

Sian Howys
Director of Social Services
Ceredigion County Council
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Date: 03 August 2020

Dear Sian Howys,

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Local Authority Performance Review April 2019 - March 2020

The code of practice for review of local authority social services in April 2019 outlines 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 from April 2019 – March 2020.

We acknowledge, that due to the unprecedented circumstances relating to COVID-19, that we were unable to complete the annual performance review meeting.

We believe that there remains significant benefits in identifying and drawing the attention of the local authority and its partners, recognising strengths and areas for improvements. The letter is intended to assist the local authority and its partners to continually improve.

It follows the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and our increasingly collaborative and strengths based approach to supporting improvement.

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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.

The content of this letter is informed by the performance evaluation activity undertaken by the inspectorate during the course of the year. This activity included:

- inspection in disabled children's services - January 2020
- meetings with heads of service
- focused activity in adults services - November 2019
- engagement with older adults and their carers August/September 2019
- review meeting - prevention and promotion of independence for older adults - October 2019
- assurance and risk assessment review – February 2020
- intelligence received
- performance information

We have been in discussions with the local authority during the activity undertaken and our annual performance letter is an accurate reflection of our findings which we have shared with you.

Summary of strengths and areas for improvement in line with principles of the 2014 Act

Well-being

The local authority continues to transform its social care operating model in order to fully meet the requirements of the 2014 Act and align with the Future Generations Act within the broader aims of its corporate strategy. There is a good level of corporate and political support for social services. In the last year, Ceredigion County Council has seen a number of changes at its senior management level. The current Director of Social Services is appointed on an interim basis, pending the implementation of the new service model after which the intention is to consider where the director role sits within the revised structure.

The appointment of corporate managers, senior managers acknowledge they have reached a pivotal point on their transformation journey. The local authority will invest in a training programme to support all corporate managers to undertake their new role and responsibilities.

Senior managers provided regular electronic updates and supported the wellbeing of the workforce during the transformation. This was valued by the practitioners and the managers we interviewed during the inspection and focused activity.

Carers told us how they valued the information and support provided by Ceredigion Carers Unit. Carers of adults we spoke with said they felt involved in the assessment process, are offered an assessment in their own right and their needs are considered as part of a wider assessment. During the disabled children's inspection we found carer's assessments were not consistently offered or completed in line with legislation. The local authority will need to assure itself all practitioners understand that carers in Wales have the same rights as those they care for and all carer's assessments are completed in accordance with statutory guidance.

Managers acknowledged the quality assurance framework requires further development and will be addressed as part of the local authority's ongoing transformation of social care.

People

The voices and wishes of adults at risk were embedded within the safeguarding documentation we reviewed. There was evidence of people being supported by informal advocates to participate in decisions that affect them. We saw evidence of safeguarding considerations and decisions taking account of the legal requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA).

The voice and views of disabled children, parents/carers and the personal outcomes they wanted to achieve were not consistently captured in the assessments or care and support plans. There is a need for a more collaborative approach and evidence of all practitioners working in partnership with individuals to ensure there is an agreed understanding of how needs and personal outcomes will be achieved. We found a need to strengthen the voice of children and parents/carers in the planning and development of services.

People were able to communicate in their preferred language. There was evidence of the Active Offer being made and managers were confident of adequate numbers of Welsh speaking practitioners in the disabled children service to implement the Active Offer. Ceredigion County Council actively supports staff to undertake Welsh language training as well as providing opportunities for practitioners to improve their confidence in speaking and writing in Welsh. During the inspection we found the local authority had embraced and promoted direct payment, encouraging families to have more choice and control. Whilst people are awarded direct payment the benefits are limited due to the difficulties in the recruitment and retention of personal assistance. This places considerable pressure on families and is an area the local authority needs to monitor.

We continue to monitor the implementation of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) which has identified the local authority, in common with many others in Wales, is unable to assure itself that people's human rights are not being breached by being deprived of their liberty unlawfully. Our joint national report on DoLS will be issued in due course.

