

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 Gwynedd 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 our inspection of children services in June 2018 and performance evaluation activity during the course of the year. This has included visits to local authority learning disability team, older people community social work service and developments within a LA care home.

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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.

We discussed these matters and our proposed performance evaluation activity for 2019/20 with you at the annual Performance Review meeting on 8 April 2019.

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

- Well-being

The local authority has a good understanding of its own strengths and areas of challenge in social services for both children and adults. The children services inspection in May 2018 showed Gwynedd Council had strong arrangements to keep children safe.

The inspection found reviews for looked after children were held in line with requirements; however work was needed to strengthen reviewing arrangements for children and young people in strengthening recording of outcomes and improved opportunities for children to see their reviewing officer. We found some children and young people did not view their review or pathway process positively and the capacity of independent reviewing officers' was a challenge in light of the increasing number of children being looked after by the local authority. We were encouraged to receive the local authority's action plan following inspection and hear of work having been undertaken to strengthen reviewing arrangements. This will be an area we will follow up through our focused activity and engagement with care experienced children.

We identified fostering arrangements were in need of strengthening to ensure adherence to regulations, with a priority being the recruitment of foster carers to improve placement choice. An area of ongoing challenge for the local authority is the sufficiency of placements for children in need of care and support. This has resulted in occasions where children have been placed in unregulated settings which can impact on their safety and well-being, and an area which requires increased focus to ensure positive outcomes.

One of the challenges for adult services is the long wait people are experiencing for domiciliary care support to begin which can lead to delays in people being discharged from hospital. This is caused in part by the fragility of the domiciliary care market, particularly in rural areas exacerbated by challenges in recruiting care workers. Gwynedd Council have a plan for transforming services and have started this process in developing local initiatives to test new ways of working with the aim of achieving better outcomes for people and overcoming these current challenges. The local authority needs to ensure it is able to manage the current demand, safeguard people and balance risks effectively when developing its transformation service plan.

Gwynedd Council are continuing to address the need for improvements in safeguarding adults and are working with their regional partners to improve outcomes for adults identified at risk. This will be an area we will continue to monitor.

- People

Gwynedd Council has a stable, skilled and experienced workforce, with most people having worked for the local authority for many years. There was evidence of Gwynedd Council growing their own' skilled workforce having links with a university and providing good opportunities for ongoing training and development. Staff told us they felt supported by managers and were able to raise concerns as they arose. Staff members we spoke with

during inspection and performance evaluation activity were positive about their experience of working for the local authority and valued being able to practice in Welsh. The local authority supports the workforce well in using the Welsh language and is able to provide an active offer to people.

Staff working for Gwynedd Council told us are happy in their work despite the challenges of increasing demand. There was good operational working relationships between teams, departments and external agencies. We found Gwynedd Council's vision and ethos of 'Ffordd Gwynedd' and 'putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything they do' was recognised and understood by the workforce and reflected the ethos of the SSWBA.

One of Gwynedd Council's achievements is the opening of a respite facility for disabled children, Hafan y Ser. The local authority directly provide have a number of care homes and domiciliary care services and have worked to ensure the services meet the requirements of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act 2016 (2016 Act). However, recruitment of care workers has been an ongoing challenge for the local authority.

Gwynedd Council face significant challenges in light of increasing numbers of deprivation of liberty safeguards and the difficulty in responding within the required timescales. 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

With prevention firmly on the agenda in adult services, work is underway to transform services in developing alternative models of service delivery for older people. Adult services have implemented five information, advice and assistance (IAA) points across the county to improve access to support for people in their local communities. We will review this as part of focused activity during 2019/20. Our inspection of children services identified work was needed to further develop the IAA service to enable workers to provide a comprehensive information service to the public.

We saw evidence of elected member oversight in implementation of the supporting families' strategy. The local authority recognise the need to further develop preventative services; this should be an area of priority action. We recognise the size and rurality of Gwynedd adds to the complexity of delivering accessible services to people.

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

We have found strong leadership and governance in Gwynedd Council. The corporate parenting board is ambitious to develop best outcomes for care experienced children with good support from across the council. We found corporate members demonstrate commitment to delivering good quality children's and adult services and we saw appropriate scrutiny given when officers reported on improvements made within the learning disability services.

We saw a good example of partnership working when we attended an event where school pupils were invited to the café in the leisure center, where adults with learning disabilities had prepared an activity for the pupils. This reflects the local authority's' ambition to strengthen partnerships between school children and people accessing its learning disability service.

There are good operational relationships between staff from the local health board and adult services who are developing innovative projects to transform services to enable people to access support closer to home. We also saw effective partnership working between children services and education and health services in securing good outcomes for children in need of care and support.

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 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 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 look at IAA and adult safeguarding, and the quality of reviews of care and support plans for children. This may be subject to change in the light of emerging issues.

You will note this letter has been copied to colleagues in WAO, Estyn and HIW. We work 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