

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 Torfaen County Borough 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 CIW's performance evaluation activity during the course of the year. These activities included:

- Activity in April 2019 reviewing the progress of Home First Model
- Adult Services Self Evaluation
- Children's services Challenge Meeting

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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 11 April 2019.

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

- Well-being

The local authority benefits from an experienced senior management team. Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled, well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision. There is a strong corporate support for social services, with the local authority having a thorough and well developed understanding of the current challenges of an aging population and the potential impact of increased demand on social services.

This has resulted in Torfaen County Borough Council's commitment to transforming and modernising the way in which it commissions and provides services, and its practice. A positive example of thinking more creatively and managing demand more effectively has been the introduction of site flow meetings held weekly AMBU to ensure joint plans are in place to discharge patients back into the community. This has resulted in the reduction of delayed transfer of care of people.

The commitment to keeping people safe extends to other corporate directorates who have developed a greater understanding of their duties to work in partnership under the SSWB Act. Different conversations are now happening on the issues that social care are facing, with corporate safeguarding leads in all divisions and mandatory safeguarding training across the local authority.

We note children's services have been going through a process of transformation led by the recently appointed head of children's services. This ensures confidence that practice is improving the well-being for children and families, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time. Further work needs to be undertaken on reviewing the early intervention and preventative services with the long term goal of having greater control and stemming the flow of children and families requiring statutory services, and ultimately the need to become looked after.

One of the challenges within children's services has been the increase in the number of children becoming looked after. The review of prevention and early intervention support for children and their families in early 2018 has led to positive developments, bringing a number of resources together to support families at risk of breakdown such as the Rapid Response Team, committed to providing intensive support to young people and their families or carers at times of crisis to prevent breakdown.

- People – voice and control

The local authority has transformed its practice within adult services, ensuring patch based teams focus on what matters to people with personal well-being outcomes no longer based solely on service eligibility. We have found relationships between practitioner, service user and local providers to be now more collaborative.

We have found staff within the teams feel part of the process of redesign and feel empowered to find solutions. From speaking with staff we found evidence that these teams are developing people's resilience and independence with a view to long term benefits through effectively negotiating longer-term preventative approaches with people rather than simply providing services.

There are increasing opportunities for adults, children and carers to have their voices heard in the assessment of their needs and the planning and delivery of care. On a regional basis the establishment of a citizen panel influences the work of the Regional Partnership Board (RPB), the North Torfaen Wellbeing Pilot capturing "what difference" the local authority and partners have made through client stories and experiences.

In order to address the challenges of a fragile domiciliary care market, close working relationships with Coleg Gwent to promote the value of working within the social care profession is being undertaken.

The local authority has updated its More than Just Words action plan and continues to focus on understanding the Welsh requirements of service users particularly those living in care homes.

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

In line with the Joint Area Plan work is being undertaken to coordinate consistent community based services such as Care Closer to Home where community connectors work with individuals, groups and organisations in the community building confidence allowing them to attend activities, groups and develop social networks within their community. The ability to avoid social isolation and loneliness has had a direct impact on people's wellbeing. The outcomes being achieved for individuals need to be evidenced by the local authority to show the impact of such preventative service is having on diverting people from statutory services through building community resilience.

Our focused activity looked at the Home First Service based at Royal Gwent and Neville Hall Hospital and we saw that in the short time the team has been established it has prevented people being unnecessarily being admitted to hospital. Home First is valued by both health board and local authority staff and demonstrates innovative integrated working delivering good outcomes for people.

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

Effective partnership working is in place to commission and deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for people. Torfaen County Borough Council recognises and values the contribution that all partners can make.

It is positive to note the local authority's commitment to partnership working and the continued exploration of opportunities for collaboration with the local health board, other public bodies and provider agencies to improve the well-being of people by aligning skills and resources.

Work needs to continue between adult services and the health board to develop new ways of working towards shared goals.

The successful bid for the Transformation Fund in early 2019 to develop care closer to home and implement a community resilience model will require continued commitment of partners to work together operationally and strategically.

CIW Performance Review Plan for 2019-20

Our scheduled 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 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.

Our focused activity with the local authority is likely to include some follow up to inspection findings relating to LAC and care leavers in children's services; our engagement in adult services will focus on people aged over 65s in the community, and possibly day services. 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. CW 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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Cc.
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Estyn