

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

06 SEPTEMBER 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING

ADVOCACY – ADULTS AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work undertaken to date in developing the provision of Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA) services for adults and for children and young people, which is being undertaken in response to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Council’s ongoing remodelling plans.

2.0 Connection to Corporate Plan

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priorities:-

- **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council’s priorities.

3.0 Background

3.1 Advocacy means assistance given to help a person represent their views. Section 181(2) of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 defines “advocacy services” as: services which provide assistance (by way of representation or otherwise) to persons for purposes relating to their care and support.

3.2 Part 10 of the Act sets out the requirements for local authorities in relation to advocacy, which are to:

- a. Ensure that access to advocacy services and support is available to enable individuals to engage and participate when local authorities are exercising their statutory duties in relation to them; and
- b. To arrange an independent professional advocate to facilitate the involvement of individuals in certain circumstances.

3.3 An advocate is defined as an ‘appropriate individual’ who can speak on behalf of someone who is facing barriers to communicating or understanding, weighing-up, or deciding on information related to services that they receive. Advocacy services come in a variety of forms, and range from informal, peer and voluntary advocacy through to paid, independent professional advocates (IPAs). The Council promotes the statutory IPA service with posters, leaflets and website via partners and local

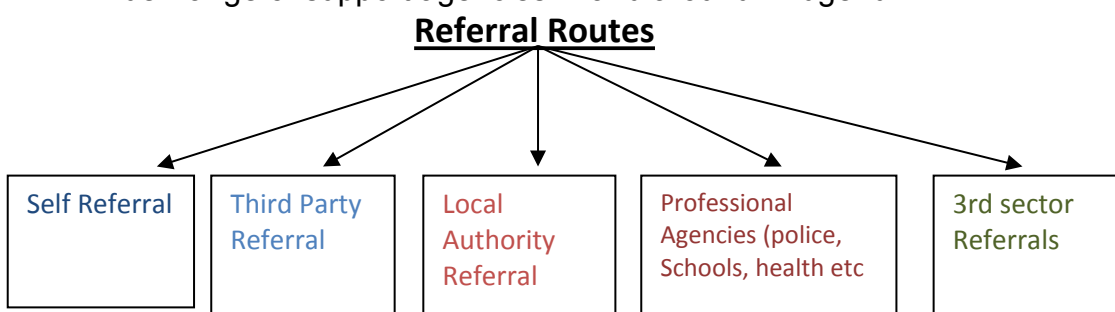
organisations, and service centres. The Advocacy Hub [website](#) is linked to both Dewis Cymru and InfoEngine online directories.

- 3.4 IPA is not meant to replace other forms of advocacy – it is a final option where other appropriate individuals, including family, friends and peers are not able to provide a voice for an individual. However, local authorities must arrange for the provision of an independent professional advocate when a person can only overcome barriers to participate fully with assistance from another appropriate individual, but there is no one else available.
- 3.5 In recognition of the duties for local authorities, Welsh Government has funded the Golden Thread Advocacy Programme (GTAP) to support local authorities with the commissioning of IPA services across Wales. In 2016, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) secured the support of GTAP to assist in establishing a pilot advocacy scheme for adults; helping with stakeholder engagement, evaluating the impact of the Pilot, and supporting the local work to develop a sustainable statutory IPA service. Referrals to the new service have come from social workers across service areas demonstrating a good awareness of the new duty across frontline teams.
- 3.6 Welsh Government has also defined a ‘National Approach to IPA for Children and Young People’, particularly for Looked After Children and for those on the Child Protection Register. This national approach (see 4.7 below) requires regional working by local authorities in commissioning an independent advocacy provider, and as such BCBC has entered into a regional Western Bay contract along with City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Councils.
- 3.7 The Council also meets its requirements for independent advocacy under the Mental Health Act 1983 and Mental Capacity Act 2005 through referral pathways to independent mental health (IMHA) and mental capacity (IMCA) advocacy services.

