

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 Vale of Glamorgan 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 of Children's Services in May 2018 and performance evaluation activity during the course of the year. This included focused activity in February 2019, which considered the Single Point of Access to adult services (SPoA) and followed up on the progress of the Independent Reviewing Officer service (IRO), an area highlighted for improvement at inspection.

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.

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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.

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

- Well-being

We found motivated front line staff reporting job satisfaction at our inspection of children's services. We noted good provision of training and strong management support at all levels including regular supervision. The high level of vacancies at the time of our inspection was affecting quality of service to children and families. There were already plans to restructure children's services and this has now taken place. This has alleviated pressures on particular teams although recruitment to full capacity remains a challenge and agency staff are covering vacancies.

Generally, practitioners knew children well and were responsive to their needs. The report of the inspection of children's services suggested the local authority assure itself of the robustness of decision making on re referrals and highlighted assessments must take into account all available information from previous contacts, and incorporate any risks. Practitioners and line managers did not always fully record decision-making.

In adult services, we noted significant pressures on domiciliary care because of insufficient availability of resource and this continues to significantly affect people who need care, including some who are delayed leaving hospital. Senior managers assure us they regard this as the highest priority and are exploring all options to address market capacity.

Vale of Glamorgan Council is improving its own residential accommodation to improve the care environment for people living dementia. It is also planning to improve community based service for people with dementia living in their own homes.

There is strong corporate support for social services. Social services have made more progress recently with its new case management database such that it will provide significantly enhanced performance management information and inform strategic planning, to the benefit of people using services.

- People – voice and control

The inspection of children's services found room for improvement in how practitioners engaged with children and families to ensure their views and outcomes they wished to achieve were central to assessments and care and support plans. Families would benefit from a more co productive approach which starts with the strengths of the families and provides clear detail on how progress would be measured. There was also room for improvement in how families were engaged within the safeguarding system; considering risks, strengths and barriers.

Children looked after were not routinely attending their review meetings and IROs were not providing sufficient oversight of children or obtaining their views, which is central to their role. We returned in February 2019 to follow up on the IRO service and, overall, we found this remained an area for improvement. However, an action plan was in place and work was underway to modernise the service.

More people in Vale of Glamorgan Council are managing their own care through the provision of Direct Payments than previously. In particular, more adults with learning

disabilities are taking this option, which allows the person more control and flexibility with the care they receive. The local authority has also been piloting a different way of delivering domiciliary care which gives people more control. As we would expect from a pilot, this model of domiciliary care is under review and is subject to amendments prior to any roll out. We look forward to learning of the findings of the review.

The More Than Just Words forum meets regularly and shares information across the region. The local authority offers bespoke Welsh language training to social care staff and taster sessions and supports staff to undertake training in work time.

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

During the inspection of children's services, we found children were protected by prompt response and timely assessments.

There has been a recent reduction in timeliness of assessments (in October-December 2018). Senior managers are clarifying the data in respect of this and developing targeted approaches to bringing about improvement.

Vale of Glamorgan Council has plans to substantially enhance support to children and families to reduce the likelihood of children requiring care arrangements and alleviate stress within the home. Vale of Glamorgan Council are working with regional partners with the aim of developing new services which will include direct support for families, therapeutic provision for children and training for practitioners to develop their direct work skills. The local authority is also considering models of social work which would unify its approach to children and families. These potential developments could lead to improved outcomes for children and families with the improvements made to service provision.

The SPoA has a clear workflow to encourage and enable a seamless response to adults presenting with needs for information, advice and assistance (IAA). Senior managers have worked well with internal and external partners to develop the IAA service, which comprises a robust and substantial co located resource of multi-agency professionals.

We found call handlers provided people with a positive first point of contact and many matters were resolved speedily and without recourse to statutory involvement. However, there were delays when advice or assessment was required. The time some people waited for a response was lengthy, several weeks in some instances, and this negatively impacted people's experience and delayed access to resources and services. This seemed to be at least partly due to staffing levels and we understand there are now additional practitioner(s) in place which has reduced the time people are waiting for assessments.

Local authorities must ensure those undertaking proportionate assessments have received training to ensure they have sufficient skills, knowledge and competence for this task. We have raised this with senior managers in Vale of Glamorgan Council. A team leader post had recently been created with the responsibility for training and discussions were

underway with internal colleagues about the possibility of establishing dedicated call handlers for social services.

The local authority has strengthened its preventative resource by further increasing its liaison with the third sector and appointing Visiting Officers, who will complement the work of Community Connectors. These resources are vital in promoting and enabling the independence of people without recourse to statutory services. It is a disappointment to Vale of Glamorgan Council that uptake of telecare (assistive technology) has not reached its annual target, although numbers have increased year on year. Senior managers are looking at ways to promote the use of this by larger numbers of 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

On inspection, we found limited choice of foster placements was contributing to placement breakdowns for children. Vale of Glamorgan Council has worked regionally and locally to increase the number of foster carers with senior managers recognising the lack of sufficiency of placements continues to affect choice and suitability of placements at times. Vale of Glamorgan Council has also been working with a provider of residential care in order to support more children closer to home. The local authority continues to have relatively low numbers of young people in residential care, although they acknowledged a deficit in placements for children with complex vulnerabilities means there are still occasions when it cannot meet children's needs close to home. It is positive that senior managers are also in discussion with third sector providers to encourage development of new resource.

We identified a strong multi-agency approach to care leavers and young homeless people. Constructive partnerships with housing and third sector has resulted in very good provision of accommodation and support for these vulnerable young people. Care leavers were very positive about the help they receive from Personal Advisors.

Generally, a robust system of multi-agency panels ensured consistent and effective decision making in children's services, although we reminded the local authority to ensure its arrangements for placing children out of its area were sufficiently robust and met relevant regulations.

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. The focus of the children's services thematic inspection 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 on promoting independence for older people submitted in January 2019. 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 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 support improvement in social care services.

CIW will continue to work with HIW in in 2019/20 to jointly inspect 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 with the local authority throughout the year and the details of these will be confirmed.

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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Cc.
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Estyn