

Dear Director

CIW Local Authority Performance Review

We published our code of practice for review of local authority social services in April 2019 which outlined our intention to write and publish an annual letter for local authorities which will:

- provide feedback on inspection and performance evaluation activity completed by us during the year;
- report on progress the local authority has made in implementing recommendations from inspections and/or child and adult practice reviews;
- outline our forward work programme.

This letter summarises our review of Conwy County Borough Council's performance in carrying out its statutory social services functions. It follows the four principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) and our increasingly collaborative and strengths based approach to supporting improvement. The letter is intended to assist the local authority and its partners to continually improve.

The content is informed by HIW/CIW's inspection of CMHT during November 2018 and performance evaluation activity during the course of the year. Including a number of engagement visits with young people and monitoring visits to safeguarding and complaints service areas.

We discussed these matters and our proposed performance evaluation activity for 2019/20 with you at the annual Performance Review meeting on 29th April 2019.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Summary of strengths and areas for improvement in line with principles of SSWBA

- Well-being

The transformation of Conwy social services and matrix management system introduced over two years ago is now well embedded. From our working with senior managers we find there is improved clarity of roles and responsibilities and increasing confidence in subject areas. Documentation when requested by us is more readily available and answers to queries or requests for information receive consistent responses.

Senior managers in Conwy local authority demonstrate a mostly good understanding of the current strengths and weaknesses in their service. They have readily identified where individuals and teams are making progress in delivering individual outcomes for people in line with SSWBA and where teams need more support. Some mandatory training has been rolled out and more bespoke training will be delivered following discussions and a workshop held with ADSS and SCW in January 2019. We encourage managers to ensure training and expectations of outcome focused assessments and care planning gathers momentum and becomes firmly understood by all social care practitioners.

Managers will also want to support practitioners in their role by ensuring recording templates and reporting formats they use reflect the requirements of the SSWBA. Including ability to reflect personal outcomes to be achieved.

There is a very positive can do attitude in the service, senior managers have confidence in developing a range of new projects including the Maelgwn initiative and assessment centre for children, and are keen to make use of grant funding to create new models of care and support to improve outcomes for people.

- People

A useful Participation and Engagement report produced by the local authority helps demonstrate the work undertaken to engage people in the development and ownership of services in line with the SSWBA. Two participation officers are employed to support this work and they have collated good evidence of people responding to their encouragement to 'get involved'.

Independent Reviewing Officers make a significant contribution to ensuring children receive the standard of service that best meets their needs. To do this there must be sufficient time for these officers to meet with children and spend time listening to their views. The local authority will want to ensure the changes planned for this service include capacity in busy workloads for IRO's to have time to listen to children and provide them with the independent support to which they are entitled. The local authority is reminded that since the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, in 2016 the requirement of IRO's to take a more holistic view when monitoring children's arrangements extends to monitoring the child's whole case, not just their review.

During the year we heard from children about the positive benefits they gained from attending the Loud Voices group, they clearly enjoyed the different fun activity and social opportunities with their peers. The regular involvement of an IRO presented a positive opportunity to provide consistency and develop good relationships with the children. The

efforts made to ensure the service is accessible for the children ensures the session is popular.

Children told us of the challenges they faced when social workers changed and we noted during challenge meetings last year Conwy had a high number of changes in social worker compared to other local authorities. Managers in Conwy will want to review the number of changes of social worker experienced by children and ensure children's views make a difference to the planning and delivery of services.

Conwy local authority is having some difficulties recruiting Welsh speakers. This means the 'active offer' is not yet fully embedded in practice but is an ambition the local authority is working towards and some good progress is reported. There are opportunities for Conwy local authority officers to participate in Welsh language classes, engage in activities which promote the use of Welsh and increase their use of Welsh at all levels.

The local authority's internal audit of social services compliments and complaints in April 2019 highlighted delays in response to complaints. We looked at a small number of complaints in detail, during the year, we focused upon the timeliness and quality of response. We found room for improvement in timeliness. However, we found people's voices were heard and people did receive comprehensive responses to the issues they raised. We found we were able to follow the journey of individual complaints within the case management system and how those complaints were usefully considered to improve practice. Managers will want to assure themselves timeliness is improved in line with timescales prescribed in national social services complaints policy.

Our monitoring of the deprivation of liberty safeguards has identified the local authority, in common with many others in Wales, is unable to assure itself people's human rights are not being breached by being deprived of their liberty unlawfully. We will continue to monitor this.