4.0 Current Situation/Proposal

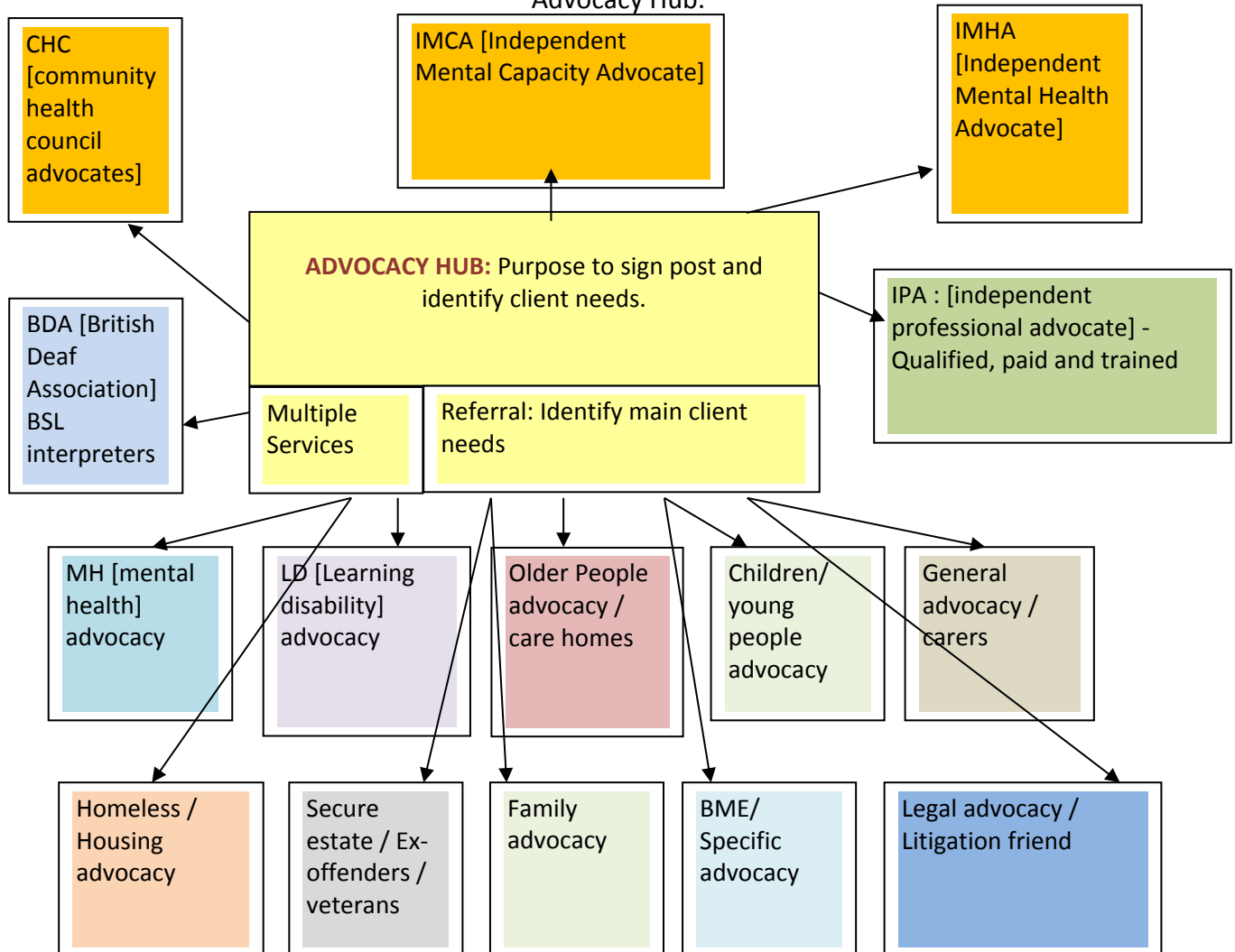
Adult Social Care

- 4.1 The GTAP has supported BCBC to engage with local stakeholders to co-produce a new and fully compliant service model for independent professional advocacy.
- 4.2 This was tested in a pilot IPA scheme for Adult Social Care that operated a ‘Hub & Spoke’ approach using two independent service providers, who also linked with the wider range of support agencies in and around Bridgend.



Informal, Community and Commissioned Advocacy Providers

Range of advocacy services including informal, peer, formal and IPA accessible directly and via the Advocacy Hub.



