



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report 2017-18

Pembrokeshire County Council

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This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Jeremy Evans, Alison Lewis and Gareth W. Lewis under the direction of Huw Rees.

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The Auditor General is independent of government, and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Auditor General undertakes his work using staff and other resources provided by the Wales Audit Office Board, which is a statutory board established for that purpose and to monitor and advise the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office is held to account by the National Assembly.

The Auditor General audits local government bodies in Wales, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national parks and community councils. He also conducts local government value for money studies and assesses compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Beyond local government, the Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Assembly Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales.

The Auditor General and staff of the Wales Audit Office aim to provide public-focused and proportionate reporting on the stewardship of public resources and in the process provide insight and promote improvement.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document is also available in Welsh.

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Summary report

2017-18 performance audit work

- 1 In determining the breadth of work undertaken during the year, we considered the extent of accumulated audit and inspection knowledge as well as other available sources of information including Pembrokeshire County Council's (the Council) own mechanisms for review and evaluation. For 2017-18, we undertook improvement assessment work at all councils. We also undertook work at all councils in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, a service-user-perspective themed review and a review of overview and scrutiny arrangements. At some councils, we supplemented this work with local risk-based audits, identified in the Audit Plan for 2017-18.
- 2 The work carried out since the last Annual Improvement Report (AIR), including that of the relevant regulators, is set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement

- 3 Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2018-19.
- 4 In last year's Annual Improvement Report we said that '...it is vital that the Council sets out clearly its strategic vision for the future, both political and administrative, and with pace makes progress towards achieving it'. The political vision has now been set out in the 'Programme for Administration 2018-2022' which was agreed by Cabinet in April 2018. The Council also approved a new Corporate Plan 2018-19 at its Council meeting on 10th May 2018. The Council now needs to ensure that it moves forward with pace to achieve its ambitions and help deliver the Council's medium term financial strategy within an environment of effective governance and scrutiny.

Recommendations and proposals for improvement

- 5 Given the wide range of services provided by the Council and the challenges it is facing, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
- make proposals for improvement – if proposals are made to the Council, we would expect it to do something about them and we will follow up what happens;
 - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made, the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;
 - conduct a special inspection, and publish a report and make recommendations; and
 - recommend to ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.
- 6 During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any formal recommendations. However, we have made a number of proposals for improvement and these are repeated in this report. We will monitor progress against them and relevant recommendations made in our national reports ([Appendix 3](#)) as part of our improvement assessment work.

Audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2017-18

Exhibit 1: audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2017-18

Description of the work carried out since the last AIR, including that of the relevant regulators, where relevant.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
June 2018	<p>Service User Perspective - Review of the Housing Adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants Service</p> <p>We committed to undertake work to understand the 'service user perspective' at every council within Wales. In Pembrokeshire County Council we linked this work to the review we were undertaking in the housing adaptations and disabled facilities grants service. In particular, whether the Council was using the experiences and aspirations of service users to inform the design and delivery of services.</p>	<p>Most service users we spoke to were happy with the housing adaptations service but the Council has not defined strategic aims or standards for the service and is not focussed enough on positive, safe outcomes for service users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most service users are happy with the housing adaptations service but the Council is not setting or communicating service standards. • The Council has successfully reduced the time taken to deliver housing adaptations but could provide greater support for applicants and focus more on delivering safe outcomes for service users. • Information on the housing adaptations service is not up-to-date or sufficiently accessible. 	<p>P1 Define the strategic aims for the housing adaptations service with a focus on the service user.</p> <p>P2 Engage with: service users, staff and other stakeholders to identify ways in which the housing adaptations service can be improved.</p> <p>P3 Revise the information provided on housing adaptations to make it clear, accessible and widely available to service users and potential service users.</p> <p>P4 Create and publicise service standards for the housing adaptations service.</p> <p>P5 Improve the level of support provided to applicants throughout the housing adaptations process. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the arrangements for appointing and managing building contractors; • improve the process for ensuring the adaptation meets the needs of the service users and their families; and • strengthen safeguarding arrangements for service users throughout the housing adaptation process.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
June 2018	<p>Overview and Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?</p> <p>We reviewed how well placed Councils' overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges.</p>	<p>The Council is revising its overview and scrutiny function but arrangements need further strengthening to enable scrutiny to meet current and future challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is revising its overview and scrutiny arrangements but it has more to do to help scrutiny to meet current and future challenges. • There is scope to improve scrutiny practice and the training provided for members. • The Council does not evaluate the impact of overview and scrutiny and cannot demonstrate its overall effectiveness. 	<p>P1 Improve the provision of training for committee members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more training specifically for Chairs and Vice Chairs of overview and scrutiny committees to enable them to be more effective in their role. • Provide further training on likely key issues for the future including: Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Swansea Bay City Region and regional working. <p>P2 Forward work programmes for overview and scrutiny committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen committee ownership of forward work programmes and committee agendas. • Ensure that scrutiny committees take account of the Cabinet forward work programme when determining overview and scrutiny forward work programmes. • Urgently review the practice of Notices of Motion going to overview and scrutiny committees. <p>P3 Chairs of overview and scrutiny committees, in consultation with committee members, to define the intended purpose and operation of overview and scrutiny pre-meetings and who should attend.</p> <p>P4 Reports provided to overview and scrutiny committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be specific about what is expected of overview and scrutiny committees when reports are presented to them. • Ensure that relevant legal considerations are taken account of in reports to scrutiny committees.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
June 2018	<p>Overview and Scrutiny: Fit for the Future? (Contd.)</p>		<p>P5 Clarify the role of Cabinet members in the overview and scrutiny committee process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the role of the Cabinet member in the scrutiny process and communicate this to councillors and officers. • Clarify the arrangements for feeding back overview and scrutiny committees' views to Cabinet and for Cabinet to respond to scrutiny committee recommendations. <p>P6 Review overview and scrutiny committees' terms of reference to decide if greater parity in workloads between committees would support more effective scrutiny.</p> <p>P7 Put in place arrangements for assessing the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
September 2017	<p>Aligning the Levers of Change</p> <p>This piece of work was undertaken to help Councils' to identify, understand and address current challenges with managing change. Implementation of the review findings will bring the opportunity to refine current arrangements in councils by promoting what is working well, identifying any barriers and developing local improvement opportunities. This project was undertaken in all 22 Councils across Wales. In Pembrokeshire County Council we looked at the Council's transformation programme by holding a number of workshops to engage with officers and councillors, and gathered their views on the programme.</p>	<p>The collated views from officers and councillors were reported to the Council's corporate management team and cabinet in September 2017. Whilst there was no public report from this work, we asked the Council to consider how to respond to the key observations made in order to drive change, with pace, to achieve common goals. We have recently reviewed the Council's progress and will be reporting on that in September 2018.</p>	None.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
November 2017	<p>Annual audit letter 2016-17</p> <p>Letter summarising the key messages arising from the Auditor General's statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and his reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice. The Annual Audit Letter is in Appendix 2 of this report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources; • I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources but there remains scope for the Council to make further improvements; and • My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the 2016-17 accounts or key financial systems. 	None.
Local risk-based performance audit			

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
March 2018	<p>Review of Whistleblowing and Grievance Policies and Procedures</p> <p>Review of the arrangements that the Council has for dealing with both employee grievances and whistleblowing concerns. The review also looked at the decision-making arrangements the Council uses for deciding whether it deals with concerns under whistleblowing or grievance procedures.</p>	<p>The Council needs to strengthen its approach to whistleblowing and employee grievance and address issues raised in earlier whistleblowing reviews, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council's whistleblowing and grievance policies are easy to read but lack some procedural detail; • whistleblowing training is good but training is not compulsory so not all managers, governors and councillors have received it; and • the Council has been slow to action the proposals and recommendations made in earlier reviews of whistleblowing arrangements. 	<p>P1 Clarify the role of the line manager and Head of Service in handling whistleblowing concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council should explain within its Whistleblowing Policy the procedure a 'prescribed person', line manager or Head of Service follows once a relevant concern is raised. This will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ensure central collation of all concerns; – promote a consistent approach for handling concerns across the Council; and – help the corporate centre monitor cases. <p>P2 Schedule regular meetings with the three internal 'prescribed persons' in the Council's Whistleblowing Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three 'prescribed persons' listed in the Whistleblowing Policy need to meet regularly to review the Council's current whistleblowing concerns and grievance logs. • This regular meeting would allow the 'prescribed persons' to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – monitor the uptake of the correct policies across the Council; – discuss cases, monitor progress and review procedures followed; – develop and publicise the role of the Whistleblowing Champions; and – raise potential risks with the Audit Committee <p>P3 Include timescales and methods within the Whistleblowing Policy for responding to those who raise concerns and keeping them up-to-date on the investigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include detail in the Whistleblowing Policy on the timescales and methods for responding to someone who raises a concern and keeping them informed during the investigation

