

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 Newport City 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.

As Newport City Council was not the subject of a Care Inspectorate Wales inspection in 2017/2018, the content of this letter is informed by our performance evaluation activity during the course of the year. This activity included:

- Review of Newport City Council's looked after children self-assessment (January 2018) and subsequent challenge meeting held with officers in April 2018.
- Review of Newport City Council's self-evaluation report in respect of promoting independence and preventing escalating needs of older adults (65+).
- Focused activity undertaken in the local authority on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019. In relation to the information, advice and assistance arrangements (single point of

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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.

contact) in relation to children and adult services, including the pilot adult and children safeguarding Hub.

- Focused activity undertaken on the 11/04/19 in relation to the Gwent Wide Home First Model - Focused Activity.

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.

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

- Well-being

The local authority benefits from a stable senior management team who feel well supported by members who are committed to the principles of the Social Services Wellbeing Act. Whilst adult and children services have separate arrangements in order to respond to those presenting with needs for information, advice and assistance, they share the same ambition; namely, to provide a clear pathway, to improve people's prospects to have their needs met at the earliest opportunity, and to enable a more relevant multi-agency response. We found motivated front line staff who treated people with respect and who were enthusiastic and understood the vision for the service.

The local authority has been piloting an adult and children safeguarding hub on behalf of their regional partners since February 2018. Staff in both adult and children services valued these arrangements but believed that capacity issues meant that it was yet to achieve its potential. We viewed the daily meetings involving adult and children social services, police, early intervention and domestic abuse, as a helpful information-sharing forum, but saw the planned evaluation as a timely opportunity to ensure that it was making a difference and delivering against a clear-shared remit.

Recruitment and retention is a recognised business-critical area and the local authority is in the fortunate position of being able to recruit to social work posts, and attract experienced practitioners. They have recently resolved vacancies at service manager level, which also provides opportunity to review service arrangements. Staff interviewed across children and adult social services, valued the quality of training provided, and most were satisfied with the regularity and quality of their supervision. Inspectors noted the high level of involvement of managers, in providing 'live' support and guidance for the daily operation of the service.

The local authority has a good understanding of its own strengths and areas of challenge in social services for adults. The first contact team has benefited from improved communication resulting from the co-location of professionals from different backgrounds who are able to offer immediate advice and assistance to people. However, the local authority recognises that ongoing work with wider partners is required to ensure the change of culture needed to deliver the expectations of the Social Services Wellbeing Act.

In children services, senior managers were alert to the demand on services, recognising the pressure on workloads and management capacity; the authority uses agency staff to manage short-term vacancies as needed. There is positive evidence of management oversight, in that a social work manager 'signs off' all new cases, including those diverted to early prevention services.

However, in both adult and children services we found it difficult to evaluate the quality of the management decisions from the case recordings seen. Managers in both adults and children's services need to evidence the extent to which they provide effective challenge and record the underpinning rationale and eligibility decisions in the written record. Newport City Council is working to strengthen their quality assurance arrangements to better oversee the consistent quality of work.

- People - voice and control

There are increasing opportunities for adults and children to have their voices heard in the assessment of their needs and the planning and delivery of their care. The local authority continues to build its culture of having meaningful conversations with people about what really matters to them.

In adult services, the local authority has implemented an equality, consistency and outcomes (ECO) quality assurance method, across the teams. This strengths-based approach aims to ensure that adults are treated fairly and equitably. Staff were positive about the approach and saw it as helping to improve consistency in relation to eligibility for services and in the way that outcomes are captured.

Adult services have progressed a range of initiatives both locally and regionally to promote people's independence, for example a bilingual AskSara online self-help guide to independent living equipment. The authority has also undertaken a programme of mental capacity assessment training to ensure that social workers who are competent to carry out mental capacity assessments support people who lack mental capacity to make significant decisions.

Newport City Council recognises that the number of people managing their own care through the provision of Direct Payments has been stubbornly slow to increase (around 20 direct payments for older people) and have identified this as an area for improvement.

In children's services, we found that the good social work practice described by staff to elicit the wishes and feelings of the child and their family was not consistently evidenced in the content of written records. The local authority is still in the process of embedding the WCCIS system, and staff in children services highlighted that the current templates are not 'user friendly'.

In children's services, overall improvement is required in order to ensure a more co-productive approach to assessment and care planning. We saw some duplication of assessment and assessments that did not result in a timely care and support plan. The local authority needs to consider how children and their families understand and experience this interaction and ensure that opportunities to support early change are not missed.

Children's services has experienced a recent increase in the number of looked after children and significant pressure on placement sufficiency. The local authority has undertaken extensive work to strengthen their looked after children, care leavers and edge of care population profile. This work is recognised as a priority and will support children services and their partners to evaluate the effectiveness of their prevention and risk management strategies, and to predict current and future resource, placement and workforce needs.