- 4.3 The Hub & Spoke service model allows for information, sign-posting and referral to all types of advocacy service, including non-statutory support where appropriate, to ensure that people in Bridgend get the right service at the right time. In keeping with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, this enables a preventative approach in providing early intervention to reduce escalation of needs, and supporting resolution of issues through access to the most appropriate type of support.
- 4.4 The Adult Social Care IPA pilot (branded as *'Bridgend Voice & Choice'*) ran from April 2017 to June 2018 and demonstrated that a sign-posting and referral contact point and helpline enables people to access the most appropriate specialist IPA service. The helpline staff at the Hub are also able to sign-post to children's advocacy services (see below) and can link to national support agencies if required.
- 4.5 The pilot received 62 referrals for IPA support up to May 2018, and the review and evaluation identified that the advocates were highly valued by the people using the service. The providers demonstrated evidence of supporting people in difficult circumstances to address their social care issues, which often overlapped with housing issues or managing personal finances. Monthly reports from the Providers and regular contract management meetings ensured the service objectives were

being met effectively, and an independent evaluation, assisted by GTAP, provided further evidence that the Providers are developing an effective advocacy service.

- 4.6 The Adult Social Care IPA service has since been fully commissioned from 1 July 2018 through an open tender exercise, which includes three independent Providers (PromoCymru; Mental Health Matters Wales; People First Bridgend) working under a co-ordinated scheme. Contracts have been tendered for two years initially, with an option to extend for a further two years. In moving forward, the service will:
- a. Support local knowledge exchange via a Bridgend advocacy network, to include all levels of advocacy available. This can link to wider Information, Advice & Assistance services offered by the Council and others, and will help those involved in the referral process to provide a more collaborative approach to supporting individuals.
 - b. Enable access via the Advocacy Hub to experienced specialist advocacy providers able to support specific needs, and to also link to other services including informal community support services, peer advocacy and referrals into IMCA/IMHA (mental capacity and mental health advocates) as required.
 - c. Continue to work strategically with GTAP to help refine and improve the Bridgend Voice & Choice service.

Children's Social Care

- 4.7 The Advocacy for Children and Young People service has been commissioned through a regional Western Bay contract led by Swansea Council. The 'National Approach' service model for advocacy for children and young people is prescribed by Welsh Government, including a set funding level, and was commissioned in Western Bay from 1 August 2017 on a one year basis with an option to extend by up to two years. The existing provider in Bridgend secured the regional contract, namely Tros Gynnal Plant.
- 4.8 Despite contracting with the existing provider in Bridgend, the introduction of the new regional service in August 2017 initially saw a temporary slow down of referrals compared to the local arrangement in place previously (64 cases for BCBC in the five months around the change of contract, compared to 104 cases in the same period in 2016). However, with increased capacity for the provider and training and awareness provided for social workers, the service Provider reports they are now working with approximately 15 individuals/21 cases per month in Bridgend (Apr-July 2018), which is an increase of 50% on the referral numbers for 2016/17 and on track to meet Welsh Government targets.
- 4.9 The new service model now requires a (compulsory) 'Active Offer' of advocacy to be made to all Looked After Children and Child Protection Register children and young people aged 5 years and over. This active offer is a new requirement ensuring that each new individual has an opportunity to meet an advocate at an early stage if they wish, and assessment forms and systems have therefore been adapted to reflect this. Out of County placements will receive support from the Western Bay service if they are within a reasonable distance, or via a reciprocal arrangement with other areas as the same statutory requirement is in place across Wales to ensure equal access is available.

- 4.10 The new active offer has also been slow to evidence increased performance (similar to most other local authorities across Wales) due to the requirement for new referral and reporting systems to be put in place. However, training has been provided for BCBC social workers on the new approach and good working relationships with the provider and regional commissioners is ensuring a collaborative approach to raising the performance across the whole service. Quarterly meetings take place with the Western Bay commissioning officers and with the Provider, and quarterly reports are submitted to Welsh Government to monitor progress against the National Approach targets.
- 4.11 While all partners are working to increase referrals and service delivery, the Welsh Government prescribed level of service - 528 individuals receiving 6605 hours of IPA support per year within Western Bay - has not yet been achieved. Each region in Wales has a similar experience with growth of the service being incremental rather than instant. This position is being reported to Welsh Government, and the prescribed performance levels may need to be reviewed at a national level in the future.
- 4.12 Given the forthcoming Health Boundary change affecting BCBC from Western Bay to Cwm Taf, discussions are underway with commissioning colleagues in both regions to manage the current service and to ensure that Bridgend continues to receive an effective advocacy service for young people.
- 4.13 Discussions undertaken with Cwm Taf have indicated a timeframe where they anticipate having a new regional advocacy service in place from April 2019, to which Bridgend could potentially be a party. However, this would require a change being made in respect of prescribed regional areas – which is something that must be driven by Welsh Government making relevant changes to legislation.
- 4.12 There will also be emerging legislation from the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, which proposes for the first time to make independent professional advocacy for children and young people a regulated service from April 2019, requiring registration and inspection with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Social Care Wales (SCW), which will have a considerable bearing on the approach and service model being commissioned in moving forward from 2019/20.
- 4.13 An extension of the Western Bay contract to 31 March 2019 has been made, in order to allow time for the required legislative changes to the regional boundaries to be made, and to understand the new regulatory requirements. Swansea Council (as lead contractor in Western Bay) has also confirmed the ability to extend beyond 31 March 2019, should it be necessary to ensure continuity of service in Bridgend.

