

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

3 NOVEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT OF CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 23 - 27 MAY 2022

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection of Children's Social Care Services Report and to request that the Committee considers the report and comments on the associated Action Plan.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 CIW carried out a performance evaluation inspection of children's services in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) in May 2022. The purpose of this inspection was to review the local authority's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation, against the following areas:

- People – voice and control
- Prevention
- Well-being
- Partnership and Integration

- 3.2 The scope of the inspection included:

- Evaluation of the experience of children at the point of performance evaluation inspection

- Evaluation of the experience and outcomes people achieve through their contact with services
- Evidence of the local authority and partners having learnt lessons from their recent experiences and actions taken/plans for service development and improvement
- Consideration of how the local authority manages opportunity and risk in its planning and delivery of social care at individuals, operational and strategic levels

3.3 The date of the inspection was the week commencing 23rd May 2022 and the inspection team consisted of a lead inspector and six inspectors.

In advance of the inspection, a range of information/documentation was submitted including:

- Strategy and Structures
- Key Documents and Operational Protocols
- Cabinet/Committee Reports
- Development Work
- Performance Data and Quality Assurance
- Workforce and Supervision information

3.4 The inspection team reviewed the experiences of people's journey through care and support through review and tracking of their social care record. The team reviewed 50 cases, with more detailed case tracking of 10 of these cases. This included interviewing the allocated case worker and their manager. In addition, CIW also sought the views of service users through interviews and focus group meetings with children and young people, parents/carers and other professionals involved.

3.5 CIW also sought the views of staff, people and stakeholders using a range of surveys to gather information and views to inform the inspection.

3.6 CIW 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.

4. Current situation/proposal

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

Summary of findings

A summary of the main findings of the inspection in the four main areas including strengths and areas for improvement can be found below:

4.2 People – Strengths

- Practitioners recognise the importance of ensuring children's voices are heard
- Practitioners generally maintain regular contact/visits to children and families
- The workforce is striving relentlessly to support children and families

- The local authority gives regard to the rights of children to be offered independent professional advocacy
- A corporate parenting and participation officer has been appointed
- Creation of the care experienced children's team
- Workforce well-being, recruitment and retention is a key priority for the local authority

4.3 People – Areas for Improvement

- Opportunities for children's views to be consistently sought and appropriately recorded need to be strengthened
- Limited evidence of direct work
- Inconsistent use of chronologies and genograms
- Strengthen business support for practitioners
- Variable evidence of management oversight/quality of supervision
- Practice model – implementation of Signs of Safety
- Review of direct payments scheme
- Consistent offer of a carers assessment

4.4 Prevention - Strengths

- Senior leaders, managers and politicians have an understanding and appreciation of the importance of the purpose and function of early help and preventative services
- Examples of good practice – parenting support and advice
- Service developments – residential, fostering and therapeutic support

4.5 Prevention – Areas for Improvement

- Opportunities to prevent escalation of need continues to be a challenge for the local authority given the persistently high volume of referrals together with the complexity of needs of children and families, and workforce challenges
- Missed opportunities to thoroughly explore and mitigate risk and a lack of professional curiosity
- Placement sufficiency and support
- Accessibility of information, advice and assistance
- Strengthening of Quality Assurance framework and alignment of performance and quality assurance systems

4.6 Partnerships and Integration - Strengths

- Positive working relationships with the regional safeguarding board and neighbouring local authorities
- Partners mainly spoke positively in relation to partnership working with BCBC
- Despite the current pressures there is evidence of partnership working to improve policies and systems and mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities within the safeguarding process

4.7 Partnerships and Integration – Areas for Improvement

- Inconsistent thresholds and standards of practice
- The local authority will need to ensure its communication strategy is sufficiently robust to effectively communicate to staff and partners the vision for children’s services and the many developments taking place/planned to take place
- Share learning from audits and reviews with staff and partners

4.8 Wellbeing - Strengths

- Following critical events, the local authority has undertaken relevant reviews and audits
- Action plans have been developed and implemented
- Appointment of deputy head of service and peripatetic team manager
- The recent establishment of a managed care team, over establishment of staffing in the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service and additional management support for the IAA service is starting to result in improved timeliness of screening, manageability of caseloads and improved management oversight. These improvements are very recent, and more work is needed to ensure improvements are embedded and sustained
- Timely, well attended strategy discussions and child protection conferences
- Provision of specialist behavioural support for disabled children with complex needs

4.9 Wellbeing - Areas for Improvement

- Further work is required to improve the timeliness of meeting statutory responsibilities
- Facilitation of supervised contact
- Consistent high quality written records
- Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation – strengthen interventions and mapping
- First year of practice – ensure competence and confidence of staff and provide consistent supervision and oversight

Recommendations and Next Steps

4.10 The self-assessment completed in advance of the performance evaluation inspection largely aligned with the inspection findings. Recognising the strengths, and to ensure timely action to sustainably improve the areas for improvement, Cabinet approved a 3 year strategic plan for children’s services in February 2022. The implementation of the priorities in the plan is being overseen by an Improving Outcomes for Children Board chaired by the Council’s Chief Executive and advised by an independent advisor. There is also a Member’s Advisory Panel as part of the governance comprising of Group Leaders.

4.11 An Action Plan has been developed in response to the recommendations made by CIW and can be found at **Appendix 2**. The actions in the attached plan are cross-referenced with the actions in the 3 year strategic plan to ensure there is alignment

and no duplication of effort. The progress to implement the actions will be overseen by the Improving Outcomes for Children Board and reported to the Member Advisory Panel and Scrutiny. CIW have indicated they will be closely monitoring the Council's performance and progress in achieving the improvements required.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- Long Term – Social Services is demand led and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) focusses on sustainable prevention and well-being outcomes for the future. There is a requirement to meet the needs of people in the longer term and, because of rising demographics and increasing complexity, the remodelling and transformation of services continues to be a priority.
- Prevention – one of the four themes within the CIW inspection is Prevention. CIW have identified areas of strength for Prevention in their report. The areas for improvement are also included, and actions for improvement have been addressed within the Action Plan at **Appendix 2**.
- Integration – one of the four themes within the CIW inspection is Partnerships and Integration. CIW have identified areas of strength for Integration and Partnerships in their report. The areas for improvement are also included, and actions for improvement have been addressed within the Action Plan at **Appendix 2**. The SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners, particularly the NHS and the Police, to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided. The report refers to work with statutory partners.
- Collaboration – The collaborative approaches described in the report, are managed and monitored through various strategic and collaborative boards across Directorates and with partners, including the Childrens' Social Care Improving the Outcomes for Children Strategic Board.
- Involvement – the key stakeholders are the people who use social care. There is considerable engagement including surveys, stakeholder meetings, feedback forms and the complaints process. The provision of accessible information and advice helps to ensure that the voice of adults, children and young people is heard.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this inspection report, there are a number of significant pressures, that the Directorate has identified, particularly in the areas of workforce and service provision (placements) in children's social care which will be considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the 2023/24 budget setting process.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee considers the CIW report on the inspection of Bridgend's Children's Social Care Services and comments on the associated Action Plan.

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Background documents:

None