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Dear Laura

CIW Annual Focussed Activity Children's Service

This letter summarises the findings of our annual focussed activity in children's services undertaken in February 2019, which concentrated on advocacy and mentoring. The inspector was Tracey Shepherd – CIW Inspection Manager.

Overview

There has been an increase in active offer referrals made by Bridgend CBC. We found that the children and young people we spoke with were satisfied with the advocacy service they had received and had found it beneficial in making their views and wishes known. Young people had benefitted from accessing the Get On Track programmes which have run in Bridgend CBC. Action has been taken to re-establish the children and young people forums and to explore mentoring options, including peer mentoring, for children and young people

Findings

- Following feedback of the engagement event CIW held with young people in October 2018, Bridgend CBC children's service had produced an action plan to address the issues raised by the young people who attended the event. The action plan included action in relation to advocacy and mentoring.
- All of the children and young people we spoke with provided positive comments regarding the advocacy service they had received. They felt their advocates had assisted and supported them in making their views and wishes known. They confirmed they had received a consistent, easily accessible advocacy service and that generally they had been able to access the service at the right time for them.

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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.

- From July 2018 there has been an increase in the number of active offer referrals made by the local authority to the advocacy service. The advocacy service reported a rise in the number of active offer referrals in the current reporting quarter (January 2019 – March 2019). Some action has been taken to raise local authority staff awareness of the active offer. The monitoring of the active offer has now been included within the IRO quality assurance system.
- The advocacy service has recently been recommissioned. Senior managers reported the new service will be improved by regular visits, by independent visitors, to children in residential placements.
- Action has been taken to re-establish the children and young people forums and to explore mentoring options, including peer mentoring, for children and young people.
- Young people have benefitted from attending the Get on Track programme and four programmes have run in Bridgend CBC since 2016. Participants had gained qualifications and developed their skills and confidence while attending the programme, which includes an element of peer mentoring. A young person told us how they valued being a peer mentor and the tutor discussed the power and benefits of peer mentoring. We were unable to ascertain how many care experienced young people or young people who were known / had been known to children's services had participated in the programmes.
- Discussions with local authority staff identified that managers were increasingly confident that staff were aware of the active offer. The staff we spoke with were able to identify methods that are or could be used to raise awareness of the active offer.
- Children and young people's consultation documents and the processes for LAC reviews have been revised.

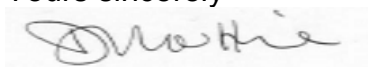
Methodology

- We spoke with seven young people who told us about their experience of advocacy and mentoring.
- We spoke with the group manager for IAA and Safeguarding, and the Strategic Planning and Commissioning Officer.
- We spoke with a representative from Tros Gynnal Plant and considered performance information provided by Tros Gynnal Plant.
- We reviewed the action plan formulated by Bridgend CBC children's service following previous CIW focussed activity.
- We spoke with a participant and tutor from the 'Get On Track' programme and considered 12 completed evaluation forms.

Through our focussed activity we identified improvements made and did not identify any significant areas for development. CIW will reflect the findings of this focussed activity in our annual Local Authority Performance Review letter.

I wished to extend our thanks to all those who helped with the arrangements for this work and to those people and staff who spoke with us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Denise Moultrie', is placed on a light grey rectangular background.

Denise Moultrie

Senior Manager LA Inspection

Care Inspectorate Wales