

## CIW National Advisory Board meeting minutes– 4 October 2023

### Welcome and apologies

#### Attendees

- Dr Ruth Hussey (Chair)
- Andrea Cooper, Older People's Commissioner's Office
- Stuart Davies
- Natalie Fletcher Rachel Harris
- Peter Max
- Julia Nawell
- Claire Protheroe
- Jenny Williams
- Sharon Williams
- Mary Wimbury

#### CIW representatives

- Gillian Baranski
- Margaret Rooney Kevin Barker
- Ceri Herbert Emma Mackintosh
- Myfanwy Moran
- Richard Payne
- Siobhan Thomas-Peters

#### Apologies

- Melanie Davies
- Carole Jones
- Bethan Louise Kay
- Simon Hatch
- Rachel Thomas, Children's Commissioner's Office
- Órlaith Brennan
- Vicky Poole

### Actions from previous minutes – 6 July 2023:

**Previous action:** Secretariat to contact the Offices of the Older People's Commissioner and Children's Commissioner to check contact details of the current representatives. **Complete**

**Previous action:** Update and amend CIW's draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy based on members' feedback and re-circulate to members. **Complete**

## Opening conversation and Q&A

Chief Inspector Gillian Baranski gave an overview of pressures in the care sector which, despite this, is still seeing good care being provided for most people.

**Staff recruitment:** The experience required for inspectors has an impact on the age profile of CIW staff and highlights the necessity to ensure recruitment builds resilience. New members of staff have been appointed. Peter Max (Partnerships for Progress) asked with the likely churn and departure of experienced inspectors, where are the future inspectors likely to come from if they've got experience, presumably they've come from NHS, local authorities or working in care? Is there a way of doing things slightly different – almost apprentices or a new type of role to train people up on the job? Has this been considered, a pathway to inspectorship within CIW?

Gillian said in childcare and play, inspectors are often teachers/early years specialists. In adults and children's services, it's often a mix of social workers and nurses. The local authority team usually have senior local authority experience. We're conscious that we're recruiting from already pressurised areas. 'Grow your own' is an attractive option with our well qualified, experienced workforce. This is something that's certainly under consideration and we can see a real value in growing your own.

**Introduction of ratings in adults and children's services:** Gillian explained CIW learnt a lot from its childcare and play work around how to and how not to introduce ratings. Silent ratings help us work with providers to test how ratings are working and to ensure consistency. We held provider events in September and it was encouraging to see the excitement for some who'd got their excellent ratings. We have so far found a good spread of ratings with many being awarded 'good'. The pilot gives us that chance to evaluate.

Mary Wimbury (Care Forum Wales) stressed the importance of ensuring ratings are introduced in a way that is appropriate and consistent as the sector remains under pressure with staffing challenges. We are seeing a lot of people reassess what they're doing after the pandemic. That goes for providers as well as staff, the two are interlinked. We wouldn't want to be in the position of losing people from the sector because of further pressure at the moment. Mary also asked whether care providers who receive an 'excellent' rating as part of the ongoing silent ratings pilot can publicise this.

Margaret Rooney confirmed providers can share their silent rating. She stressed we must remember this is a pilot. The purpose of the pilot is to test the framework and thresholds and to get consistency. Therefore it follows the published rating may be more 'accurate' and the result of a fully tested process.

Margaret also explained CIW had undertaken further work on thresholds for 'areas for improvement' (resulting in a 'needs improvement' ratings) and 'priority action notices' (resulting in a 'poor' rating).

## **Voices from National Advisory Board members**

Claire Protheroe (PACEY Cymru) provided insight into how changes to the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for childcare are impacting providers. She said within the revised NMS, there's now clearer guidance on how childminders are able to work with an assistant and what qualifications they require. However, funding for those qualifications has been delayed. Welsh Government has now extended the deadline to complete these qualifications but there is still uncertainty around when the deadline is.

First aid and safeguarding now have stricter criteria for training, with a deadline of November 2024 for staff to complete this.

Kevin Barker confirmed he has been in communication with Welsh Government policy colleagues about these issues. The revisions to the NMS were done with the best intentions and in partnership with the sector, but there are funding implications.