- Prevention

Delays in responding to adult safeguarding enquires within the prescribed timescale of seven days fell below the target range the local authority themselves found acceptable for a period during the year. Having recognised the drop senior managers took remedial action to improve performance and notified elected members. The performance of the service rapidly improved. Managers and elected members will want to assure themselves management oversight and audit are sufficient to prevent any repetition.

Development of family centres across the local authority area is in early development with two centres open. The local authority has begun to look at evaluation and will want to assure itself future development of evaluation tools are focused on outcomes for people.

The challenges of providing and commissioning domiciliary care in Conwy is being managed. In a recent self-evaluation the local authority was able to report only one person waiting for domiciliary care to be commissioned and no waiting list for Reablement. This is a good position the local authority will want to work hard to maintain.

The local authority was able to report in their Social Care Commissioning Strategy; Finance Analysis document, that just under 66% of Conwy budget is currently spent on managed

care and support and 26% on prevention and early intervention. Over time the local authority wants to see an increase in expenditure on prevention and early intervention and a reduction in expenditure on managed care and support. The corporate plan supports the outcome of people are healthy and active and the Conwy Wellbeing services will be key.

Throughout 2018 our programme of work focused on care experienced children and young people. Qualitative evidence was gathered from six local authority children and fostering inspections, 22 self-evaluations completed by local authorities, challenge meetings held with those local authorities who were not subject to an inspection and engagement activity with care experienced children, care leavers and foster carers. The report will be published on our website, with key findings made in respect of profile, sufficiency, practice, partnerships, stability, governance and corporate parenting. Many of the areas we have identified for improvement are being considered by Welsh Government's Ministerial Advisory Group on improving outcomes for care experienced children and young people and we also hope local authorities will consider their own contribution to addressing these findings.

- Partnerships

The North Wales Regional Safeguarding Board for Children has continued on its journey of improvement under the current chair. Other local authorities in North Wales have told us of the positive support received from Conwy local authority and how regional partnership working supports heads of children's services to learn from each other and share good practice.

Conwy local authority managers also make a significant contribution to the national Children's Ministerial Advisory Group and the commitment to work towards earlier intervention, reduce the numbers of looked after children and improve social work practice for children in Wales is evident in discussions with them.

The inspection of the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) earlier in the year demonstrates that while there is evidence of progress in direct provision of services to people, there is more refinement required.

Conwy local authority, through universal services are making significant efforts to support community initiatives and enable people to attend community activities through the provision of information and assistance. It is not clear that people who do not meet eligibility for support from the CMHT are consistently signposted to and supported by universal services. There is a need for improved partnership working and communication to address the challenges of differing points of access into support services.

CIW Performance Review Plan for 2019-20

Our scheduled thematic adult services inspection programme for 2019/20 will be focusing on prevention and promoting independence for older people and for children services thematic inspection the focus will be on prevention, partnerships and experiences of disabled children. If your local authority is selected for inclusion in this programme, you will receive four weeks' notice of the scheduled date of the inspection.

We will undertake engagement activities aligned to the thematic inspections and meet with people who receive care and support services. We will be convening a meeting with the local authority and its key partners in the summer term to follow up areas identified in the self-evaluation submitted in January 2019 focusing on prevention and promoting independence for older people self-evaluation. A thematic national report will be published upon the completion of inspections and engagement activities.

In late 2019, we will pilot a joint inspection of child protection arrangements. The joint inspection will be led by CIW and in partnership with HIW, Estyn, HMI Constabulary (HMICFRS) and HMI Probation.

With the drive towards collaboration and integration in public services, CIW works closely with other inspectorates to share intelligence and jointly plan inspections. We will work closely with Social Care Wales to share information to support improvement in social care services.

CIW will continue in 2019/20 to work with HIW in jointly inspecting community mental health teams. We will be following up recommendations made within HIW and CIW joint thematic review of Community Mental Health Teams as part of bi-annual head of service meetings with local authorities.

Our focused activity with the local authority will include number of changes of social worker experienced by children and capacity of IROs to undertake their full range of duties with children. We will follow up on the CMHT improvement action plan and the links between support services during this next year.

This may be subject to change in the light of emerging issues.

You will note that this letter has been copied to colleagues in WAO, Estyn and HIW. CIW works closely with partner inspectorates to consider the wider corporate perspective in which social services operate, as well as local context for social services performance.

We will publish the final version of this letter on our website.

Yours sincerely



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Estyn