**Gofal Cymdeithasol Cymru**
**Social Care Wales**

**Guidance Note 1a:**
**Setting regional and integrated priorities**

## What this guidance note does

This note provides advice on how to identify the right priorities in your area plans to ensure they are correctly focussed, action orientated and can be monitored and evaluated. It is important because the plans must be a progression from your population assessment and focus on integrated services.

The Statutory Guidance states that Regional Partnership Boards (RPB) must prioritise the integration of services in relation to:

- Older people with complex needs and long term conditions, including dementia

- People with learning disabilities;

- Carers, including young carers;

- Integrated Family Support Services: and

- Children with complex needs due to disability or illness.

Your population assessment will have identified other priority areas and you can, of course, include other areas amongst your priorities where they featured in your population assessment. You will be expected to describe regional and integrated activity against each of the core themes in your area plan.

You will also need to refer to issues that do not qualify as priorities but still featured in your population assessment.

It is expected that all priorities will start from a default position of integration. You will be expected, first and foremost, to consider the options for integration within your priority areas from the outset and explain what that integration looks like in your Area Plan (see section 2.5 of the Area Plan template)

## Guidance/advice

There are many types of planning model which could be used to create the area plans, e.g. service plans, business plans, development plans, improvement plans, action plans. Do not become preoccupied with these differences but instead view the area plan as a demonstrable outcome of your population assessment.

This means it should provide the detail necessary to translate the headline priorities identified in your assessment into outcomes and actions that convince the reader that there is a logical flow from your assessment of need, through to your identification of gaps in the provision of services, and on to your intention to make changes and improvements where they are most needed.

## Setting outcomes based priorities

A prerequisite to developing your plans will be clarity about your priorities. The combined population assessments expressed priorities in different ways, some being much more specific than others. You should review your priorities to ensure that they are appropriately expressed as the right basis on which to build a plan. For example, if the priority subject matter is loneliness and isolation, you need to choose the most appropriate way of describing what you intend doing about it, not just for managers and professionals but also in a way that makes sense to the general public. The different examples of possible action words that could be applied to your priorities illustrate that your intended action can be interpreted differently depending on what you attempting to achieve.

So, for instance, "attending" to loneliness and isolation is relatively meaningless unless it is clear what that attention entails whereas "reducing" the levels of loneliness and isolation, or even "eliminating" them, displays a much stronger intent. You may need to convert the original priorities in your population assessments into action orientated expressions to ensure your plan is properly focussed. Do not underestimate the importance of doing this as it is against this intent that your plan will be monitored and evaluated. You may consider adopting the SMART objectives approach, i.e. expressing priorities that are specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and time-based. You may also wish to consider this model using different variations of the SMART acronyms, e.g.

**S -** specific, significant, stretching

**M -** measurable, meaningful, motivational

**A -** agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-orientated

**R -** realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-orientated

**T -** time-based, time-bound, timely, tangible, trackable

The guidance makes it clear that joint area plans must focus on integrated services (see paragraph 26 of the statutory guidance) for each of the core themes included in your population assessment and your priorities should reflect this. There is no expectation to produce a plan which embraces every conceivable action that you would wish to take in relation to care and support. By definition, priorities cease to be priorities when they attempt to tackle everything. Instead, your priorities must:

◆ Reflect the outcomes of your population assessment;

◆ Be targeted at issues where integrated solutions are the focus of attention;

◆ Cover the priority areas identified in the guidance (Para.27);

◆ Include other areas amongst your priorities where they featured in your population assessment.

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**Remember**

Your population assessment will have identified a range of needs. Some of these will be priorities which can be dealt with locally. In the first instance, ensure you have included priorities for attention in your plan which are considered to need an integrated and/or regional response. Also remember that this is a 5 year plan so take a long-term view of priorities.

## Reflecting the findings of the population assessment

You may still feel that your plan does not sufficiently recognise areas of service that did not feature so strongly in your population assessment but still require improvement or development including some which at this stage would not be classified as needing an integrated response. You should verify whether these matters are being adequately addressed elsewhere, e.g. in a specific strategy, but should still be referred to in your area plan under the relevant core theme. In such cases you should explain the position of the RPB in relation to the issues and direct readers to the relevant plan or strategy.  The important principles here are to acknowledge the importance of the issue, ensure you are satisfied it is being attended to, and identify how via a suitable reference, e.g. a hyperlink.  This may include information gathered through any recent commissioning or market position exercises.

In explaining the position of the RPB on these "other" issues, it may be sufficient to simply say that the RPB will be kept informed regularly about progress. Alternatively, a more assertive reference may be needed such as *"The RPB will regularly monitor progress via data and information to determine whether it needs to take further action."*  Make sure your message is clear in respect of what you are doing about the issue.

It is useful to consider your approach to identifying priorities as a 2-tier exercise. The first involves the priorities which are central to your plan. The second is to ensure you have 'mopped up' all the other issues and needs that featured in your population assessment and referred to the action being taken in relation to them. This approach will provide you with a robust audit trail to your population assessment that nothing has been ignored without confusing readers about what are your main priorities. In reality, you will be very specific about your main priorities including actions, and be less specific but still informative about the other issues.

## Reflective questions

- Is your plan a natural and logical progression from your population assessment?
- Are the priorities stated in your population assessment reflected in your plan?
- Have you expressed these priorities in a way that ensures action can follow and be monitored?
- Does your plan focus on integrated services for each core theme? (see Guidance note 1b)
- Does your plan cover the priority areas referred to in Para.27 of the guidance?
- Have you cross referenced other issues receiving attention via other plans or strategies and explained the RPB's position on these?

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