

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

24TH JANUARY 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE WALES - INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2017 – ACTION PLAN UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To present to the Cabinet Committee the updated Action Plan following the inspection of Children's Services in January/ February 2017.

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 The inspection undertaken in Children's Services 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 had recently become looked after by the local authority.

3.2 The inspection also evaluated the quality of leadership, management and governance arrangements in place to develop and support service delivery.

3.3 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, the authority was 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 Integrated Family Support Team
- 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 reported their findings on their website and to the Minister for Health and Social Services in June 2017. They also requested an opportunity to present findings to Bridgend County Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.12 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 received the report and action plan on the 20th July 2017.

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 and 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. The Inspectors reported that they had not seen any serious failures that left children being harmed or at risk of harm however they did comment on the fact that the quality of threshold screening, assessments, care and support planning was 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 Inspectors commented that consistent good social work practice, to elicit the child's wishes and feelings, was not well reflected in the content of assessments. They concluded that assessments/plans needed to be better shared with children and families as well as better communication about any proposed changes about service developments.

- 4.7 Inspectors noted that senior managers were already taking steps to look at the impact services were having on reducing need and risk and the authority was working hard to transform Children's 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 Inspectors noted that 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 The inspection found that the workforce 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 have more timely recruitment of experienced staff.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- 4.11 An Action Plan was developed in response to the recommendations made by CSSIW. It was presented to Cabinet on the 25th July 2017.
- 4.12 The Action Plan has been 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. An updated Action Plan is attached at **Appendix 2**.

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 Cabinet Committee receives and approves the updated Action Plan.

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9. Contact officer

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10. Background Documents

None