Gillian explained how helpful it is to hear about how some of the delay and decisions are impacting on the sector. She confirmed CIW will take that message back to policy colleagues in Welsh Government and will be very alive to the impact of this late notification, in terms of any action that we take.

Kevin Barker said he'd expect inspectors to take a proportionate approach around this issue where possible.

Peter Max raised the issue of similarities between data being collected by CIW and Social Care Wales. He said there was a real desire to make it as simple as possible for all providers.

Gillian Baranski described a recent joint leadership session between the two organisations which featured discussions around ICT and investigating what more can we do together.

Margaret Rooney confirmed this is something we want to achieve. We know in the annual return we collect a lot of data which we can share with Social Care Wales. Further data collection is something we have agreed to do with SCW, we want to do this but we need time and resources to enable that to happen.

Rachel Harris (childcare and play practitioner) spoke about compassionate leadership and support for staff working in the childcare and play sector, an increasing number of whom are coming forward to discuss mental health issues. She wanted to know how leaders could be supported in this area.

Gillian Baranski mentioned the Social Care Wales portal on supporting leaders in childcare and play and social care, while Margaret Rooney said the topic resonated with CIW's work on equality, diversity and inclusion, and positive cultures.

Rachel also raised the issue of staff mental health and wellbeing. She said it is really exciting that staff feel they can come and say they have a mental health issue and feel more able to discuss it. It's something everyone talks about quite happily. For some young people it's their first job, it's important they receive the support they need.

Margaret Rooney said the discussion prompted her to consider support for Responsible Individuals in childcare and play within the Social Care Wales community of practice, and that she'd pass this on.

Dr Ruth Hussey agreed the demographics of people coming into the workforce is an important issue which had been raised with her by others.

Natalie Fletcher (Responsible Individual at a children's service) said the subject of mental health and wellbeing is also pertinent in the children's residential sector particularly following COVID-19. Natalie advised they had created new roles for therapists and staff counsellors. She said they were seeing more and more staff who need mental health support, adding: "You have to make sure you're adapting to support your staff team, to make sure you can continue to provide the service."

Ruth said: "It's highlighting how lonely it can be as a senior manager and how much we all need support networks to navigate changing situations."

Myfanwy Moran (Senior Manager, CIW Local Authority Inspection team) agreed and stressed this is an important aspect of retention, staff wellbeing and supporting people through potentially their first employment experience. CIW has seen some examples in local authorities where they're holding psychology-led sessions to support the staff, and some innovative practices around staff wellbeing. In a competitive environment there is a need to offer these wellbeing initiatives where appropriate.

## **Key findings in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2022-23**

Members were given early sight of the 'Reflections' chapter of the Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2022-23 and asked for their feedback around the 'calls to action'.

Feedback included making the 'calls to action' more specific and clearer that areas such as safeguarding are everyone's responsibility, not just the social care sector but health, education and the third sector.

Members were clear CIW shouldn't try to duplicate good work being done by others such as Social Care Wales around positive practice. Good practice should be shared in a more public way because that would help raise the profile of the sector and therefore help with recruitment and retention.

**Action:** Ensure longer discussion before the publication of the 2023-24 Chief Inspector's Annual Report to ensure members' views are captured in-depth.

## **Working together**

Chief Inspector Gillian Baranski gave an overview of the recent [Rapid review of child practice arrangements](#). She explained that overall the process works appropriately, but we did find issues in respect of recruitment and retention, workforce instability, communication within and between partner agencies.

We saw excellent practice, but not everywhere. We found really committed staff so we owe it to them to make the system better. For health and education, the absence of electronic recording systems means we saw handwritten, indecipherable notes which would be difficult to action.

In order to help providers to share best practice, have mutual support and share ideas, Social Care Wales has created an online community of practice for Responsible Individuals (RIs).

Margaret Rooney discussed the work on **positive cultures**, which CIW has been working on with Social Care Wales, Welsh Government and partners. She explained the ambition is to develop a positive practice framework which includes toolkits for people to use, integrating positive cultures into other initiatives such as commissioning frameworks, changes in regulations and statutory guidance. This work intertwines with equality, diversity and inclusion. Margaret confirmed CIW will bring this back to the National Advisory Board to get members' input into what the framework could look like and how best we could roll it out in a way that's going to make a difference for people.

Dr Ruth Hussey said positive cultures are influenced by the whole system, and that it might be worth CIW and others joining up with the NHS on this issue.