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
March 2018	<p>Review of Whistleblowing and Grievance Policies and Procedures (Contd.)</p>		<p>P4 Mandate the e-learning whistleblowing module for all officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council has produced a good whistleblowing e-learning training course, it should mandate this training for all officers. The Council should also actively encourage councillors and governors to attend. This will help to raise awareness and knowledge. <p>P5 Clarify the role of Human Resources in the Council's Grievance Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to ensure the Council gives consistent, correct advice and to monitor cases, the Grievance Policy should ask all line managers to contact Human Resources as soon as an employee raises a grievance. <p>P6 Review and amend the Council's Grievance Policy to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarification of who decides if a grievance investigation is required; • explanation of who will complete an investigation (including reassurance that any investigating officer would be impartial); • explanation of how witnesses' views will be considered (eg interviewing other employees) ; and • sharing of a draft investigation report with the grievance raiser to enable them to check for factual accuracy.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
<p>Fieldwork completed – report to be issued September 2018</p>	<p>Review of Pembrokeshire County Council's Transformation Programme</p> <p>The review looked at how effectively the Council is managing its transformation programme and taking action on the observations from the earlier review of 'Aligning the Levers of Change'. The review focused on the Council's approach to its transformation programme and the delivery of the associated savings identified in its medium term financial plan.</p>	<p>Report to be issued September 2018</p>	
<p>Improvement planning and reporting</p>			
<p>March 2017</p>	<p>Wales Audit Office annual improvement plan audit Review of the Council's published plans for delivering on improvement objectives.</p>	<p>The Council has complied with its statutory improvement planning duties.</p>	<p>None.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
November 2017	Wales Audit Office annual assessment of performance audit Review of the Council's published performance assessment.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement reporting duties.	None.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Reviews by inspection and regulation bodies			
Care Inspectorate Wales (previously known as CSSIW) June 2017	Follow up inspection of care and support – People with Learning Disabilities in Pembrokeshire CIW inspection in March 2017, focusing on the areas for improvement identified during a previous inspection in December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority has made progress in the provision of care and support it provides for people with learning disabilities. Significant priority has been given to consultation with people with learning disabilities, their carers and staff, and this has been central to the improvements that have been made. The emphasis has been on ensuring the stakeholders' voice is heard and actively acted upon in the plans developed by the Authority. We found positive changes had taken place regarding the leadership and culture of the local authority and without exception staff, people with learning disabilities and family members reported that leaders were accessible and had engaged with them to seek their views. An elected member has been appointed as Champion for people with learning disabilities, and is supporting senior officers to drive through the changes needed. 	Recommendations R1 The local authority, in collaboration with key stakeholders, needs to develop a plan that details the way in which the Learning Disability Strategy will be turned into action. In doing so it must ensure that all stakeholders are involved and demonstrate the commitment made by the local authority to coproduce services. R2 The easy read Strategy needs to consider the range of communication methods used for people with a learning disability in Pembrokeshire. R3 A communication strategy is developed to ensure all stakeholders have an opportunity to be involved in the development of services and this must consider how the local authority engage with hard to reach groups. R4 A commissioning strategy for care and support for people with learning disabilities should be developed in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board. This should be informed by a wide ranging analysis of need and focussed on collaborative and innovative solutions. R5 An accommodation strategy for people with learning disabilities needs to be developed, which is based on population needs assessment for the Authority. R6 A records management policy is developed to ensure consistency in care and support arrangements. Arrangements need to ensure that care management records demonstrated people's involvement; in all aspects of their care including reviews and that care and support plans are person-centred.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (previously known as CSSIW) June 2017</p>	<p>Follow up inspection of care and support – People with Learning Disabilities in Pembrokeshire (Contd.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Learning Disability Strategy has been developed in partnership with Hywel Dda Health University Board and key stakeholders. It is critical now that the local authority move forward quickly to ensure this Strategy is translated into a model of service delivery. In doing so they must ensure that they build upon the collaborative approach used so far and engage with stakeholders throughout. A key factor to the success of this will be a clear communication strategy that sets out how the local authority will communicate and engage with stakeholders, in the development of services for people with learning disabilities. • An easy read draft Strategy has been developed for people with learning disability, and inspectors were informed that people were engaged in the development of this Strategy through the support of advocacy services. While this is positive, concern was expressed during consultations with stakeholders that the easy read Strategy is not fully presented within Total Communication language that is consistently used within services in Pembrokeshire. 	<p>R7 The details regarding the restructure of the team need to be formalised, to ensure people with learning disabilities, their families, carers, staff, agencies and the Third sector understand the model of service delivery. This must include clear arrangements for the allocation and delivery of work at all levels, including the CTLD team, review team and the transition team.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Care Inspectorate Wales (previously known as CSSIW) June 2017	Follow up inspection of care and support – People with Learning Disabilities in Pembrokeshire (Contd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The commissioning and contracting team have reviewed contracts to ensure those scenarios that inspectors found in December 2015 where an individual with a tenancy also received care and support from their landlord are addressed. Improved collaborative working was reported with housing and discussions are taking place regarding new initiatives, however, an accommodation strategy for people with learning disabilities has yet to be developed. The Authority must ensure the vision set out in the Strategy regarding accommodation for people with learning disabilities, is set out within a clear plan and that this correlates with the Authority's population needs assessment. 	

