

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

20 JULY 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE WALES INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To present to the Committee the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) Inspection of Children's Services Report and related Action Plan and request that the Committee note the recommendations and action plan to address these and agree further arrangements for monitoring the actions.

2.0 Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan/Other Corporate Priority

2.1 This report links to the following Corporate Plan priorities:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Smarter use of resources.

3. Background

3.1 Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) has worked together with key stakeholders to develop a new framework for local authority inspection, engagement and performance review. Revised arrangements for engagement and performance review were outlined to directors in a letter from the chief inspector in March 2016.

3.2 The overarching approach to inspection, engagement and performance review is engagement with people, staff and elected members. The aim is to support rigorous evidence and information gathering which both contributes to the assurance process and enhances the accountability of senior officers and elected members for the sufficiency and quality of social services. Central to this approach is the introduction of a core inspection programme of children's and adults' social services.

3.3 CSSIW already has a range of information and intelligence about local authority social services and the impact these have on people's lives. Whether services are provided by the local authority directly or commissioned by local authorities on behalf of people, they will know something about the outcomes for people who need care and support and carers who need support. The implementation of the core programme will more effectively integrate our work across both local authority and regulated services.

3.4 The approach to all inspection, engagement and performance review activities reflects the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 national well-being outcomes and the quality standards for local authorities issued in the relevant code

of practice by Welsh Government. The inspection methodology emphasises engagement with people, including a clear focus on the extent to which service delivery is respectful of people's dignity, promotes independence and is provided to Welsh-speaking people in their language of choice.

- 3.5 The core inspection programme implemented from June 2016 included inspections of adult and children's social services across all local authorities in Wales. The first year of roll-out was to be used as a learning and review phase; testing the efficacy of the local authority inspection, engagement and performance review framework as a whole. This included working closely with inspected local authorities to listen and learn from their experience.
- 3.6 The inspection undertaken in Children's Social Care in Bridgend focussed on how children and families are empowered to access help and care and support services and on the quality of outcomes achieved for children in need of help, care and support and/or protection, including children who have recently become looked after by the local authority.
- 3.7 The inspection also evaluated the quality of leadership, management and governance arrangements in place to develop and support service delivery.
- 3.8 The dates of the inspection were as follows:

Week 1 – week commencing: 30/01/2017

Week 2 – week commencing: 13/02/2017

In advance of the fieldwork, we were required to submit a self-assessment and a range of advanced information/documentation in the following areas:-

- Strategy and Structures
- Key Documents and Operational Protocols
- Blank Templates
- Cabinet/Committee Reports
- Development Work
- Families First and IFST
- Performance Data and Quality Assurance
- Workforce

This required co-ordinating the provision of 212 documents/items in total.

- 3.9 In Fieldwork Week 1, CSSIW inspected the work by assessing a sample of 20 from 65 cases. In some instances this included interviewing the allocated case worker and their manager. In addition, CSSIW also sought the views of service users through interviews with children and young people and parents/carers.
- 3.10 In Fieldwork Week 2, CSSIW explored themes arising from week 1. They conducted a number of individual and group interviews with elected Members, managers, partners and service providers. Where possible they observed practice linked to the cases reviewed during week 1.
- 3.11 CSSIW confirmed that a report of the findings would be published on their website and provided to the Minister for Health and Social Services along with a media

statement. They also requested an opportunity to present findings to Bridgend County Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 The CSSIW inspection report is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Summary of findings

- 4.2 Inspectors found that the authority had worked hard in the context of the Social Services Well-being (Wales) Act (SSWBA) 2014, to reshape its services. The authority's Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) function was delivered through the Assessment team which provided a single point of contact for both social work and preventative (Early Help) interventions.
- 4.3 Access arrangements were respectful of people's rights and individuality and were available bilingually but there was a lack of accessible quality information for children, young people and their families and the model was yet to mature into an integrated service fully understood and delivered with partner agencies.
- 4.4 Screening decisions were timely and Inspectors saw some positive evidence of management oversight. When contacts were received by children's services and there was an obvious indication of significant harm, prompt and proportionate initial action was taken to protect children. However, whilst no widespread or serious failures that left children being harmed or at risk of harm were identified by inspectors, the quality of threshold screening, assessments, care and support planning was found to be inconsistent.
- 4.5 It was acknowledged by the service that the changes introduced to operationalise Information, Advice and Assistance had brought additional expectations that put pressure on the capacity of the managers and the workload of the assessment team. The impending transition to a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) provided a timely opportunity to refresh service expectations resulting from the SSWBA, including learning from practice.
- 4.6 Good social work practice to elicit the child's wishes and feelings was not consistently well reflected in the content of assessments. Assessments/plans needed to be better shared with children and families in addition to proposed changes about service developments.
- 4.7 Inspectors noted that senior managers were already taking steps to look at the impact services are having on reducing need and risk and the authority was working hard to transform children's social services at a time when they had to deliver medium term financial savings.
- 4.8 They noted that the ambition of the authority's plans signalled their commitment to improving both early intervention and statutory services for children, young people and their families, recognising this was significantly dependent upon the ability of all council directorates to work together in order to deliver against the council's vision and contribute and co-ordinate an effective range of services. The council will need to ensure there is an ongoing analysis of the underlying complexities and risks associated with statutory children's services.

- 4.9 It was positive that the council had recently begun work to develop a more comprehensive evidenced based commissioning plan that will be key to the delivery of its early help and permanence strategy.
- 4.10 Staff were committed to achieving good outcomes for children and families but staff morale was variable across the service and needed to be nurtured at a time of significant change. Like other local authorities across Wales, Bridgend should continue to focus on how they can retain staff for longer and more timely recruitment of experienced staff.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- 4.11 An Action Plan has been developed in response to the recommendations made by CSSIW and can be found at **Appendix 2**.
- 4.12 The Action Plan will be monitored by the Early Help and Safeguarding Board which is chaired jointly by the Corporate Directors for Social Services and Wellbeing and Education and Family Support. It will also form part of CSSIW's routine programme of engagement with the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications, the report highlights that the authority is working hard to transform services at a time when there are medium term financial savings to be delivered.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee notes the CSSIW report on the inspection of Bridgend's Children's Social Care and comments on the associated Action Plan.

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9. Contact officer

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10. Background Documents
None