

ADSS CYMRU¹

The Local Authority Annual Social Services Reports Guidance

1. **Report Style and Content** - the report needs to be written in a way that can be read and readily understood by a range of audiences including:
 - service users and carers and all those whose well-being is affected by what the local authority's social services and related functions do, so that the impact of those services is explained;
 - the general public who have an interest in what their local authority is doing, how it is performing and how their money is being spent;
 - elected members and others involved in scrutiny processes;
 - the local authority's partners including both formal partners and others in the public, private and third sectors who need to understand the local authority's programme and priority objectives;
 - regulators (including the Wales Audit Office, CSSIW, Social Care Wales and the Statutory Commissioners);
 - the Welsh Government.

2. **Overall page and word limit** - Paragraph 88 of the Part 8 Code says that the director should ensure that "the report is not overly long and written in a clear, concise way."

3. **Accessibility** - As the report is a public-facing document it needs to be written in plain, every day, jargon-free English and Welsh

¹ https://socialcare.wales/cms_assets/hub-downloads/Guidance-for-local-authority-annual-social-services-reports.pdf

Corporate - Although the report must be delivered to the Council by the Director, it is the Local Authority's report on the performance of its social services functions. It needs to explain how the wider functions of the local authority such as transport, housing, education and leisure have contributed and will continue to contribute to the achievement of individuals' well-being outcomes.

4. **Timely** - Paragraph 80 of the Part 8 Code says the annual report "must be published as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of a financial year". If all the supporting processes are working well, it is recommended that local authorities publish the report by the end of July. It should be referenced that not all performance data will have been externally validated by this point.
5. **Open and Evaluative** - The report should give an open and honest account that highlights not just the successes but the challenges and priority areas for improvement identified through a rigorous, non-defensive process of self-evaluation.
6. **Improvement objectives** - From the 2017–18 report onwards, the report should set out the extent to which the planned improvement objectives have been met. There should be no gaps in the story. Where the previous year's report highlighted a priority area for improvement, the following year's report should say what actually happened in that area. Where the local authority failed, partly or wholly, to achieve its improvement objective, the report should say so and explain what is being done as a consequence. Against every quality standard the report should say:
 - what the local authority had planned to do in the previous year
 - how it succeeded
 - what difference it made to outcomes for well-being of people
 - what the priority objectives are for next year and why.

7. **Experience of Citizens** - Local authorities should reflect the experience of citizens in their self-evaluation throughout the report. It should be remembered that the Code for measuring social services performance requires that, in addition to collecting the required qualitative data, local authorities must give people “an opportunity to provide a narrative account of their experience, regardless of the method chosen to collect the data”. Such narrative accounts are intended to:

- provide an enriched account when assessing the effectiveness of care and support
- help ensure that people’s experiences drive improvement
- help local authorities identify areas of improvement and good practice
- demonstrate effective engagement with advocates and family members

8. **Measuring social services performance** - The Code on measuring social services performance sets out:

- the six quality standards that local authorities must achieve to discharge their duties under the SSWB Act
- the actions the local authority must undertake to achieve the quality standards
- the quantitative and qualitative data related to the standards that local authorities must collect, report annually to the Welsh Government and include in the annual report.

9. **Reflecting Local Circumstances** - Section 2 provides space and opportunity for local authorities to include local and regional initiatives. In responding to the annual reporting requirements, Directors could consider the following framework to reflect a national/regional/local balance:

- specific initiatives to meet local circumstances including local branding of services (e.g. urban, rural, language, etc. needs)
- regional partnership examples such as information, advice and assistance, commissioning, training, etc.
- collaboration with the local health boards and other partners
- participating in national initiatives to ensure Wales-wide consistency such as the Delivering Transformation Grant work programmes, workforce development, Dewis Cymru and the Welsh Community Care Information System.

10. **Aligning Reporting to the National Quality Standards** - The template in Section 2 of this guidance sets out the chapters for the report and the most significant section is aligning the way that local authorities report to the national quality standards for well-being:

- working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve
- working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being
- taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm
- encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society
- supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships
- working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

11. **Quality standards** - Chapter 4 is the substantive section of the report and requires local authorities to report their progress and plans against the six quality standards reflecting the whole range of need. This is to help to ensure that:

- the report provides clear and direct assurance that the local authority is working to the required quality standards and the supporting activities are being undertaken as the code requires
- it provides a narrative of where the local authority has reached in their improvement journey using evidence from population assessments
- where priority objectives have changed from year to year, it explains what has happened and why
- it keeps the focus on achieving well-being outcomes for individuals
- it aligns with the new CSSIW inspection framework (see para 2.8 above)
- it allows easier comparison across local authorities
- there is a clear link between the report and the National Outcomes Framework
- it makes it easier for local authorities to share good practice in the style and content of their reports.