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Care Inspectorate Wales (previously known as CSSIW) June 2017	Follow up inspection of care and support – People with Learning Disabilities in Pembrokeshire (Contd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 is progressing well. The arrangements for Information, Advice and Assistance had been developed and we found these in general to be consistent with the ethos of the Act. However, stakeholders expressed some uncertainty about how people with learning disabilities and their carers will access services; the authority must consider this aspect to ensure that people understand the pathway into the service and that this is a seamless process. Critical to this will be ensuring that the structure review that has been completed sets out the roles and responsibilities for team members and the criteria of need of how people will be supported within this new structure. In doing so the Authority must ensure that they listen to the voice of people who have clearly expressed that they want a named professional who they can contact. • Practitioners are now supported by clear care management systems, and inspectors saw much improved arrangements regarding assessments, care and support plans and reviews. However, further work is required to evidence in case records, how people with learning disabilities and their families are actively engaged in the care and support arrangements and that plans are person-centred. • The arrangements for adult safeguarding are much improved, with the dedicated safeguarding unit for adults and children demonstrating they have the right resources to meet the demands. Effective policies and procedures are in place to ensure that safeguarding matters are addressed appropriately and in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. 	

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake a forward-looking annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. Improvement authorities (defined as local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities) have a general duty to ‘make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions’.

The annual improvement assessment considers the likelihood that an authority will comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The assessment is also the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. Staff of the Wales Audit Office, on behalf of the Auditor General, produce the annual improvement report. The report discharges the Auditor General’s duties under section 24 of the Measure, by summarising his audit and assessment work in a published annual improvement report for each authority. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether (as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17) he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

The Auditor General may also, in some circumstances, carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the authority and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). An important ancillary activity for the Auditor General is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments.

Appendix 2 – Annual Audit Letter

Councillor David Simpson – Leader
Pembrokeshire County Council
County Hall
Haverfordwest
SA61 1TP

Reference: 274A2017-18

Date issued: 30 November 2017

Dear Councillor Simpson

Annual Audit Letter Pembrokeshire County Council 2016-17

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources

It is Pembrokeshire County Council's (the Council) responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

Local authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards.

On 24 July 2017 I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and transactions. I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts had been completed on 30 October 2017 after the conclusion of work on elector questions. My report and certificate is contained within the Council's published Statement of Accounts.

I reported the key matters arising from the accounts audit to the Council in my Audit of Financial Statements report on 20 July 2017. I reported that the Council had delivered the draft financial statements some four weeks earlier than the statutory deadline of 30 June and that the audit was completed some nine weeks in advance of the statutory deadline of 30 September. Despite the shorter timescale, the draft financial statements were generally prepared to a good standard and were supported by comprehensive and timely working papers. This was a significant achievement, which built on the lessons learnt in the previous year, particularly around asset valuations

I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources but there remains scope for the Council to make further improvements

My consideration of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the accounts as well as placing reliance on the work completed under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

My Annual Improvement Report published in July 2017 concluded it is vital that the Council sets out clearly its strategic vision for the future, both political and administrative, and with pace makes progress towards achieving it. The Auditor General will highlight whether improvements have been made when he publishes his next Annual Improvement Report.

