

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 Ceredigion County 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 and performance evaluation activity during the course of the year.

- Review of the local authority's looked after children self-assessment (January 2018) and subsequent challenge meeting held with officers in April 2018.
- Engagement activity with children and carers, and discussions with the local authority as part of looked after children thematic programme.

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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.

- Review of the local authority self-evaluation report in respect of promoting independence and preventing escalating needs of older adults (65+).
- Focused activity undertaken in the local authority in both children and adults services.
- HIW and CIW inspection of CMHT.

We discussed these matters and our proposed performance evaluation activity for 2019/20 with you at the annual performance review meeting on 9 April 2019.

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

- Well-being

Ceredigion County Council has an experienced senior management team within adult and children services who have a good understanding of the department's strengths and areas for improvement. This is supported through positive regional partnership working to identify and develop services informed by consultations and the population needs assessment. Ceredigion County Council is undergoing a corporate restructure and transformation plan to address ongoing budgetary challenges and deliver sustainable services.

The four local authorities in Mid and West region have adopted the Sign of Safety Practice Framework. We heard how Ceredigion County Council is working collaboratively on its implementation and development in order to promote consistency in services across the region; and has decided to adopt the framework for both adults and children's services. We had an opportunity to discuss how practice was changing with Independent Chairs for Child Protection and were told the new operating model was welcomed by all staff and partners.

We found the new operating model to be aligned with the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act [Wales] 2014 in putting people at the heart of what the local authority does, with particular focus on co-production, prevention and developing person-centred solutions.

During focused activity work we met with managers and practitioners from children services and heard the difference the new ways of working were making to children and how children and young people were enabled to safely remain with their families. We found motivated front line staff in children's and adult services who treated people with respect and who were enthusiastic and understood the vision for the service.

- People – voice and control

The importance of ensuring compliance with the Welsh language standards and the "Mwy na Geiriau" strategic framework was evident with the active offer fully embedded. It is positive to hear the local authority are developing bilingual documentation to enable its workforce to practice bilingually supported by an audit of Welsh language in the workplace and the provision of a range of training opportunities to support and raise awareness of the language.

The local authority has an experienced and stable workforce. 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 supporting staff to achieve social work

qualifications, however maintaining a stable workforce can be a challenge in light of structure changes. An area of strategic priority for the local authority is to strengthen its appraisal process along with continued corporate restructuring.

Safely reducing the number of children who are looked after is recognised as a priority with the local authority routinely evaluating the effectiveness of its prevention and risk management strategies with its partner agencies to predict current and future resource, placement and workforce needs. There is a need to strengthen fostering services and commissioning arrangements in order to meet demand and avoid situations where children may be placed in unregulated settings.

The children and foster carers we spoke to were mainly positive about the support they received. Social workers were described as 'super' and that there was always someone at the end of the phone. Young people said the local authority had tried its best to help them and keep them safe. They also told us they wanted the local authority to be honest with them and not to hold 'things back' from them and wanted fewer changes of social worker.

The significant variance of children who are looked after being visited within the required times has led to targeted improvement activity by the local authority. It is important for the local authority to continue to assure itself that all children receiving care and support are seen regularly and are supported.

We have heard how the Carers Fund scheme has supported carers and provided support to people in crisis. It is positive to see the development of the carer's service area and consideration given to strengthening the out of hour's provision.

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 a commitment to develop DEWIS, and heard how the Community Connectors were assisting with this and of the intention to embed DEWIS in the local authority website.

We heard the positive development of Porth y Gymuned as a through age service providing 1:1 information, advice and assistance to assist people to source appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.

We found the local authority to be a learning organisation for example seeking opportunities to visit other local authorities at a regional and a national level to assist in its continued improvement.

The local authority had challenges with the availability of domiciliary support for people living independently at home. The local authority recognise people supported through

domiciliary care later in life, with higher needs, wishing to live independently in their own community and working on improving their performance in this area.

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

We visited Porth Gofal, an integrated information, assistance and advice service, in partnership with, Hywel Dda Health Board and the Third Sector and other statutory agencies. This is enabling information sharing and assisting with informed decision making and providing a more consistent and coordinated access to care and support in a timely manner.

The importance of partnership working was evident. We saw evidence of positive working relationship between children and adults services, with other departments within the local authority as well as evidence of the local authority working in partnership with statutory partners and the third sector at a local and regional level.

We heard how Ceredigion County Council contributed to the development of the Adult Safeguarding Threshold Guidance a document developed by CWMPAS, the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board. We heard how the threshold document has been developed to ensure a regional collective response to keeping people safe is appropriate and proportionate to the abuse/neglect identified or the risk thereof. We discussed the examples within the guidance and the advantages of a different reporting form and process for Provider concerns.

We undertook two days focused activity within the local authority Community Mental Health service and found good operational partnership working. We heard of the challenge of accessing resources and the transformation agenda in this service to enable people to receive support within their own communities. The local authority received a HIW and CIW inspection in November 2018 which highlighted the service provided safe and effective care with there a need to focus on compliance with all Health and Care Standards (2015) and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

The inspection found a good multidisciplinary approach with regards to assessments, care planning and reviews to ensure good outcomes for people. Care plans were strength based and recovery focused. The CMHT and the Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team (CRHTT) demonstrated positive working relationships.

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 and for children services thematic inspection 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.

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 submitted in January 2019 focusing on prevention and promoting independence for older people self-evaluation. 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 and 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 in 2019/2020 to work with HIW in jointly inspecting community mental health teams. We 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.

Our focused activity with the local authority will include focusing on the quality of care and support plan reviews for children and young people and the quality of deprivation of liberty safeguards.

This may be subject to change in the light of emerging issues.

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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Estyn