

Morwena Edwards
Director of Social Services
Gwynedd Council
Council Offices
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Date: 03 August 2020

Dear Morwena Edwards,

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 Gwynedd Council's 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 improvement. 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.

Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru (AGC)
Swyddfa Llywodraeth Cymru
Sarn Mynach
Cyffordd Llandudno
LL31 9RZ
www.arolygiaethgofal.cymru

☎ 0300 790 0126
☎ 0872 437 7303
✉ CIW@gov.wales

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
Welsh Government Office
Sarn Mynach
Llandudno Junction
LL31 9RZ
www.careinspectorate.wales

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:

- focused activity in children's services
- focused activity in older adults services
- engagement with older adults and their carers within different schemes and projects in the community.

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 is a 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

Older people and their carers benefit from initiatives, which promote their well-being and independence. These include projects such as Dementia Go and extra care schemes operating within local communities. We received positive feedback from individuals about the significant difference these initiatives had made to their lives. Individuals told us how they reduced social isolation and promoted independence.

One of the challenges identified in adults services is the delays people experience in receiving domiciliary care support and provision of equipment, resulting in delayed discharges from hospitals for people. The local authority has piloted projects to respond to the fragility of the domiciliary care market, and has clear ambitions to professionalise the home care role and reconcile the wage levels across all sectors by April 2021. This is in line with the local authority's workforce and recruitment strategy within social care 2018-2023. Gwynedd Council's vision is for home care services to move towards a locality/patch-based model, and to commission based on outcomes for individuals. Further discussions between the local authority and local health board considering joint commissioning of services are ongoing, and CIW will be interested in the progression of this work.

The local authority needs to continue to ensure it is able to manage the current demand, safeguard people and balance risks effectively when developing its transformation service plan. Focused activity in 2019 demonstrated that there is still room for improvement in safeguarding services. Particularly in ensuring compliance with recording to reflect the overarching duties of 2014 Act. The local authority needs to demonstrate greater analysis of the decision making at the time of referral whilst ensuring timely and accurate records are maintained/kept.

In 2019 we undertook focused activity in children's services. We identified strengths including good management oversight of the content and quality of assessments, sound case analysis and closure summaries. We found good examples of what matters conversations and the child's voice being sought.

The inspection of children's services during 2018 found reviews for looked after children were held in line with requirements but further work was required to strengthen reviewing arrangements for children and young people. The local authority updated CIW in March 2020 with progress it has made and have invested significant time and resources into

assessing and reflecting how this service could be improved, demonstrating the commitment to drive progress. The work has identified ongoing challenges in implementing the new model of reviewing due mostly due to significant increase in the numbers of looked after children. The commission of an independent consultant will provide a further report on progress to date, and the impact of these challenges on the new model of working. It is trusted that the local authority continue to inform the CIW of further progress.

People

Gwynedd Council continues to have a stable, skilled and experienced workforce, with most people having worked for the local authority for many years. The local authority reports they are facing more recruitment challenges recently. Staff informed CIW about the positive professional support within teams and from their direct line managers. However, some staff told us they felt undervalued in their professional roles. Training has been rolled out for all staff in collaborative communications and a commitment to strengths based practice. We will be interested to observe how this is further embedded in practice over the next twelve months.

A strength in Gwynedd is that the local authority meets its statutory duty to offer services in the Welsh language. People spoken to as part of the engagement work consistently referenced how they had been able to communicate through their language of choice during assessments and subsequent contacts. This reflects the local authority's commitment and success in employing Welsh speaking employees and in meeting its obligations in line with Welsh Language Standards.

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.

Prevention

As part of the Gwynedd Council's preventative strategy 2020-2022, they have developed a newly established team in children's services, operational since September 2019, to respond to harmful and problematic sexual behaviours. The aim of this innovative service is to ensure that there is a multidisciplinary skillset to provide appropriate and timely intervention to reduce incidents of abuse and exploitation. Over the next twelve months, CIW will be interested to monitor the success of these arrangements.

One of the challenges for the local authority, as with other local authorities in Wales is the increase in the numbers of looked after children. The local authority has plans to increase their capacity to care for looked after children, and one strategy for achieving this is to reconfigure their fostering team. Another example is that the local authority now has a specific social work post dedicated to consider the appropriateness of discharging Care Orders, and to make such court applications where relevant.

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 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.

The local authority's children's services has responded innovatively to end of placement reviews by commissioning a third sector agency, Y Bont, to conduct these. The aim of using Y Bont is to promote impartiality and to collate any emerging issues from placement breakdowns. There are established channels so that Y Bont can easily communicate their findings with both relevant team, senior managers and fostering panel.

Partnerships

Adults services have established five information, advice and assistance (IAA) points across the county to improve access to support for people in their local communities. We observed one IAA point in Bangor, a multi-disciplinary team who are co-located, although it is acknowledged that this is not the case in all remaining points at present. We saw the benefits of this in practice to include; appropriate decisions about who was best to respond, reduction of duplication, and effective communication to benefit individuals between professionals of various disciplines.

Community connectors are located in 3 of the information advice assistance (IAA) points across the county and it is hoped that there will be a community connector in each of the five. These are Welsh Government-funded posts and sponsored by third sector indicative of the local authority's commitment to partnership working.

In terms of improvements for adults services, the local authority should continue to develop and understand when an advocate could support the determination and delivery of outcomes. There is also a need to improve understanding of its duty to work in partnership with individuals and ensure that their voice is central to care planning.

During our focused activity in children's services we observed a number of examples of effective partnership working both with statutory partners and the third sector. This resulted in better outcomes for children and families in Gwynedd.

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 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 peoples 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 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 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 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