My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the 2016-17 accounts or key financial systems

The Council agreed to participate in the second year of our 'outcomes pilot' on Welsh Government grants. Our 'outcomes pilot' aims to test the feasibility of a new grant outcomes approach. The pilot takes account of how both the Welsh Government and the Auditor General wish to improve the value and impact of certification work by moving auditors' efforts away from transaction testing and towards consideration of the activities to be delivered by the funding. We are due to conclude our work in December 2017 and will report the outcome of the pilot to the Welsh Government and the Director of Finance in due course.

My ongoing work on the certification of non-Welsh Government grants claims and returns has not identified any significant issues to date in relation to the accounts or the Council's key financial systems. I will report any key issues to the Director of Finance once this year's programme of certification work is complete.

The financial audit fee for 2016-17 is currently expected to be in line with the agreed fee set out in the Annual Audit Plan.

Yours sincerely



Richard Harries

Engagement Director

For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales

cc: Ian Westley, Chief Executive

Jon Haswell, Director of Finance

Appendix 3 – National report recommendations 2017-18

Exhibit 2: national report recommendations 2017-18

Summary of proposals for improvement relevant to local government, included in national reports published by the Wales Audit Office, since publication of the last AIR.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
June 2017	<u>Savings Planning in Councils in Wales</u>	The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement, although proposals for improvement were included in local reports issued to each Council.
October 2017	<u>Public Procurement in Wales</u>	The report contained seven recommendations. Six of the recommendations were for the Welsh Government, one of the recommendations was for public bodies: R3 It was clear from our sampling that some procurement strategies are out of date and there has also been a mixed response to new policy and legislation, such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. We recommend that public bodies review their procurement strategies and policies during 2017-18 and on an annual basis thereafter to ensure that they reflect wider policy and legislative changes and support continuous improvement.
October 2017	<u>Good governance when determining significant service changes – National Summary</u>	The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement, although proposals for improvement were included in local reports issued to each Council. The report was designed primarily to provide insight, share existing practice and prompt further conversations and discussions between councils and other organisations.
December 2017	<u>Local Government Financial Reporting 2016-17</u>	The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
January 2018	How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness	<p>R1 Implementing the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to develop services which are focussed on preventing homelessness and reducing demand. These are very different to traditional casework led homelessness services, and prevention work requires new skills and early interaction with users and potential users. We found local authorities' progress in revising and strengthening services is variable (paragraphs 1.12 to 1.20). We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure their staff are sufficiently skilled to deal with the new demands of mediating, problem solving, negotiating and influencing with homeless people; and • review and reconfigure their services to engage more effectively with homeless and potentially homeless people to prevent homelessness. <p>R2 The Welsh Government provided funding to support local authorities to implement the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and this funding has been critical in enabling new preventative services to be developed. The funding is in place until 2019-20 but authorities need to ensure they use headspace provided by these resources to revise their services to deliver their responsibilities in the future (paragraphs 1.21 to 1.28). We recommend that local authorities review their funding of homelessness services to ensure that they can continue to provide the widest possible preventative approach needed. Reviews should consider use of Supporting People as well as General Council fund monies to support delivery of the authority's homelessness duties.</p> <p>R3 How services are configured and managed at the first point of contact can significantly influence how effective local authorities are in managing and reducing demand. Easy to access services which maximise usage, avoid gate keeping and focus on early solutions can significantly improve the prospects for successful homelessness prevention. We found that some authority point of entry systems are poorly designed which reduces the authority's prospects for early intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring (paragraphs 2.4 to 2.11). We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design services to ensure there is early contact with service users; • use 'triage' approaches to identify and filter individuals seeking help to determine the most appropriate response to address their needs; and • test the effectiveness of first point of contact services to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
January 2018	How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness	<p>R4 Establishing clear standards of service that set out what the authority provides and is responsible for is critical to ensuring people know what they are entitled to receive and what they need to resolve themselves. We found that authorities are not always providing clear, concise and good quality information to help guide people to find the right advice quickly and efficiently (paragraphs 2.12 to 2.17). We recommend that local authorities publish service standards that clearly set out what their responsibilities are and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive and what they must do for themselves. Service standards should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be written in plain accessible language. • be precise about what applicants can and cannot expect, and when they can expect resolution. • clearly set out the applicant's role in the process and how they can help the process go more smoothly and quickly. • be produced collaboratively with subject experts and include the involvement of people who use the service(s). • effectively integrate with the single assessment process. • offer viable alternatives to the authority's services. • set out the appeals and complaints processes. These should