

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 Flintshire 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 performance evaluation activity during the course of the year which includes the adult safeguarding focused activity in February 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.

We discussed these matters and our proposed performance evaluation activity for 2019/20 with you at the annual performance review meeting on 15 April 2019.

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

- Well-being

People can be confident the local authority senior management team have a good understanding of the strengths and areas of improvement required in both adults and children's services. This is supported through positive regional partnership working to identify and develop services informed by consultations, population assessments.

During our focused activity in relation to adult safeguarding we saw evidence of timely and proportionate responses to adult safeguarding referrals which clarified matters and were clear on actions needed to protect people from abuse and neglect. Multi-agency discussions were consistently and effectively recorded in case notes and we found evidence of management oversight.

The local authority is aware of the challenges it faces in providing domiciliary care and is actively exploring alternative care models; the micro-care feasibility study being one example of this.

In Children's Services there is a clear understanding of the significant challenges it faces in recruiting and developing foster carers to support an increasing cohort of children with complex needs, older children and sibling groups. The service has secured funding to research a model of foster care known as Mockingbird. If the local authority decide to implement the Mockingbird Foster Care Model in Flintshire it will be the first in Wales.

Senior managers are aware of the significant pressure on their workforce and we heard how they are consistently working together to ensure arrangements are in place to support the well-being of staff.

- People – voice and choice

The safeguarding team are aware some further work is needed to ensure all safeguarding processes are robust. Recent improvements have been made, working closely with Single Point of Access, to ensure a co-ordinated response to all safeguarding reports. The local authority needs to ensure proper and consistent regard is given to the wishes and feelings of the adult at risk and that they are empowered to make their own informed decisions.

The involvement of care experienced children in service development is an area of positive practice. We heard how children have been involved in co-producing an action plan following a wellbeing survey, they were asked to participate in at the end of 2017/18. The key findings of which are being used to inform service development and support arrangements for children in care. In adult services the local authority has made arrangements to capture the experience of people with a learning disability and older adults living in extra care. The local authority is seeing the benefits of digital stories and shared with us an example from the Early Help Hub.

We assessed the local authority's leadership, direction and progress in embedding Welsh language in front-line services as part of annual performance evaluation activities. The

service is aware of the need to improve its capacity to provide services in Welsh. We heard of the conversation group Paned a Sgwrs which focuses on raising workers confidence in their use of the language. A specific Welsh language course for social care staff has been delivered and we also heard how the service is working to support people living in care homes whose first language is Welsh. The local authority needs to ensure it continues to strengthen its ability to provide bilingual support.

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 has focused on developing and strengthening early intervention and preventive services. During our focussed activity we heard how the Flintshire Public Service Board commissioned the establishment of a multiagency Early Help Hub in Children's Service. We meet with managers and workers from statutory and non-statutory agencies and it was evident from the discussions that the information sharing and communication across agencies has improved outcomes for children and families. The diverse representation of different agencies is beneficial. It was recognised there is a need for better links with the adult mental health service and it was positive to hear from the senior manager in Children's Services of the ongoing discussions with Community Mental Health Team Managers to improve joint working.

In adults services we heard how the Single Point of Access opening hours had been extended and how the service is now integrated with the Community Response Team. The local authority, local health board and third sector are focused on working together to ensure people are receiving the right care at the right time. The partnership is effectively utilising integrated care funding to develop community based support which promotes independence. The plan to develop a discharge to assess model being an example of this.

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

During our safeguarding focused activity we found evidence of good working relationships between the safeguarding team and other Adult Service Teams. Staff talked positively and consistently about the support and guidance they received from colleagues in the Safeguarding Team. Their independence was valued by Senior Managers. We saw

evidence of regular case file audits to identify areas for development and to ensure a consistent approach.

There is clear recognition across the local authority of the contribution other such as transport, education and leisure have in promoting well-being.

The local authority is actively engaged in regional partnership working. Flintshire County Council has taken a lead in developing a new Integrated Autism Service and it is positive to note that from the outset this has been developed with people who have autism and their parents/carers. More recently the local authority has become the lead for the Regional Learning Disability Service. The Director of Social Services continues to chair the Adult Safeguarding Board.

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. CIW 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.

We will also undertake two pieces of focused activity during 2019/20; the details will be confirmed following summer meetings with Senior Managers.

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

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

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

Cc.
WAO
HIW
Estyn