

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 Wrexham 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 our inspection of services for older adults in Wrexham County Borough Council during January 2019 and performance evaluation activity during the course of the year. This has included a number of monitoring visits to children's services and an Improvement Conference held in December 2018, and a formal follow up meeting in May 2019.

We discussed these matters and our proposed performance evaluation activity for 2019/20 with you at the annual Performance Review meeting on 10th 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 local authority has a good understanding of its own strengths and areas of challenge in social services for adults. Older people can be increasingly confident the service is reflecting the requirements of the social services and wellbeing act in balancing individual autonomy with managing risks.

In the early part of 2018 Children's services were not benefiting from the same level of insight or improvement. It became evident improvements expected in children services following a previous inspection were not being delivered and some areas were experiencing decline. We highlighted concerns to the local authority and addressed them through a CIW Improvement Conference. At the close of conference we were satisfied the local authority understood our concerns and had begun to take steps to make improvements.

- People

There are increasing opportunities for carers, adults and children to have their voices heard and be equal partners in the assessment of their needs and the planning and delivery of their care and support. We saw the provision of formal advocacy for adults extended and the recruitment of some very experienced Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing officers (ISROs) for children has potential to drive further improvements in children's services.

We are aware ISRO capacity has been increased in WCBC, however, there is more work to do to ensure the local authority consistently listens to the voice of the child, ensure plans are up to date and not allowed to drift to the detriment of the child. Local authorities need to ensure individual IRO caseloads reflect their duties and enable the IRO to perform their role in compliance with the SSWBA, the ECHR and the UNCRC.

There has been good progress in implementing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and undertaking mental capacity assessments for adults in Wrexham County Borough Council. This is a key area of work where the local authority has responsibility for ensuring the most vulnerable people have their voices heard. Wrexham County Borough Council does not have a waiting list of outstanding Deprivation of Liberty applications or approvals.

Across social services there are significant pressures upon staff to manage demand and changing expectations in an increasingly complex legal framework. These pressures are compounded in Wrexham by ongoing difficulties of recruitment and retention of the social care workforce. Social care workers do report very visible, supportive managers who are keen to share responsibilities, knowledge and skills. However, it is also a responsibility of the director of social services to drive a whole sector plan to ensure a sufficient, skilled, safe and focused workforce to promote the wellbeing of people with care and support needs and prevent people reaching crisis. We suggest this to be a priority area for the local authority as they work in partnership with the local health board and voluntary sector.

Challenges in recruitment and retention of staff is also impacting the local authority's ability to provide an active offer of services in the Welsh language. The local authority is aware of

its duties and challenges and is engaging in a range of activities to resolve these. However, while there are some Welsh speakers in the service it is unlikely the duty will be fully met.

- Prevention

With prevention firmly on the agenda for adults, work has begun to develop alternative models of service delivery in both older people and disability services. There has been some success in day and work opportunities for people with learning disabilities but more work is required to develop a joint approach to the review and provision of third and independent sector early intervention and prevention services to improve coordination, reduce isolation and support people to remain independent.

Staff from across social care services in Wrexham County Borough Council reflect a can do and will do approach and there are areas of innovation and good practice across adults and children's services. We have heard about an increase in formal reflective practice sessions since our children's improvement conference in December 2018. We welcome and encourage a strengths based approach to promoting staff competencies and confidence through staff supervision, mentoring, training and reflective practice learning, both as groups and individuals.

As part of making children's services more robust the local authority is intending to make good use of the Welsh Government Transformation Fund. There does need to be support for practitioners to use their skills and experience to develop more creative means of supporting families, and reduce the number of children who become looked after. Practitioners work must be reflective and evidenced based and they must be supported by managers to make informed decisions. The local authority's recent reflection on the process of legal gateway meetings and the role of team managers in this process is welcome.

Safeguarding adults has been the focus of considerable management planning and support in Wrexham County Borough to good effect. Deficits in national documentation have been filled with local policies and procedures that have also been and shared regionally. There is a good framework within which practitioners can work to meet their adult safeguarding duties under the SSWBA.

The timely management oversight and audit developed in adult safeguarding by Wrexham County Borough Council provides a firm basis upon which to improve audit and quality assurance across services more generally. The local authority will want to ensure managers at all levels understand their role and responsibilities in ensuring recent improvements in quality are maintained and further progress is made.

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

Senior officers across the local authority are able to demonstrate the link between their roles in housing, economy and finance and the social care agenda. There is a clear understanding of the benefits of prevention and the potential negative impact on people and budgets when service planning and responses are delayed or ineffective.

There are some good relationships with colleagues from the local health board and some very good innovative projects. Front line services would benefit from strong strategic support to move beyond visions and projects to a clear understanding of what a system of sustainable outcome focused services will look like in practice in Wrexham. There is opportunity to develop local governance arrangements within wider regulatory parameters and these opportunities can be maximised to ensure services become sustainable in line with Well-being of Future Generations Act.

CIW Performance Review Plan for 2019-20

Our scheduled inspection programme for 2019/20 will be focusing on prevention and promoting independence for older people and for children services 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.

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. A National report will be published upon the completion of the thematic inspection programme and engagement activities.

Our focused activity with the local authority will focus upon areas discussed in the improvement conference. This may be subject to change in the light of emerging issues.

CIW will continue to work with HIW to jointly inspect community mental health teams (CMHT). We will also follow up recommendations made within joint HIW and CIW review of community 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Eastlake', written in a cursive style.

Sharon Eastlake
Interim Head of Local Authority Inspection Team
Care Inspectorate Wales

Cc.
WAO
HIW
Estyn