

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 Monmouthshire 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. This included the review of corporate safeguarding undertaken by WAO in which CIW participated; the 'challenge meeting', held in the context of CIW's inspection of services for children looked after / care leavers; and bi-annual meetings held with respective heads of service.

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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 9th April 2019.

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

- Well-being

Elected members are fully aware of the challenges facing social services, and continue to be actively involved in finding solutions and monitoring developments. There have been significant changes in social services senior leadership over the past year, with new appointments to both Director of Social Services and Head of Adult Service roles.

The local authority's new approach to domiciliary care – Turning the World Upside Down – has recently been piloted, and will move to a prototype phase later this year. The impact of this, alongside the revised, outcome-focussed care and support plans which are being introduced will be sampled as part of CIW's forthcoming inspection of adult services. The pricing of packages of domiciliary care is recognised by the local authority as ongoing pressure point – one that is likely to intensify in future.

Together with regional partners, concrete proposals for the significant redevelopment and expansion of in-house residential provision continue to be actively explored. It is anticipated that this will be largely ICF funded, and bring about a revised 'house model' for the delivery of a range care and support options, including residential placements, adapted bungalows and community facilities. This positive development has the potential to add much needed additional extra-care capacity in the south of the county.

- People – voice and control

Feedback from care leavers we spoke to as part of our engagement activity was generally positive; they considered social workers and personal advisers from the local authority were there when they needed them. They also felt that Monmouthshire County Council positively encouraged young people to explore different options such as education, college and employment.

An action plan has been drawn up in relation to the implementation of the required Welsh Language Standards. Clusters of Welsh-speaking populations have been identified within the county, and the local authority continues to work hard to promote a range of courses for staff aimed at further developing confidence in the language.

We were concerned to note continued challenges in relation to the timely completion of child protection conferences. The local authority has recognised this and responded to the immediate pressures by commissioning additional external expertise to help meet this demand. Further analysis is required to fully understand the reasons behind recent increases in the numbers of children being added to the child protection register. The effectiveness of Monmouthshire County Council's response to this will be monitored by us with interest during 2019/20.

In addressing the needs of care experienced children and young people the vision of having a service that is psychologically informed has resulted in investment in the Multi-Disciplinary Intervention Support Team (MIST) and the proposed development of a regional approach to

residential provision using ICF funding. This is evidence of the commitment of the local authority to develop therapeutic placement provision and improve availability and choice of placements and preventing the need for children to be placed far away from their community.

Challenges continue with recruitment of foster carers which limits the choice of placements for young people entering care resulting in placement breakdown or placements out of county.

The local authority has successfully developed a model of positive practice in delivering a range of services to people in prison in line with new responsibilities introduced with the SSWBA. It is positive to note the intention to extend this support for people in prison who are living with dementia or needing support at the end of life.

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 effective in asking people 'what matters' to them, and in prioritising individual needs to support people. It is positive to note that the broad principles of 'Healthier Wales' have underpinned the development of the three existing community hubs. The good working relations established with primary care professionals / GP's in some areas of the county needs to be expanded across Monmouthshire.

We will review the effectiveness of the local authority's plans to enhance the use of digital technology to reduce the level of individual risk, and improve support for people, for example via more effective deployment of tele-health expertise during 2019/20.

Monmouthshire County Council utilises an innovative approach to engage with people using real-life stories as a means of identifying and learning from the impact of services on people's lives. This has recently been subject to research undertaken by Swansea University which is due to be reported upon soon, and will be considered during our inspection of community-based adult services.

First point of contact arrangements in children's services have been re-designed, and early indications suggest this approach is more effective. The broader range of options for children and families offered by the Achieving Change Together (ACT) initiative is a positive development.

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

Preliminary feedback on the Building Strong Families initiative suggests this partnership approach is becoming more effective in delivering more proactive interventions to children and their families. Key to this has been the partnership working with early years / flying start and third sector agencies, with primary health personnel becoming increasingly involved.

Partnership arrangements at both local and regional level continue to develop and mature. This has resulted in significant improvements in commissioning, pooled budgets and increasing social care services delivered on a regional footprint. For this joint partnership to function considerable commitment from all senior managers is pivotal.

CIW Performance Review Plan for 2019-20

Our scheduled thematic adult services inspection programme for 2019/20 will be focusing 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 Monmouthshire County Council 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. We 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, we work closely with other inspectorates to share intelligence and jointly plan inspections. We will also work closely with Social Care Wales to support improvement in social care services.

In 2019/20 we will continue to work with HIW in jointly inspecting community mental health teams. We will also 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 is likely to include aspects identified for follow-up as a result of the inspection of adult services, and the outcomes for children following the re-structuring of elements of the team structure.

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