be based on fairness and equity for all involved and available to all. <p>R5 Local authorities need to design services to engage with service users effectively and efficiently, but current standards are too variable to ensure service users are getting access to the advice they need (paragraphs 2.18 to 2.24). To improve current performance we recommend that local authorities make better use of their websites to help manage demand by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • testing the usability and effectiveness of current website information using our lines of enquiry set out in Appendix 5; • increasing and improving the range, quality and coverage of web based information; making better use of online applications; and • linking more effectively to information from specialist providers and advice specialists, such as Citizens Advice. <p>R6 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduces a new duty on social services and housing associations to collaborate with local authority homelessness services in preventing homelessness. We found that these arrangements are not operating effectively and service responses to prevent homelessness and assist homeless people are not always being provided, nor are they consistently effective (paragraphs 3.13 to 3.25). We recommend that local authorities set out and agree their expectations of partners identifying how they will work together to alleviate homelessness. The agreement should be reviewed regularly and all partners' performance reviewed to identify areas for improvement.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
January 2018	<u>How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness</u>	<p>R7 Local authorities monitoring systems and evaluation approaches to ensure compliance with their responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty are not working as well as they should (paragraph 3.35 to 3.39). We recommend that local authorities address weaknesses in their equalities monitoring, and ensure that their homelessness service accurately records and evaluates appropriate data to demonstrate equality of access for all service users that the local authority has a duty towards.</p> <p>R8 Managing demand can be challenging for local authorities. There are some clear lessons to be learnt with regard to the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and homelessness prevention duties that can be applied to managing demand in other services (paragraphs 4.24 to 4.27). We recommend that local authorities use the checklist set out in Appendix 10 to undertake a self-assessment on services, to help identify options to improve how they can help manage demand.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>The report contained nine recommendations. One of the recommendations was for the Welsh Government, eight of the recommendations were for local authorities and/or delivery organisations:</p> <p>R1 There are many sources of funding and policies for adaptations, which results in disabled and older people receiving very different standards of service (paragraphs 1.5 to 1.9). To address these discrepancies we recommend that the Welsh Government set standards for all adaptations to ensure disabled and older people receive the same standard of service irrespective of where they live, who their landlord is and whether they own their own home.</p> <p>R2 Most public bodies are clear on how their work on adaptations can positively impact on disabled and older people, and have set suitable aims that provide focus for action. For adaptations, having the right strategic goals also establishes a clear basis for decision-making on who should be prioritised for services and how and where to use resources. However, we found that current policy arrangements have a number of deficiencies and public bodies are not maximising the benefit of their investment (paragraphs 3.8 to 3.15). We recommend that local authorities work with partner agencies (health bodies, housing associations and Care and Repair) to strengthen their strategic focus for the provision of adaptations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting appropriate strategic objectives for adaptations that focus on wellbeing and independence; • improving the quality of information on the demand for adaptations by using a wide range of data to assess need including drawing on and using information from partners who work in the local-authority area; and • linking the system for managing and delivering adaptations with adapted housing policies and registers to make best use of already adapted homes. <p>R3 Ensuring that all those who might need an adaptation have all the information they need in order to apply for and receive an adaptation is important. Good-quality and accessible information is therefore essential for delivery organisations to demonstrate fair access and transparency. However, we identified weaknesses in the quality and coverage of public information relating to housing adaptations (paragraphs 2.6 to 2.15). We recommend that delivery organisations provide information on housing adaptations in both Welsh and English, and accessible formats including braille, large fonts, audio versions and other languages. Information should be promoted widely via a range of media including social media, websites and published information, and also through key partners. Preferably, information should be produced jointly and policies aligned between delivery bodies to improve coverage and usage.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>R4 Given the wide number of routes into services, delivery organisations need to ensure they have robust systems to deal effectively and quickly with applications. However, we found that the processes used by delivery organisations vary widely and often create difficulties for disabled and older people seeking assistance (paragraphs 2.16 to 2.19). We recommend that delivery organisations streamline applications by creating single comprehensive application forms covering all organisations within a local-authority area that are available via partners and online.</p> <p>R5 Delivery of adaptations can be delayed by a variety of factors (paragraphs 2.20 to 2.33). To improve timeliness in delivery we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Welsh Government reviews whether local authorities should continue to use the means test for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs); • local authorities provide or use home improvement agency services to support disabled and older people to progress their DFG applications efficiently; • delivery organisations work with planning authorities to fast track and streamline adaptations that require approvals; • delivery organisations use Trusted Assessors to undertake less complex adaptation assessments; and • the Welsh Government streamlines its approval processes for Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs).