Margaret discussed **CIW's work on what a good care home service for children** looks like. Care Inspectorate Scotland has useful guidance for prospective providers of care homes for children. CIW wants to produce similar guidance. CIW is working with a provider, 4Cs, the Children's Commissioner's office, third sector and Welsh Government to help us develop this guidance.

Dr Ruth Hussey asked if the group is going to listen to the voice of children and young people in that process. Margaret confirmed this will be an important aspect of this work.

Natalie Fletcher said a service's statement of purpose should set out the ethos and culture of the service. She stressed the importance of children's homes having a clear vision because everything is set around the model you're choosing to use. To simulate a family home you'd want connections to colleges and towns so children can access those things.

Dr Ruth Hussey said research literature and evidence needs to be drawn into this to underpin the guidance. There may be UK-wide or international learning that may be relevant here.

Peter Max commented on the need for local authorities to be encouraged to avoid over-capacity in some areas. It does need some sort of planning and different ways of engagement to make sure it works; when it comes to delivery, what you don't want is six charities investing in the same village.

Margaret Rooney explained CIW does not have the power to refuse an application due to low demand in an area.

Mary Wimbury said commissioning must not be based on cost if local authorities wish providers to not simply choose the cheapest areas.

Margaret said in England, Ofsted register children's homes and have a location assessment the provider has to complete as part of registration which must show they have consulted with police and the local authority, and demonstrated the provision is needed in that area with sufficient access to education, health and so on.

## **Childcare and play improvement project**

Ceri Herbert (Senior Manager, CIW Childcare and Play Inspection team) gave an overview of CIW's response to the [independent childminding review](#) commissioned by Welsh Government. Findings were published in June 2023, including 23 recommendations.

Welsh Government is coordinating the response to the recommendations arising from the review. CIW is considering nine recommendations relating to its work around registration, inspection, support for registered childminders to help them remain in the sector and removing barriers for those who are currently registered.

CIW has set up an internal task and finish group looking at what we're already doing and anything else we can be doing, and an external group involving PACEY and others. Ceri noted it was positive we already have work in progress for several recommendations.

Kevin Barker (CIW Head of Childcare and Play Inspection) then spoke about CIW's [childcare and play improvement project](#), which aims to achieve better outcomes for children. The sector is under pressure, and the project is about CIW playing its part in making things better, in line with one of CIW's guiding principles to support improvement and innovation.

The response to the project so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

Peter Max commended the work. He presented a constructive challenge: providers may be worried about encouragement to adopt best practice as it's their choice whether or not to adopt it based on their particular circumstances. Peter asked if this was something CIW was expecting to have most difficulty with?

Kevin said it was. However, a bigger challenge may be confidence from our workforce about nailing our colours to the mast and saying 'this looks really good, you might want to think about doing it that way' because of an anxiety about next time we inspect, we're marking our own homework. We need to have an adult relationship with the sector and be comfortable with taking some risks and acknowledge that it might not work for another setting. Ultimately, it's the provider who's responsible for the quality of what they provide and not CIW. It will be about signposting and presenting options rather than saying 'our advice is...'

Dr Ruth Hussey asked how CIW will choose what is best practice and what definitions are being used. She advised this would need to be clearly connected to outcomes in order for CIW to put its weight behind it as a regulator – CIW will need to be confident that way of working is going to improve outcomes.

Kevin advised ratings are linked to this. He explained the overall rating for a theme might be 'good' but there might be something CIW sees which looked 'excellent' and we will need to be brave in talking about that where we find it. The ratings should give us comfort that we have a methodology to arrive at that conclusion. There is an ongoing debate about what makes good practice, excellent practice, and/or notable practice.

Claire Protheroe (PACEY Cymru) thanked Kevin for the work to date. She said it will be really interesting to see how this progresses especially when the remit is widened. She advised CIW's role in improvement was one of the things that came out of the independent review of childminding as well.

Ceri Herbert said CIW will need to be objective in looking at 'best practice' and focus on outcomes for children. What works beautifully in one setting and results in excellent outcomes for children, may not work well in another setting, so our judgements around what is good or best will need to be based on how that practice is impacting on children.

**Action:** Kevin Barker agreed to share the proposal document with members.