

David Howes
Director of Social Services
Swansea City and County Council
Civic Centre
Oystermouth Road
Swansea
SA1 3SN

Date: 03 August 2020

Dear David Howes,

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 Swansea 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 improvement. 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.

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:

Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru (AGC)
Swyddfa Llywodraeth Cymru
Sarn Mynach
Cyffordd Llandudno
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Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
Welsh Government Office
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Llandudno Junction
LL13 9RZ
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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.

- children's services focused activity undertaken in relation to the independent review process, in particular considering how the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) promote the voice of the child. September 2019
- adults services focused activity, in relation to services for carers of older people; undertaken in August and September 2019
- adults services focused activity on Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and adult safeguarding undertaken in March and April 2019
- engagement activity, in relation to older people (aged 65 and over), undertaken between July and October 2019
- practice and performance review meetings, held with heads of adults and children's services

During the course of the year we have discussed with you the activity listed above and as such our annual performance letter is an accurate reflection of our findings as shared with you.

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

Well-being

Swansea Council's approach has been informed by a remodelling of significant aspects of service delivery, which has seen the recently created Social Services Directorate replace the former People Directorate. This has resulted in a positive realignment of services, aimed at ensuring improved outcomes for people. A series of adult service reviews relating to domiciliary care, residential care, reablement and respite, and services for younger adults are continuing to inform this process, and the restructuring of adult services to align with this approach remains under active consideration. Whilst 'supporting people' lies within the Social Services Directorate thereby facilitating support to some extra care services, responsibility for housing sits elsewhere within the authority meaning that some elements of service delivery can prove more challenging to implement as they are not fully aligned.

The remodelling of in-house domiciliary care services, and the re-commissioning of external providers has resulted in some improvements, particularly transitioning from a more traditional 'time and task' approach to brokerage, to one that promotes flexibility in the meeting of people's individual needs. In common with other local authorities, Swansea recognises that there continue to be challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, and that services can struggle to provide care in some harder to reach local areas, meaning that some people may not receive social care support in a sufficiently timely fashion.

The local authority works hard within the framework of its Looked After Children Reduction Strategy to analyse and understand fluctuating numbers of children who are looked after, which have shown a slight recent increase within the last quarter. This evaluation has been informed by effective tracking via the permanence panel, and also early lessons have been learnt via the monthly diversion panel. Swansea Council has recently been successful in increasing both the proportion of children placed closer to home, and also those placed with in-house foster carers.

CIW's focused activity in relation to safeguarding in adult services confirmed that safeguarding referrals are processed in a timely manner, that partnership work is effective and that action is taken to safeguard adults at risk. However, audits of safeguarding cases

had not been undertaken for some time prior to our visit and we found evidence of delay in non-criminal investigations. We were informed that the local authority is considering ways to improve the adult safeguarding process and is working on an audit framework.

The safeguarding process is presently carried out by locality-based teams, which has presented the local authority with some challenges in ensuring consistency of threshold decision making and overall quality of work. Options for a dedicated safeguarding team as part of the restructuring of adult services are being actively considered. It is anticipated that these new arrangements will include a better screening tool for use at the front door.

Overall numbers of children on the child protection register continue to be relatively stable trend, although re-registration rates remain a concern and the local authority continues to work hard to understand the reasons behind this. Child protection case conferences and reviews continue to take place within statutory timescales.

Elected members are fully aware of the challenges facing social services, and continue to be actively involved in finding solutions and monitoring developments. All elected members have completed Safeguarding Adults and Children Training.

People

The shared vision founded on a strengths-based approach is understood by the authority's workforce, with a collaborative communication practice framework increasingly embedded in adult services, and signs of safety well-established within children's services. These approaches are well-aligned with the 2014 Act, with an emphasis on 'what matters' conversations and personal outcomes. Our engagement activities confirmed the authority has a dedicated and professional workforce, with management oversight ensuring a consistency of quality and approach in many areas, although there were exceptions to this, e.g. adult safeguarding.

