

Jake Morgan  
Director of Community Services  
Carmarthenshire County Council  
County Hall  
Carmarthenshire  
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Date: 03 August 2020

Dear Jake Morgan,

## **Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 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 Carmarthenshire County Council's performance in carrying out its statutory social services functions from April 2019 – March 2020.

We acknowledge, that due to the unprecedented circumstances relating to COVID-19, that in many instances we were unable to complete the annual performance review meeting.

However, we believe that there remains significant benefits in identifying and drawing the attention of the local authority and its partners, to the areas of both strength and 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 Wellbeing (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:

- inspection of older adults services, May and June 2019
- focused activity in children's services, 15 and 16 August 2019
- Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and CIW inspection of Llanelli Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), 3 and 4 December 2019
- engagement with Working Together Parent and Carers Group, 11 March 2020

During the course of the year we have been in discussions with you during all of the activity listed above, and as such, our annual performance letter content is an accurate reflection of our ongoing findings which we have consistently shared with you.

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

#### **Well-being**

The CIW inspection of older adults services found practitioners, managers, partners and staff from other departments within the local authority articulated a shift of culture as a consequence of the 2014 Act. This has resulted in a shared focus on addressing the well-being of people. We found common understanding across key agencies, notably between health, social care and police. This means people can be confident their safety and well-being is thoroughly considered by a multi-agency group. Both inspections undertaken in 2019 found there were good links and communication between management within the health board and local authority, with good overview of the service by both authorities. Staff were positive about working in Carmarthenshire County Council. They spoke highly of their colleagues and team managers and said they felt well supported.

The CMHT inspection found good links with the local authority centralised safeguarding team and there were clear policies and procedures in place for staff to follow. Training information provided confirmed that staff had received adult and child safeguarding training. Staff we spoke with were clear about their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding adults and children and were able to describe the reporting processes.

The focused activity undertaken in children's services in relation to safeguarding arrangements for children subject to sexual exploitation found that a multi-agency risk assessment process for child sexual exploitation was in place and was understood by staff. It was positive to note social workers working with other professionals through a risk assessment process and progress being thoughtfully considered to benefit vulnerable children.

#### **People**

During inspection, people routinely told us they were satisfied with the services that had helped them. Through review of care and support records and talking to people receiving services we were satisfied people's views were taken into account. When people lacked capacity to understand issues significant to them we found social workers provided robust assessments that accurately represented the person's situation. The service users who

took part in the CMHT inspection process were generally positive about the services they received. Service users felt included and respected by the choices they were given.

Parents and carers of disabled children told us they had a voice and were listened to through the Working Together group and events held. They said they recognised the openness and a transparent approach taken by the local authority. This helped communication and understanding the plans and vision of Carmarthenshire County Council. Some parents valued their involvement in the recruitment of staff. Parents told us that they were all aware of direct payments, but identifying a personal assistant was challenging.

The local authority has stable management teams across the social services department; a new chief executive was appointed at the end of 2019. Recruitment of staff has become a challenge this year, there are concerns that the supply of social work staff is diminishing. Staff told us line management support was good at all levels within children's and adult services. Children's services staff acknowledge the benefits of the 'Pod' meetings utilised in children's services as these provided an opportunity for shared thinking through complex family circumstances. Psychologists provide complementary support to the pods. This is important in providing supportive challenge from a discipline different to social work. Reflective work such as this, adopting a strengths based practice model and the stability and leadership of the management group are contributory factors in the local authority having the lowest looked after children rate per 10,000 population in Wales. Staff were positive about working in the local authority. They spoke highly of their colleagues and team managers and said they felt well supported.

The local authority has a Welsh language board working across social care and housing. The senior manager with lead for the Welsh language has plans to reinvigorate the board which works to an action plan. The Active Offer is promoted in the local authority and there is a good proportion of staff who can provide a service in Welsh. The CIW inspection found people were actively supported in their use of Welsh language. Some staff mentioned this as a reason for working in the local authority. We found evidence services were made available through the medium of Welsh as far as possible to enable people to be supported in the language of their choice.

We continue to monitor 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.

The council report demand remains an issue and screening is important. The backlog has reduced by half in the last year. This is managed by two dedicated posts in the safeguarding team and enables response to urgent situations. Over thirty social workers have recently received training to undertake Best Interests Assessments, but staffing vacancies are an additional challenge.

## **Prevention**

Carmarthenshire County Council promotes inter-disciplinary working to support people's independence. The local authority and Hywel Dda University Health Board have collaborated in developing and investing in services which are responsive to acute poor health. The Tocals service is an example of effective working across disciplines to support

people's independence and well-being. Other preventative approaches such as GP Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings, social prescribers, dementia friendly communities and the Fulfilled Lives scheme demonstrate a commitment to prevention in Carmarthenshire. CCC evaluation has indicated these are addressing the needs of people at an earlier stage and preventing needs escalating.

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.

CIW did not receive a response about this recommendation and would ask that the local authority respond to this request for information.

## **Partnerships**

In older adults services we found good leadership provided by health and social care senior managers and programmes to strengthen communities. There were examples of local and regional multi-agency partnerships to provide strategic direction to harmonise practice and streamline the deployment of resources.

We found multi-disciplinary responses and a shared sense of purpose working together across professional groups. This enabled prompt and effective responses at critical times for people. We found effective preventative multi-disciplinary work at different levels featured prominently throughout our inspection fieldwork.

During the CMHT inspection we found a multidisciplinary approach was in place for assessment, care planning and review and that service users and their families were involved, where appropriate, in the process. We found that there were good links and communication between the management within the health board and local authority, with good overview of the service by both authorities. The team had close links with third sector agencies such as MIND. Many of these services were jointly funded by Hywel Dda University Health Board and Carmarthenshire County Council.

Our focused activity work in children's services found partners contributed to safeguarding processes, with good communication evident particularly between police and social services. Services worked well together, staff gave high regard to services available through youth services and recognised the preventative work undertaken. Multi Agency Child Sexual Exploitation (MACSE) meetings provided a good opportunity to consider both strategic and operational matters.

## **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 current children 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 people's 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, 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 a fantastic 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 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