for improvement as a result of collating data, one local authority found that individual service areas did not have the accurate data or the relevant place to keep the information. The local authority then put in place a comprehensive management information system. The system has the capacity to collate the local authority's own outcome indicators as well as partners' agencies within the children and young people's partnership such as the Local Health Board and Police.
- 33 A few partners have inappropriately delayed progress on finding solutions, quoting the work on Wales Accord for Sharing Personal Information as rationale.
- 34 About half the local authorities visited find the surveys conducted by Communities that Care<sup>2</sup> useful because they give a local perception. However, these perceptions focus on negative perceptions of communities and young people in particular.

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<sup>2</sup> A private organisation undertaking work of behalf of local authorities

## Using data to inform planning

- 35 The greatest inconsistency across local authorities is the effectiveness of the use of data to inform priorities and strategic planning when working in partnership.
- 36 Many authorities have been surprised when they mapped services and resources against population, identifying for example: a playground situated in an area with no population in its target age group; and also youth clubs with very low attendance rates but with high unit costs. However, local authorities and partnerships have not used this information well to take action on these issues.

### Case study

#### Mapping data from a range of sources

A few local authorities have begun to use Global Positioning Systems mapping to overlap data from a range of sources. In these authorities, the process has led to useful and well informed targeting of specific services by a range of partner providers. In two local authorities, this has led to focused geographical targeting of services. Once key geographical areas are identified, other providers such as the Youth Service collect user postcodes to build a picture of children's and young people's participation in services.

- 37 As yet, partnerships and service areas within local authorities are not adept at mapping or making links between different information held by a range of providers. For example, they do not map data on children and young people who do not attend school with those involved with the Youth Offending Team, children in need, or those on school action programmes. This type of correlation and analysis would enable early interventions to be targeted at the most vulnerable.
- 38 Local authority areas that have established partnership structures and who have well established co-ordinating officers or teams in place have built effectively on successive analyses of need. This has led to better quality information and better partnership performance.
- 39 At times, specific Welsh Assembly Government initiatives have funding models which contradict the local partnership's assessment of need. For example, the Flying Start targets funding at some families within a school catchment area who may not necessarily need support, while other families in other areas need targeted intervention. Similarly, national priorities and funding do not help local authorities who have effectively allocated resources according to need. These local authorities will have already targeted their priorities in previous years and made progress, and will want to move to the next priority rather than duplicate action and use of resources.
- 40 A few local authorities found that more research was required to give the details needed for meaningful targeting following the initial analysis. One local authority found that targeted and structured interviews with specific groups were the only

means to get the information they needed. For example, they listened to young people not in education, training or employment (NEET), users of family centres, and children with disabilities.

- 41 Estyn inspections find that many local authorities and their partners are slow to identify and take action for key groups of children and young people in need of additional support to help them sustain their education. These include minority ethnic pupils, NEET young people, young people involved with the Youth Offending Team, and looked after young people.
- 42 Detailed pupil level data is not used well enough to target services for specific groups. For example, information on pupils in receipt of free-school-meals is not used well enough to help other partners target preventative and support services.
- 43 It is with those more vulnerable groups of children and young people that partnerships find more difficulty in using detailed data well to inform planning. As a result, partnerships do not plan well enough to make sure the most vulnerable get the services they need.

## Impact

- 44 Partnerships are beginning to use data more effectively to identify priorities. However, as yet, providers are not as effective at recording the impact of this planning and prioritisation. Nearly all local authorities and their partners find it difficult to find useful methods to demonstrate the impact of their work and measure outcomes for children and young people.
- 45 Estyn inspections of youth support services find that Children and Young People's Partnerships often find it difficult to demonstrate the impact of collaboration on improved outcomes for learners. Too often, the lack of useful outcome data and the difficulty of gaining ownership of joint priorities means that partners cannot see the impact of this joint working.
- 46 Only about half of partnerships have actually reallocated resources to respond to priorities. In addition, only a few have refocused core budgets to address cross-organisational strategic priorities, such as reducing the numbers of young people who are NEET.

### Case study

#### Recording the impact of collaboration

One partnership in north east Wales has begun to monitor the success of their working groups. The Children and Young People Service in the local authority uses an improvement log to demonstrate key improvements. The partnership's Chair has used this system successfully to give qualitative evaluations of the impact of collaborative work on improving outcomes for learners.

- 47 Initiatives that target specific groups often have effective techniques to collate useful data on outcomes. However, this good practice is not always recognised or shared amongst other providers. These initiatives use existing performance information, such as that available on the examination results of looked after children or gypsy travellers, and look at improved trends over time following support and targeted intervention.
- 48 Individual providers within partnerships have useful information on the perceptions, needs and outcomes achieved by children and young people but do not share the information effectively enough with others. Therefore, this information cannot be used to help improve outcomes for young people, or to demonstrate current improvements.
- 49 CYPPs do not have a clear enough overview of outcomes for children and young people in their local authority area. This is because there are limited useful measures for important aspects of education, support services and early intervention work.

- 50 In addition, the lack of useful outcome data in out-of-school hours learning and the local authority youth service is holding back the work of partnerships
- 51 In youth support services and in the local authority youth service there has been little progress by the Welsh Assembly Government in drawing together national data on outcomes for learners. Therefore, these sectors cannot make the best use of data to make change where it is most needed, or to improve the impact of their services.
- 52 A few local authorities used Demonstrating Success<sup>3</sup> as a means of measuring the impact of youth support services. However, there is confusion amongst providers about how to use the model and its actual effectiveness by providers. As a result, too few providers make effective use of the model to judge its usefulness as a tool.
- 53 Providers often rely too heavily on anecdotal evidence to evaluate whether or not initiatives are helping children and young people. In the case of health initiatives, for example, providers note whether planned actions are carried out, but only a few have robust systems in place for evaluating the impact of their work in real changes in behaviours and health.
- 54 The outcome measures identified in the guidance for partnerships reflect some current national performance indicators. These are useful for elements of the core aims, but the most important gaps remain incomplete.
- 55 Partnerships find it difficult to decide on relevant and useful outcome measures. A few partnerships evaluate the processes staff have gone through rather than the outcomes for children and young people.
- 56 Partnerships find difficulty in judging value for money because they cannot judge the effectiveness and impact of their work on children and young people.

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<sup>3</sup> A Welsh Assembly Government project