

Dave Street
Director of Social Services
Caerphilly County Borough Council
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Tredomen
Ystrad Mynach
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Date: 03 August 2020

Dear Dave Street,

Care Inspectorate Wales Local Authority Performance Review April 2019 - March 2020

The code of practice for review of local authority social services in April 2019 outlines 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 Caerphilly County Borough Council performance in carrying out its statutory social services functions from April 2019 – March 2020.

We acknowledge, due to the unprecedented circumstances relating to COVID-19, we were unable to complete the annual performance review meeting. We believe that there remains significant benefits in identifying and drawing the attention of the local authority and its partners, recognising strengths and areas for improvements required. The letter is intended to assist the local authority and its partners to continually improve.

It follows the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and our increasingly collaborative and strengths based approach to supporting improvement.

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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.

The content of this letter is informed by the performance evaluation activity undertaken by the inspectorate during the course of the year. This activity included:

- focused activity adults services January 2020
- focused activity children's services February 2020
- engagement with older adults and their carers September 2019
- head of service meetings
- challenge meeting prevention and promotion of independence for older people October 2019

Summary of strengths and areas for improvement in line with principles of the Act 2014

Well-being

Caerphilly County Borough Council benefits from a stable and experienced senior management team. Both adult and children services receive political and corporate support and there is a shared understanding of the direction and drive needed to ensure that services improve outcomes for people.

The local authority has continued to work hard, in the implementation of the Act 2014, during a time of financial constraint and budgetary savings to reshape its services. The ambition of the local authority's plans signals its commitment to improving people's well-being and independence. There is a clear recognition that a whole systems approach is needed, working in partnership with service users, local communities, partner agencies and across children's and adults services, to improve the quality of services.

Older people and their carers benefit from initiatives which promote their well-being and independence. We received positive feedback from individuals through our engagement activities about the significant difference these initiatives have made, reducing social isolation and promoting independence in local extra care schemes.

We undertook focused activity in adult services specifically looking at safeguarding. We identified strengths including voice and wishes of the person effectively embedded within the process and practice. We found evidence of positive multi-agency working with effective and supportive management oversight with clear decision making rational. We saw how practitioners arranged immediate protection to keep vulnerable individuals safe from the risk of harm. The local authority recognises its responsibilities as a corporate parent with partners, stakeholders and directorates understanding the issues faced by young people with a clear commitment to care experienced leavers.

The local authority has a relatively stable looked after children population. For its most complex and challenging young people the development of children's residential homes within the local authority continues, with an application to register a second home and plans to develop a third by the end of 2020. This initiative is intended to enable a reduction in the need for children to be placed in high cost residential provision outside of the local authority.

We found within family group meetings and core groups a strength based approach being introduced, multi-agency partners initially struggled but can see the benefits for children and their families. Outcomes are evidenced using "distant travelled tools" at all key stages within a young person's journey.

Responsibility for children's and adult safeguarding are managed within children's services. This has improved capacity and resilience by working collaboratively across disciplines.

People

Caerphilly County Borough Council continues to have a stable and skilled workforce, with many staff having worked for the local authority for a number of years. During focused activities staff informed us of the positive professional support within teams, from their line and senior managers.

Many local authorities including Caerphilly County Borough Council continue to find recruitment difficult in some areas of the social care workforce. Successful initiatives including reviewing the market supplement for key posts and implementing an enhanced remuneration package for foster carers has promoted recruitment in hard to fill posts.

The local authority is fully committed to involving residents in the shaping of services. The local authority over the past year have undertaken a number of consultations in respect of reviewing and developing services with 19 surveys being sent out five for adult's services and 14 for children's services. In addition, young people have been involved in the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) evaluation of placements.

The local authority have identified the difficulty in hearing the voices of young people within the 13 plus age range. Engagement has been undertaken an example being consultation undertaken between young people and independent reviewing officers (IRO) where documentation was reviewed and following young people's views made available on line. The local authority considers this area as a challenge and will continue to develop creative approaches to gather the views of children and families about their experiences.

We identified the impact of how training by all staff on "What Matters" conversation has improved practice, ensuring better outcomes for adults and children. Staff articulated how their practice had changed and how they had shared their training experience with colleagues.

Significant changes to documentation on Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) has allowed more open narrative led recordings. We found evidence of social workers using strength based outcome focused conversations working with service users, cares and families to promote their wishes and feelings. Children's Services social workers discussed how they are now using the risk model and are "holding the risk", formulating care and support plans and moving away from written agreements with families to developing shared safety plans.

Interviews during focused activity with care experienced young people evidenced positive engagement with their personal assistant (PA), youth services, housing, and partner agencies. The 16+ team were praised for being flexible in their approach, responsive and going the extra mile to ensure the young person's best interest is at the forefront of their practice.

During the adults focused activity, we saw evidence of good Mental Capacity Act (MCA) assessments being undertaken by social workers where people lacked capacity,

assessments provided appropriate understanding of the issues significant to them and best interest decision made accordingly. Social workers provided robust assessments that accurately represented the person's situation.

We found evidence during adult focused activity of people being supported by advocates to participate in decisions that affect them. We were told how the regional partnership board had worked on a partnership agreement for formal advocacy developing the wider Gwent offer.