Financially-related constraints on the recruitment of social workers were eased towards the end of 2019, and recruitment to a backlog of vacancies in adult service hubs has recommenced. The recent approval of a retention policy means that there can also now be further progression for those employed for two years or more. It is anticipated that this will have a positive, long-anticipated impact on relatively high levels of turnover currently being experienced in some service areas. Recent usage of agency staff in children's services continues to be minimal. A workforce wellbeing strategy, underpinning a more agile approach based on the monitoring of output has recently been developed.

The recruitment to the significant positions of children and adults heads of service will be key to ensuring the embedding of ongoing initiatives, and the overseeing of the proposed remodelling of adult service delivery.

There is a recognised need to develop and implement a clear strategic vision in relation to carers. Whilst we found that many of the carers' assessments viewed during our activity reflected a real sense of the individual to whom they related, overall the quality of carers' assessments was too varied.

Alongside this, there is a need to review the range of opportunities for carers to receive short breaks or respite, and consider expanding current options, particularly in relation to those carers who are caring for people with dementia who require nursing care. People

spoken to during our evaluation of services for carers of older people told us of the adverse impact of short-term funding of some services and personnel employed in support of carers.

The local authority recognises that the levels of direct payments have been static for some time, and that its current approach raises questions over whether it is currently providing the appropriate levels of individual support. This has been identified as an area of risk, with an improvement plan aimed at improving outcomes for people in the area.

Swansea Council should improve systems for data collection and quality assurance, to ensure that the local authority has accurate and relevant information to inform practice and provision of services, and identify gaps in practice and service provision, in relation to aspects such as the provision for carers of older people. The local authority is planning for the implementation of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) in June 2020. This will provide further opportunities to consider how WCCIS can assist with the collation of relevant data to support practice and quality assurance.

It was clear from our activity with independent reviewing officers (IRO's) that they were aware of the importance of putting the child at the centre of the review process. They recognised that children need to be supported to participate fully in their reviews, to have their voice heard, whilst showing creative and innovative ways of engaging with children to ensure their views and wishes are heard and acted on. We found that children's well-being was promoted through the use of advocates and where required, interpreters to ensure that the voice of the child is sought and heard.

One element of the improvement programme within child and family services is the further embedding of the 'what matters' conversation in day to day practice, and a task force has been established to look to improve the active participation of children and young people throughout service delivery.

Swansea Council continues to implement the Welsh Language Standards, and there is good awareness across social services of these, and the Active Offer made to citizens. There are challenges in matching the limited number of Welsh speaking staff to meet needs as reflected in the regional population assessment. In relation to carers, we found that provision of the Active Offer of Welsh was not always recorded on casefiles to evidence that this was taking place.

A workforce development review is focusing on Welsh language training needs of the social care workforce, and there are contingency arrangements at the front door to ensure the Active Offer is implemented on a daily basis, either through available social care staff or via corporate customer services

A strength of the local authority is its ongoing commitment to co-production and participation, which is set out in a number of plans at corporate level. These are implemented via a clear programme of work set out for each service area, the delivery of which is underpinned by volunteers.

Swansea Council has acknowledged the scale of challenges it faces in meeting the volume of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessments. The establishment of a dedicated DoLS team has been successful in addressing a previous backlog.

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

Swansea social services has well developed front door arrangements in adult social care, and through a Common Access Point (CAP) there are strong links to health and third sector partners. Our engagement with adult carers and others having contact via CAP confirmed that generally they were listened too and were treated with dignity and respect. Their experiences in other respects were more mixed, with some people unclear as to how they could access information, advice or assistance directly from the local authority, whilst others talked about difficulties experienced in getting through to social services. Others spoke of difficulties "getting into the system" but felt that once they were known to social services it was easier.