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>R6 Most local authorities, housing associations and Care and Repair agencies have established processes to appoint, oversee and manage builder and/or contractor performance. However, we found wide variations in how delivery organisations arrange, contract and deliver building works (paragraphs 2.37 to 2.44). We recommend that delivery organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce formal systems for accrediting contractors to undertake adaptations. These should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – standards of customer care such as keeping to appointments, keeping the site tidy, controlling noise etc; – vetting of financial standing, tax and VAT status; – promoting good health and safety practices; – requiring the use of warranty schemes; – ensuring that adequate insurance is held; and – requiring references. • use framework agreements and partnered contracts to deliver adaptations; • address weaknesses in the contracting of adaptations, updating Schedule of Rates used to tender work and undertaking competitive tendering to support value for money in contracting; • develop effective systems to manage and evaluate contractor performance by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – setting an appropriate range of information to judge performance and delivery of works covering timeliness of work; quality of work; applicant/tenant feedback; cost of work (including variations); health and safety record; and customer feedback; – regularly reporting and evaluating performance to identify opportunities to improve services; and – providing formal feedback to contractors on their performance covering key issues such as client satisfaction, level and acceptability of variations, right first-time work, post-inspection assessment and completion within budget and on time.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>R7 Maximising impact and value for money in provision of adaptations requires effective joint working between housing organisations and health and social care services to ensure the needs of often very vulnerable people can be met, and their quality of life improved. However, our findings highlight that delivery organisations continue to have a limited strategic focus on adaptations, concentrating on organisational specific responses rather than how best collectively to meet the needs of disabled or older people (paragraphs 3.16 to 3.21). We recommend that local authorities work with partner agencies (health bodies, housing associations and Care and Repair) to develop and improve joint working to maximise both take-up and the benefits of adaptations in supporting independence by pooling of resources, co-locating staff and creating integrated delivery teams</p> <p>R8 Most public bodies recognise the value of adaptations in reducing the risk of falls, preventing hospital admissions and speeding up discharge from hospital. However, the importance of adaptations is not always reflected in local partnership arrangements and outside of Occupational Therapists, health professionals noted that the different local-authority and housing-association systems for administering, approving and delivering adaptations are difficult to navigate (paragraphs 3.22 to 3.24). To enhance take-up and usage of adaptations with health bodies we recommend that delivery organisations jointly agree and publish joint service standards for delivery of adaptations within each local-authority area. The service standards should clearly set out how each agency approaches delivery of adaptations and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive. Service Standards should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be written in plain accessible language; • be precise about what people can and cannot expect to receive; • be produced collaboratively to cover all adaptations services within an area; • set out the eligibility for the different funding streams, application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes; and • offer the viable options and alternatives for adaptations including linking with adapted housing registers to maximise use of already adapted homes.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>R9 Having the right performance indicators and regularly reporting performance against these are important for public bodies to manage operational performance, identify areas of improvement and evaluating the positive impact of services. We found that the current range of performance indicator data is extremely limited and not sufficient to enable a full evaluation of performance (paragraphs 4.5 to 4.20). To effectively manage performance and be able to judge the impact of adaptations, we recommend that the Welsh Government and delivery organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set appropriate measures to judge both the effectiveness and efficiency of the different systems for delivering adaptations and the impact on wellbeing and independence of those who receive adaptations; • ensure delivery organisations report against their responsibilities in respect of the Equalities Act 2010; • ensure performance information captures the work of all delivery organisations – local authorities, housing associations and Care and Repair agencies; and • annually publish performance for all delivery organisations to enable a whole systems view of delivery and impact to support improvement to be taken.
April 2018	Speak my language: Overcoming language and communication barriers in public services	<p>Ensuring that people who face language and communication barriers can access public services</p> <p>R1 Public bodies are required to ensure that people can access the services they need. To take account of the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and other legislation, we recommend that public bodies regularly review the accessibility of their services to people who do not speak English or Welsh as a main language including Deaf people who use sign language. This assessment can include using our checklist.</p> <p>Developing interpretation and translation services in Wales</p> <p>R2 Our work with public bodies, interpretation and translation service providers and service users has identified some challenges for interpretation and translation services. We recommend that the Welsh Government work with public bodies, representative groups and other interested parties to make sure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the supply of interpreters is sufficient especially for languages in high demand such as BSL and Arabic; • interpreters with specialist training are available to work in mental health services and with people who have experienced trauma or violence; and • quality assurance and safeguarding procedures are in place.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