5.0 Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening was carried out for the pilot IPA service in February 2017 in consultation with the Equalities & Diversity Officer. As the fully commissioned Adult Social Care service has now consolidated the pilot with accessibility for all people eligible under the 2014 Act, the service has had a

positive impact in terms of equality, as all protected characteristics are able to access a fully commissioned statutory IPA service.

- 6.2 The Children and Young People Advocacy service is prescribed by Welsh Government through a National Approach targeted at specific client groups.

7.0 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Implications

- 7.1 By giving voice to people who may otherwise lack ability to express themselves, the commissioned advocacy services aim to assist children, young people, adults and their carers to have greater voice, choice and control in their lives. The wellbeing goals of a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, and a Wales of cohesive communities are therefore supported through these services.

- 7.2 The commissioning of the advocacy services supports the five ways of working under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as follows:

Long Term – statutory IPA advocacy gives voice to those who have no other person to speak on their behalf. With a requirement to meet the needs of people in the longer term and with demographic trends towards an ageing population with increasing complexity of need, including estimated increases in the prevalence of dementia, embedding advocacy services that support these individuals will ensure that vulnerable people are better supported to have voice, choice and control in maintaining their independence and wellbeing in the longer-term.

Prevention – the IPA service aims for early-intervention to prevent unnecessary escalation of needs. By identifying and addressing issues via advocacy, earlier resolution can be achieved.

Integration – the service works across sectors taking in referrals from statutory services, health and social care agencies, and the advocacy itself is delivered by third sector Providers within a co-ordinated scheme.

Collaboration – The service model has been co-designed with local stakeholders, the Golden Thread Advocacy Programme (as a national support agency), and with academic collaboration in the evaluation of the Pilot Service. The Hub & Spoke service model is predicated on close collaboration between the service providers and with BCBC social services teams.

Involvement – key stakeholders were involved in the design of the service model following the principles of co-production. The IPA service itself responds directly to the issues and concerns of the people who use the service. As such, the involvement of Individuals is fundamental to the success of the service to ensure that the voice of adults, children and young people is heard.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 A core annual budget of £72,000 funds the Adult Social Care IPA service. This supports daily access to an advocacy hub and helpline, as well as 56 hours/week of advocate time across three specialist IPA services covering all client groups.

- 8.2 For the Children and Young People IPA service, a maximum annual budget of £113,407 has been prescribed for Bridgend by Welsh Government. This total budget includes a contributory grant of £24,984 from Welsh Government to BCBC which goes towards funding the level of service prescribed by Welsh Government under the National Approach, including the 'Active Offer'.
- 8.3 Western Bay local authorities have committed to pay a minimum guaranteed 80% (£90,718 per annum for BCBC) of the maximum annual budget to the provider, with a further commitment to fund up to 100% (£113,407) should actual service demand meet estimated service hours.
- 8.4 The Welsh Government has stated that this grant will form part of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) after the first two years of operation of the service (from 2019/20 onwards). The budget and grant amount was agreed with Welsh Government as part of the Western Bay regional contract.
- 8.5 A move to the Cwm Taf region, and a Welsh Government review of the prescribed level of service delivery, may change the anticipated budget beyond April 2019 – but at the time of writing this report, no announcements had been made nor communication received to this effect.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the information contained in this report, and provide comment on the work undertaken to date.

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10. Contact Officers

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11. Background documents

None