

## 2. What are the health and social care needs of the population?

### 2.1 Assessing Need

A comprehensive Health Needs Assessment and Health Status Profile has been produced in Gwynedd to inform this Strategy. This is a process of measuring the extent and nature of the health needs of the population as a whole as well as targeting particular groups so that services can be planned and delivered to respond to them. This process includes a review of statistical information collected and collated by both health and social care organisations and discussions with individuals and a range of relevant agencies both statutory and voluntary.

Given the relatively short time since the production of the last detailed needs assessment, many aspects of the recorded health status of the people of Gwynedd will have changed very little. Other important sources, from which we gather information, such as the Census, are unchanged. Consequently, the current Needs Assessment builds on the work undertaken in 2005, and should be viewed in conjunction with it.

The Needs Assessment is in 2 parts; the first part uses national and local data sources to produce a snapshot of current patterns of health and illness in Gwynedd, and also highlights those things which we know are likely to influence the health and well-being of individuals within the county. The second part takes a number of key areas identified in a multi agency prioritising workshop (including Chronic Conditions, Alcohol, Carers, and Dementia) and focuses in more detail.

4 key questions are asked

- What is the problem and why is it important?
- What is the current situation in Gwynedd and comparison with other areas?
- What is the evidence for action in addressing the issue?
- What is known about gaps in existing service provision?

Each section then concludes with recommendations for priority action in the strategy and highlights where further work will be required. This process is similar to that used to inform the Children and Young People's Plan.

The 2007 Needs Assessment demonstrates that Gwynedd compares favorably with other areas of Wales on many health status indicators:

- Overall death rate significantly lower than the average for Wales, and marginally lower than overall death rate for England;

- Coronary Heart Disease death rates significantly below the Welsh average, with a 30% decrease in death rates between 1996 and 2005;
- Stroke death rates lower than the Welsh average;
- Respiratory death rates significantly lower than Welsh average;
- Relatively low numbers of babies born weighing less than 2500g;
- Higher proportion of the population reporting that they have 'good health' than the Wales average;
- Highest proportion of population in Wales taking regular physical exercise but below the recommended average;
- Relatively low proportion of the population living in the "most deprived" areas in Wales

These features are a cause for celebration and bear witness to the relatively good quality of life experienced by Gwynedd residents as a whole.

However, the following features are a cause for concern.

## **2.2 Demography**

The total population for Gwynedd is expected to increase only slightly over the next 20 years, but a 40% increase in the number of people between retirement age and 84, and a 75% increase in the number of people over 85 are also predicted. This is alongside a probable fall in the numbers of younger people available to meet the increased need for health and social care services. This is likely to result in an increased reliance on older people themselves and in multiple caring roles.

## **2.3 Behaviour and Lifestyles**

A number of key concerns have been identified and include:

- Lack of physical exercise
- Poor diet
- Alcohol misuse
- High percentage of smokers
- Increase in sexually transmitted disease

## **2.4 Chronic Conditions**

The greatest burden of ill-health in the population now relates to chronic conditions long term conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, respiratory disease, neurological conditions such as epilepsy and Parkinson's Disease, and chronic pain. Not only do these conditions limit the quality of life for those who suffer them, but, if poorly managed, lead to unnecessary hospital admissions, depression and anxiety, isolation, multiple drug treatments, and increased demand for daily care from health and social care providers, voluntary organisations or from informal carers such as family and friends.

## **2.5 Cancer**

The number of cancer cases in Gwynedd and the death rates from many cancers are higher than average for Wales. There has been a similar pattern for a number of years, and as yet, despite improvements in education and information regarding cancer, and improvements in access to cancer treatment, the trends have not changed.

## **2.6 Identifying the Priorities**

Due to the changes in the demographics of the population it is anticipated that there will be a growing increase in age-related diseases and long-term conditions. Whilst the premature mortality rates from cancers and heart diseases continue to fall (with improvements in prevention and treatment), the poor lifestyle choices made (illustrated by the increase in obesity rates and the proportion of the population who continue to smoke), but longer life expectancy, will see a higher proportion of our population with long term, chronic conditions such as Diabetes, respiratory conditions, Stroke and Dementia.

The changes in demography will not only increase the need for services, but fewer young people will be available to support and care for older people both formally and informally. These support networks enable older people to retain their independence. Out-migration amongst young people in Gwynedd between 1997-2001 increased from 12% to 14%. This figure emphasizes the need to ensure a vibrant economy and the success of regeneration projects to keep young people in Gwynedd and offering them better employment choices.

Key local priorities have been identified with a more in depth analysis as noted in the 2007 Gwynedd Health Needs Assessment. Inevitably this has resulted in some areas being omitted as priority areas and during the consultation process some concern was expressed by voluntary support groups and charities representing those vulnerable groups that their situation and interests had not been addressed. However while not specifically naming those groups, a

contribution to addressing their needs through the key priorities particularly will be made.

Key areas for attention in this strategy:

- Carers Services (including young carers)
- Dementia Services
- Learning Disability Services
- Mental Health
- Alcohol Dependency
- Long-term, chronic conditions, such as Diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD), Stroke and Coronary Heart Disease

Ongoing needs assessment will be a key feature of this new Strategy. All members of the Partnership will commit to an approach which ensures that patient and public perspectives are incorporated at the earliest stages of planning services. This process will also help us to ensure equality and equity in the availability and quality of services, and the standards and outcomes which can be expected by everyone living in Gwynedd. More localised assessments of need will also be developed with the communities themselves taking an active part in the process.