May 2018	<u>Reflecting on Year One: How Have Public Bodies Responded to the Well-being of Future Generations</u>	The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement.
May 2018	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R1 People with a learning disability have a right to live independently. The last 50 years have seen significant changes in the provision of accommodation and support. Service provision has moved to a model that enables people to live in the community in ordinary houses throughout Wales (paragraphs 1.3 to 1.10). We recommend that local authorities continue to focus on preventing people becoming dependent on more expensive placements in care homes by providing effective support at home and a range of step up accommodation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the evaluation of prevention activity so local authorities understand what works well and why. • utilising the mapping of prevention services under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 that covers other agencies and service providers. • improving the signposting of additional help so carers and support networks can be more resilient and self-reliant. This should include encouraging carers to make long-term plans for care to maintain and protect their dependants' wellbeing. • sharing risk analysis and long-term planning data with other local authorities, service providers, and partners to agree a shared understanding of the range of options. <p>R2 Population projections show that the number of people with a learning disability will increase in the future, and those aged over 65 and those with a moderate or severe learning disability will rise significantly (paragraphs 1.3 to 1.10). We recommend that local authorities improve their approach to planning services for people with learning disabilities by building on the Regional Partnership Boards' population assessments for people with learning disabilities and agreeing future priorities.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
May 2018	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R3 The Welsh Government produced guidance to local authorities, entitled 'developing a commissioning strategy for people with a learning disability' to support authorities in producing strategic plans for the commissioning of learning disability services. In conjunction with codes of practice developed following the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Welsh Government requires local authorities to develop integrated commissioning options with Local Health Board services. The aim is to provide a joined-up and cost-effective approach to the commissioning of services but our review highlighted weaknesses in current arrangements (paragraph 2.4 to 2.12). We recommend that local authorities do more to integrate commissioning arrangements with partners and providers and take account of the work of the National Commissioning Board by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the barriers that exist in stopping or hindering further integration; • improving the quality of joint strategic plans for learning disability services (see also paragraphs 3.11 to 3.14); • establishing investment models and sustainable financial structures, joint workforce planning and multi-year budgeting; and • developing appropriate governance and data sharing frameworks with key local partners that include a clear process for managing risk and failure. <p>R4 Local authorities' engagement with people with learning disabilities and their carers is variable. Whilst many authority services have positive relationships with advocacy groups, some are less successful in involving these groups and carers in evaluating the quality of services (paragraph 2.18 to 2.20). We recommend that local authorities do more to involve people with learning disabilities and their carers in care planning and agreeing pathways to further independence by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistently including people with learning disabilities and their carers in the writing, monitoring and development of care plans; • systematically involving carers and advocacy groups in evaluating the quality of services; • involving people with learning disabilities in procurement processes; and • ensuring communications are written in accessible and appropriate language to improve the understanding and impact of guidance and information.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
May 2018	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R5 Local Authorities could do more to involve service providers in commissioning and make the tendering process more effective by making it easier to navigate and more outcome focused. However, providers are not as effectively engaged as they should be (paragraphs 2.28 to 2.38). We recommend that local authorities collaborate with providers, the third sector and suppliers in understanding challenges, sharing data, and pooling expertise by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the quality, range, and accessibility of tendering information; and • working with providers to shape local markets by coming to a common understanding of the opportunities, risks, and future priorities in providing learning disabilities services. <p>R6 Most local authorities do not have effective arrangements to monitor and evaluate their commissioning of learning disability services (paragraphs 3.3 to 3.15). We recommend that local authorities develop a more appropriate set of performance indicators and measures of success that make it easier to monitor and demonstrate the impact of service activity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-designing measures, service and contract performance indicators with service providers, people with learning disabilities and their carers; • ensure commissioners have sufficient cost and qualitative information on the full range of placement and care options available; • equipping commissioners with data to demonstrate the long-term financial benefits of commissioning choices, this includes having the right systems and technology; • integrating the outcomes and learning from reviews of care plans into performance measures; • evaluating and then learning from different types of interventions and placements; and • including learning disability services in local authority scrutiny reviews to challenge performance and identify improvements.

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