Prevention

Ceredigion County Council is working to reshape and re-design its operational services with a greater focus on its early intervention and prevention initiatives in line with the requirement of the 2014 Act.

Disabled children and young adults are supported and encouraged to learn and develop to achieve their full potential and participate in society. The local authority acknowledges that it is not currently maximising the use of assistive technology and should look into promoting more widely.

Sufficient resources remains a challenge for the local authority. During the recent inspection we saw delays in the provision of care and support and a dependency on direct payments. Provision of domiciliary care for adults continues to be challenging. The local authority will want to ensure its commissioning arrangement supports the development of good quality services for both children and adults.

We reviewed how the local authority implemented the West Wales Partnership Adult Safeguarding threshold guidance. When concerns relate to the quality and the standards of

service delivery we saw a focus on working with providers to appropriately address concerns and improve service provision and delivery.

During 2018 our programme of work focused on care experienced children and young people. The [report](#) is published on our website. Key findings highlight areas for improvement in respect of profile, sufficiency, practice, partnerships, stability, governance and corporate parenting. Many of the areas we have identified for improvement continue to be 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.

In December 2019 we wrote to all local authorities asking for information about the Public Accounts Committee report following their enquiry into care experienced children, specifically recommendation 5 concerning the effectiveness and frequency of end of placement reviews.

The local authority advised they have procedures in place to respond to placement breakdown. Disruption meetings discuss how the issues could be resolved differently and the outcomes is formulated into an action plan which influences future practice. The care experienced children multi-agency assurance group monitors information regarding placement breakdown on a quarterly basis.

Partnerships

During the adult focused activity we found evidence of practitioners developing a professional working relationship with people built upon co-operation and a shared understanding of what matters. We found effective joint working arrangements between the safeguarding team and other teams within adult services. Representatives from the police and health board told us of good working relationships with the local authority.

During the inspection we saw evidence of a multi-agency approach to risk manage the behaviour of a vulnerable young person. The meetings were well attended and held regularly to consistently review the situation, taking proactive action to mitigate against harm or the potential for harm.

'Camu Mlaen' is an example of the local authority children services and learning service working in partnership with Coleg Ceredigion and Hywel Dda University Health Board. The partnership developed a new person centred model which will enable young people with severe and complex needs to be educated and prepared for adult life. This will enable young people to remain closer to home and maintain their connections within their communities.

Ceredigion County Council continue to be actively engaged in local and regional partnership working. This is evident in their approach to safeguarding in both children and adults services. The West Wales Regional Partnership Board identified a need for an increased emphasis on children work. The local authority is committed to this development which will strengthen and increase its ability to meet the needs of children with complex needs.

CIW Performance Review Plan for 2020-2021

Our scheduled thematic inspection programme for 2019-2020 focused on prevention and promoting independence for older people, and for the current children's services thematic inspection the focus is on prevention, partnerships and experiences of disabled children. Due to the current emergency situation relating to COVID-19 we have paused the publication of our older peoples report and paused all activity relating to the disabled children's review. We will advise you in due course when we envisage recommencing our inspections.

We hope to publish the older people's national report in due course and want to take this opportunity to thank you for your local authority's contribution to this.

Due to the unforeseen circumstances we find ourselves in, we are currently reviewing and considering our work plan for the remainder of 2020-2021.

CIW worked together with HMI Constabulary (HMICFRS), HMI Probation, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Estyn to develop a model of joint inspection of child protection arrangements in Wales (JICPA). This approach was piloted during the autumn of 2019. This was a fantastic example of new ways of working across wales and a real drive towards collaboration and integration in public services.

We continue to work closely with Social Care Wales to support improvement in social care services.

You will note that this letter has been copied to colleagues in Audit Wales, 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,



Lou Bushell-Bauers
Head of Local Authority Inspection

Cc.
Audit Wales
HIW
Estyn