The local authority has undertaken a creative approach in seeking to recruit domiciliary care workers, arranging a tea and cake recruitment event resulting in 30 people being interviewed. Registration of domiciliary care workers has been promoted with staff attending planned workshops with Social Care Wales to support workers undertaking the registration process, this has included supported living staff. Regional Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) bid has been submitted to pay for registration fee for all independent sector staff as an incentive to register.

We continue to monitor of the implementation of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) which has identified the local authority, in common with many others in Wales, is unable to assure itself that people's human rights are not being breached by being deprived of their liberty unlawfully. Our joint national report on DoLS will be issued in due course.

Prevention

Prevention is an inherent part of the Caerphilly County Borough Council's business. Social services have identified the long term benefits for individuals and families who engage in the services within the prevention agenda. Collaboration is an inherent part of this agenda with evidence of both internal and external partnership working with agencies as being critical in developing and delivering services.

Within adults services we saw relevant information shared with contract and commissioning team and the quality assurance and improvement officer. Through identifying safeguarding themes in relation to provider's services and undertaking thematic audits, provided evidence of practice development to improve the safety and well-being of service users.

A key priority has been the implementation of the safe reduction strategy in respect of children who have become looked after. Work has been undertaken with ICF funding being used in early help and prevention services to prevent young people from entering the looked after system. Additional resources for family group meetings, extra psychologist in Team around the Family (TAF) are also used to prevent admission into care. Fostering has expanded its support services to support family and friend's placements through working with My Support Team (MyST) who offer additional psychologist support to such placements to prevent placement breakdown.

Partnership

We were told of how the transformation grant have been used to develop Integrated Well-being Networks within North Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Compassionate Communities. Health have employed 6 community connectors to work in GP surgeries supporting people at risk from loneliness and isolation as well as supporting people discharged from hospital.

Funding has been identified for next 18 months to develop the work of Community Champions and their role within the multi-disciplinary team.

Other positive areas of joint working include the Pan Gwent Better Care Project is one example of work undertaken on a regional basis with funding from Welsh Government, looking at all double handed calls with the aim of releasing more care hours into the system. Senior practitioner will assess packages of care, consider use of equipment, train staff in safe moving and handling. South East Wales Shared Lives (SEWLAS) are seeking to develop more placements with families, to reduce the need for hospital admissions for people with mental health problems.

During 2018 our programme of work focused on care experienced children and young people. The [report](#) is published on our website. Key findings highlight areas for improvement in respect of profile, sufficiency, practice, partnerships, stability, governance and corporate parenting. Many of the areas we have identified for improvement continue to be 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.

In December 2019 we wrote to all local authorities asking for information about the Public Accounts Committee report following their enquiry into care experienced children, specifically recommendation 5 concerning the effectiveness and frequency of end of placement reviews.

Caerphilly County Borough Council confirmed the range of mechanisms they have in place to prevent potential placement breakdown and ensure stability, with a focus on learning and informing practice

Partnerships

Political support for social services remains strong. Senior officers are able to demonstrate how the links between the different directorates contribute to supporting the work of social services across the local authority. The Chief Executive and Director of Social Services (DoSS) describe their roles as supportive with appropriate challenge, fostering the right environment for the senior management team to undertake their role successfully.

Caerphilly County Borough Council is a proactive contributor to the regional boards and participates on sub groups and joint working projects. This has resulted in the finalisation and signing off a section 33 agreement to allow the allocation of pooled funds for residential care for older people.

Partnership arrangements at both regional and local level continue to develop and mature. The regional 'Home First' model at the Royal Gwent Hospital is an example of this in practice. Health and social care professionals working together to ensure people are screened by a 'trusted assessor', ensuring and supporting early discharge from hospital, with ongoing assessment undertaken at home.

We found evidence of good joint working on complex cases between children's services and specialist agencies services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Youth Offending Services (YOS), Barnardo's and police, with effective risk

management and information sharing in the best interest of the young person embedded in practice.

CIW Performance Review Plan for 2020-2021

Our scheduled thematic inspection programme for 2019-2020 focused on prevention and promoting independence for older people, and for the current children's services thematic inspection the focus is on prevention, partnerships and experiences of disabled children. Due to the current emergency situation relating to COVID-19 we have paused the publication of our older persons report and paused all activity relating to the disabled children's review. We will advise you in due course when we envisage recommencing our inspections.

We hope to publish the older people's national report in due course and want to take this opportunity to thank you for your local authority's contribution to this.

Due to the unforeseen circumstances we find ourselves in, we are currently reviewing and considering our work plan for the remainder of 2020-2021.

CIW worked together with HMI Constabulary (HMICFRS), HMI Probation, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Estyn to develop a model of joint inspection of child protection arrangements in Wales (JICPA). This approach was piloted during the autumn of 2019. This was an excellent example of new ways of working across Wales and a real drive towards collaboration and integration in public services.

We continue to 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 Audit Wales, Estyn and HIW. CIW works closely with partner inspectorates to consider the wider corporate perspective in which social services operate, as well as the local context for social services performance.

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

Yours sincerely,



Lou Bushell-Bauers
Head of Local Authority Inspection

Cc.
Audit Wales
HIW
Estyn