

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 Denbighshire County 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 CIW's performance evaluation activity during the course of the year. This included a number of engagement visits with looked after children and foster carers, focused activity in team bases, to review case files, and read the local authorities own documentation.

We discussed these matters and our proposed performance evaluation activity for 2019/20 with you at the annual Performance Review meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> 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 importance of wellbeing and promotion of independence are both clearly on the agenda and being actively embedded in services at all levels in Denbighshire local authority.

The Head of Children's and Education Services provides strong leadership and a clear emphasis on the importance of wellbeing in enabling children to be safe, be confident and to learn. We heard about the work of consolidating new relationships between staff in social services and schools and an ambition to support more parents, families and children to seek help before they reach crisis.

In line with the SSWBA we encourage the local authority to continue to recognise prevention and early intervention as statutory duties that can make a difference for children and reduce demand on budgets. We acknowledge the concern of senior managers about grant funding for statutory duties and the challenges of short term funding to sustainable financial planning.

To support staff in delivering wellbeing for people, the local authority will want to ensure all templates and recording tools are up to date in line with the requirements of delivering upon the SSWBA and the requirement to ensure assessment templates for adults and children are consistent with those used by colleagues across the Health Board footprint.

- People – voice and choice

The continued investment of resource by Denbighshire County Council in improving access through a Single Point of Access (SPoA), Talking Points and Community Navigators is in line with requirements of the SSWBA.

However, the local authority's performance indicators and carers' survey demonstrate almost a quarter of respondents reported difficulty in receiving the right information and advice when they needed it. Senior managers need to ensure the combination of SPoA and Talking Points continues to meet the requirement to provide timely and proportionate responses and have not introduced an unnecessary extra step or delay in to the process for vulnerable people and their carers who are eligible for managed care and support. The local authority should maximise learning from any complaints to operational services about poor communication or lack of information.

The Director's annual report contains many compliments from people who have used services and a recent self evaluation of older adult services undertaken by the local authority also contains examples of good practice and good outcomes for people. The positive use of these examples demonstrates a clear understanding of the importance of building positive relationships and working in partnership with staff and people who use services to recognise and maximise their own strengths and personal resources to sustain independence.

The SSWBA is also about supporting people who deliver social services, empowering them to co-produce solutions with people who need care and support and carers who need

support. Their confidence and competence is essential to the effective delivery of services and we recognise the benefits of celebrating the many positive compliments received and good progress made towards co production and implementation of SSWBA in Denbighshire Director's report. We also recognise the emphasis the local authority places on winning 'awards' and the benefits of these achievements to staff morale. However, the Directors report should also demonstrate the local authority is hearing feedback from people and contain a balance of comments including those where the feedback is not positive and has led to or will drive improvements.

Engaging with people in the language of their choice continues to be a challenge for Denbighshire County Council. The local authority recognises the challenge and is demonstrating creativity in its response, not least in its establishment of a Welsh Language Members group, a formally constituted committee of the council, with responsibility for overseeing the council's Welsh language strategy.

There is a positive balance of professional experience and enthusiasm in children's services. Front line staff and team managers benefit from the considerable knowledge of a very experienced principal social work practitioner who is generous in sharing learning and encouraging reflection. The practitioner provides balance and oversight to an experienced and enthusiastic operational management team who are keen to test new ideas.

Relatively new members of adult services senior management team have brought new ideas, experience and perspective to the service. Team managers have told us about the good support they are offered and the opportunities they have to be creative in finding solutions to meet eligible needs.

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.

- Partnerships

Our focused activity through the year has included reading a selection of children's case files. The case files provided evidence of good multi agency working and a snapshot of the complexity of challenges facing front line professionals in their work to keep children safe. Cases sometimes involved police from a range of forces, specialist nurses and the voluntary sector, and required staff to demonstrate creativity and tenacity to achieve good outcomes for children.

Minutes of meetings in the case files were of a good standard and while some actions could have been more timely, and there were some minor missed opportunities, the work was mainly good and children clearly the focus of attention.

Denbighshire's Reablement service and Step Down cluster working together with BCUHB report seeing a reduction in delayed transfers of care from the previous year, and 78% of adults completing a period of Reablement have no package of care and support six months later. This is a high figure and managers will want to ensure this service is being correctly targeted to achieve greatest benefits.

- Prevention

Denbighshire County Council is making a positive contribution to a number of collaborative work streams shared across the region, including the Community Resource team agenda. Denbighshire County Council's first operational Community Resource Team based in the Royal Alexander hospital in Rhyl has been in place for over 12 months. During focused monitoring activity we found the team room buzzing with activity and relevant information flow for the benefits of people who rely on services.

We found the service to be on a journey of positive integration, with professionals already optimising some opportunities to reduce duplication and provide seamless services for people with care and support needs. We also found variable understanding of the purpose and potential benefits of what matters conversations with some team members requiring further training to ensure a greater understanding of the importance of ensuring services become more efficient and sustainable. The most recent Community Resource Team in Ruthin is a positive addition and the authority is encouraged to continue with the roll out of community resource team bases.

Delays in the process of safeguarding adults in Denbighshire has been highlighted as an area of concern by CIW for some time. A large number of safeguarding enquiries not completed within 7 days is not an indicator of a service offering a timely response to adults who are at risk of abuse.

The direction of travel towards prevention and strengths based communities is clearly set by senior managers in Denbighshire County Council. Posters and learning materials are visible in offices and staff tell us about the use of the 'resource wheel' to underpin work and ensure people's strengths are recognised as a resource in meeting their own needs. The local authority will want to build upon this work through further developing community initiatives and social enterprises.

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.

#### CIW Performance Review Plan for 2019-20

Our scheduled thematic 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. Denbighshire County Council was selected for an inspection of older adults services, and at time of writing this letter are expecting inspection to begin imminently.

Alongside the thematic inspection programme, we will undertake engagement activities aligned to the theme of inspections and meet with people who receive care and support services. We will convene a meeting with the local authority and its key partners during the summer to follow up on the self-evaluation of promoting independence for older people that local authorities' submitted in January 2019. National reports will be published upon the completion of the thematic inspection programme and engagement activities

We are aware Welsh Audit Office have recently undertaken some work on SPoA in Denbighshire and we will also follow this up in our forthcoming inspection of services for older adults. We will also look at reablement and discharge from hospital and how these services work together support people to remain independent. Safeguarding adults is always a focus in our inspections.

Our focused activity with children's services will include looking at the number of times children experience a change in social worker.

CIW will continue to work with HIW to jointly inspect community mental health teams (CMHT). We will also follow up recommendations made within the joint HIW and CIW thematic review of community mental health teams during bi-annual head of service meetings.

CIW are working together with HMI Constabulary (HMICFRS), HMI Probation, HIW and Estyn to develop a model of joint inspection of child protection arrangements in Wales (JICPA). We will be piloting one JICPA during autumn 2019. With the drive towards collaboration and integration in public services, CIW work closely with other inspectorates to share intelligence and jointly plan inspections. We will work closely with Social Care Wales to support improvement in social care services.

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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Care Inspectorate Wales

Cc.  
WAO  
HIW  
Estyn