Some people told us that there had been missed opportunities for early intervention to prevent escalation of individual need or crisis. They were sometimes unaware of whether other agencies had shared information with the local authority that would have indicated that some earlier intervention would have been beneficial. Other people felt that they were not aware of local services and activities, and some commented that the level of community services and activities was dependent on where you lived; that is, some areas had more availability of community-based activities.

Some partner agencies said there was a lack of resources to support prevention and people's well-being, and prevent escalation of needs and felt further work was required to ensure effective contingency plans are in place. We also heard some third sector agencies did not receive many referrals from local authority adult services and felt the adult teams did not always know what resources were available in the community. People were positive about the role of local area coordinators (LAC) in reaching out and supporting them. The authority has plans to expand on the current arrangements, to extend this aspect of its service offer.

Performance figures contrasting outcomes in 2017-2018 with those in 2018-2019 confirm that Swansea Council is supporting more people in their own homes, with fewer people being cared for in care homes, suggesting that the direction of travel in remodelling elements of the adult services structure is beginning to pay dividends. It is anticipated that the realignment of the current integrated hubs and other planned restructuring will, in time, continue to support these positive developments.

There continue to be high levels of activity at the front door of children and family services, although the percentage of work passed through for formal assessment continues to move in the right direction. The re-modelled approach to early help involves the establishment of Early Help Hubs, Edge of Care Service and Integrated front door arrangements, which will be co-terminus with the existing locality teams, and include police, GP's, parenting support, psychology input and education welfare. This initiative is underpinned by £1.2M of transformation funding, and its longer term sustainability is linked to ongoing successful implementation of the Looked After Children Safe Reduction Strategy.

In June 2019 we published our national report on our work about 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 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 expect local authorities to be considering their own contribution to addressing these findings. We will monitor with interest the development of much needed commissioning and market position strategy to map future demand for services and help shape the market.

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. Swansea City Council's Permanence Policy sets out a range of measures to support placement stability for looked after children. Foster Swansea, the Local Authority Fostering Team, works collaboratively with colleagues in the Looked After Children Team, Supported Care Planning Service and Independent Reviewing Service. An integrated, solution focused and Signs of Safety approach is used, utilising a range of measures and interventions to support the effectiveness of end of placement reviews. Foster Swansea does not currently collect data in respect of post placement disruption meetings; it is scheduled for introduction in 2020.

Partnerships

The reorganisation of health board boundaries in April 2019 resulted in a change of regional footprint. The thorough preparation undertaken by the partners involved has acted to minimise potential disruption and the newly configured West Glamorgan region has taken the boundary changes as an opportunity to consolidate and innovate some partnership arrangements.

Senior officers are increasingly able to demonstrate how the links between their different directorate responsibilities are supporting the social services agenda across the authority. There is a wider understanding of the benefits of community-based prevention and the potential negative impact on people and budgets when service planning and responses are delayed or ineffective.

The publication of the inspection report by HMI Prisons in March 2019 that rated the Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service as inadequate led to a decision to disaggregate the service to ensure partner authorities could focus on service provision in their own geographical areas. Swansea Council responded quickly to this opportunity, and now hosts its own stand-alone youth offending and early intervention service. Whilst it is still early days, recent managerial recruitment has already resulted in improved integration with statutory services, and a greater emphasis on preventative approaches. The authority is realistic about the continuing improvement needed and is working to deliver against a detailed improvement plan. These new arrangements continue to be monitored by the Youth Justice Board.

Partnership arrangements at both regional and local level continue to develop and mature, and the regional 'Hospital 2 Home' initiative is a recent example of this being realised in practice. This involves health and social care professionals working closely together to ensure people are appropriately screened by a 'trusted assessor', then ensuring that co-

ordinators are on hand to facilitate people getting home without delay. Formal assessment of each individual's ongoing needs is then carried out at home, within two to three weeks.

The local authority is a proactive contributor to the regional boards and aspects of its improvement and transformation agenda are being progressed via the Adult Improvement Board and Regional Safeguarding Board, based on the identified priorities of the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board.

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 current the 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 persons 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