The Welsh Active Offer is embedded within the IAA process, in both children and adult services. It was positive to note that there were staff members within the teams who could also communicate in the languages of Urdu, Punjabi and Shona.

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

The local authority is committed to promoting prevention, early intervention and to ensuring people are better-supported to achieve their own personal outcomes. Senior managers have worked well with internal and external partners to develop a multi-agency service for those presenting with needs for information, advice and assistance. We saw examples of new matters effecting people being resolved speedily and appropriately signposted to non-statutory services.

We saw evidence that the adult service first contact team undertook proportionate assessments that explored 'what matters' to a person and provided or directed them to the support they need via preventative services where relevant. The local authority has progressed work to develop a more coordinated approach with partners in relation to early intervention and prevention services to support people to remain independent and reduce isolation. For example, an Independent Living Strategy has consolidated the partnership between the Council and Registered Social Landlords to develop accommodation and support solutions to meet the needs of older people with learning disabilities.

The location of prevention services within the same directorate as children social services is well established and there are close operational relationships between family support, the preventions team and children services. Managers valued the attendance of the preventions team at the daily safeguarding hub meeting and saw this as strengthening IAA and 'step down' decisions. It was noted that, as in other local authorities, grant-funding requirements act as a barrier to children and families with both non-eligible and eligible needs from accessing some prevention services.

The local authority has a well-established externally evaluated partnership with Barnardos who deliver an Integrated Family Support Service children and family support services particularly focusing on those children at risk of becoming looked after or in need of protection. Given the recent increase in their looked after children population, the local authority has extended, this provision to deliver services aimed at preventing family breakdown, the removal of children but also the reduction of placement breakdown and improving the long-term outcomes for children in Local Authority care settings.

The Gwent Safeguarding Board has established a joint Adult and Children's Case Review Group to consider all referrals for APR & CPRs this has enhanced shared learning across the two sectors and supports joint working.

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.

- Partnership

Partnership arrangements at both local and regional level continue to develop and mature with a key emphasis on partnership working. This has resulted in significant improvements in commissioning, pooled budgets and increasing social care services delivered on a regional footprint. Effective partnership working requires considerable and continued commitment from all senior managers and there is a challenge in balancing this with the identified increase in demand and pressures on workloads.

Safeguarding adults and children has been the focus of significant management planning and support. Improved communication has been achieved internally and with partner organisations in the development of a pilot adult and children safeguarding hub. However, the absence of such key partners as health and education from the daily meeting is disappointing and staff raised issues regarding the general resilience of the service. The pilot arrangements are now the subject of an evaluation and the benefits of extending the multi-agency membership is under discussion.

In children services, professional referrals use a revised multi-agency referral form (MARAF). Despite accompanying detailed written advice provided to partners, we found the quality of professional referrals was inconsistent. The review of the safeguarding hub arrangements provides an opportunity to identify learning from practice and refresh multi-agency training to ensure that the thresholds and referral expectations of both early intervention and statutory children's services are shared, understood and owned by partners. It was positive that children services had recently identified 'specified points of contact' with partners not represented within the safeguarding hub to help improve timeliness for example of information sharing and lateral checks.

In adult services, an example of collaborative working between the five Gwent local authorities and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and other public bodies is the establishment of the Home First Service based at Royal Gwent and Neville Hall Hospital. In the short time since the team has been established, it has significantly prevented unnecessary admissions to hospital and facilitated timely discharge. Home First is valued by health colleagues and evidences innovative, collaborative and integrated working, ensuring good outcomes for people through undertaking what matters conversations and building on people's strengths.

The establishment of the Mental Health Triage project (MHTP) situated in Gwent Police Control Room is an example of partnership and collaborative working between the five Gwent local authorities, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Gwent Police Authority.

We visited the MHTP and although this is a relatively new project, the data available indicated there has been a reduction in the number of occasions when police have been deployed to incidents and in the amount of time, police spend dealing with incidents.

Moreover, there are indications that peoples' outcomes are being improved through signposting and negotiating access to more appropriate services as well as through a reduction in Section 136 detentions.

#### CIW performance review plan for 2019-20

Our scheduled thematic adult services inspection programme for 2019/20 will be focussing on prevention and promoting independence for older people. The focus of children's services thematic inspection 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. CIW 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 on promoting independence for older people submitted in January 2019. 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 in partnership with HIW, Estyn, HMI Constabulary (HMICFRS) and HMI Probation. 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 share information to support improvement in social care services.

CIW will continue to work with HIW in in 2019/20 to jointly inspect community mental health teams. CIW 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.

We will also undertake two pieces of focused activity with the local authority throughout the year and the details of these will be confirmed.

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