

Lance Carver
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
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Date: 03 August 2020

Dear Lance Carver,

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Local Authority Performance Review April 2019 - March 2020

The code of practice for review of local authority social services in April 2019 outlines our intention to write and publish an annual letter for local authorities which will:

- provide feedback on inspection and performance evaluation activity completed by us during the year
- report on progress the local authority has made in implementing recommendations from inspections and/or child and adult practice reviews
- outline our forward work programme

This letter summarises our review of Vale of Glamorgan Council's performance in carrying out its statutory social services functions from April 2019 – March 2020.

We acknowledge, that due to the unprecedented circumstances relating to COVID-19, we were unable to complete the annual performance review meeting.

However, we believe that there remains significant benefits in identifying and drawing the attention of the local authority and its partners, to the areas of both strengths and improvements required. The letter is intended to assist the local authority and its partners to continually improve.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

It follows the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and our increasingly collaborative and strengths based approach to supporting improvement.

The content of this letter is informed by the performance evaluation activity undertaken by the inspectorate during the course of the year. This activity included:

- engagement activity, in relation to older people (aged 65 and over), undertaken between 4 July and 15 August 2020
- practice and performance meeting held with the Head of Adults Services on 6 August 2020
- practice and performance meeting held with the Head of Children's Services on 6 August 2020
- annual focused activity undertaken in children's services on 4 and 5 November 2019
- meeting with Vale of Glamorgan Council and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (CVUHB) to review self-evaluation of work in relation to promoting independence for older people 22 November 2019
- annual focused activity undertaken in adults services on 18 and 19 February 2020

During the course of the year, we have been in discussions with you during all of the activity listed above and as such our annual performance letter content is an accurate reflection of our ongoing findings which we have consistently shared with you.

Summary of strengths and areas for improvement in line with principles of the 2014 Act

Well-being

The local authority benefits from an experienced senior management team. Effective leadership is evident at all levels working towards a shared vision that emphasises the importance of choice and independence as well as sustaining family arrangements. Work already initiated has progressed during 2019-2020 to align both adults and children's services structures to more effectively support local community based approaches that focus on achieving good outcomes for people.

A significant amount of work during the last 12 months has focused on reconfiguring the 'front door' to both adults and children's services to ensure that people are receiving timely early help services. Preventive services have been expanded through the inclusion of partner agencies from statutory and third sectors, including police staff and community navigators in GP surgeries. All staff including partners have been trained to offer high quality information, advice and assistance and to provide support to people before their needs escalate. However, we noted during our focused activities that 'what matters conversations' do not always take place soon enough. Nevertheless, we found that all professionals were committed to delivering strength based practice. Further embedding strength based approaches could be enhanced by the adoption of a consistent social work practice model. We recognise both adults and children's services are proactively working towards achieving this over the next 12 months.

There is a strong corporate and political support for both adult and children's services and a thorough and well developed understanding of strengths and current challenges.

People

People's views have been sought by Vale of Glamorgan Council. The Regional Learning Disability Strategy, launched in June 2019, was co-produced with people with a learning disability, their families and carers. Consultation activities have been undertaken in respect of relocation of day services for older people and with children and families in respect of service design. However, we found the Vale of Glamorgan Council could benefit from more systematic follow-up of recommendations made by service users to ensure maximum impact. During our focused and engagement activities most people told us that they were treated with dignity and respect and that they felt listened to. Although many people said they had not been asked for feedback about provision, generally, when asked, people provided positive feedback about services they received and the staff who delivered services. Some people felt local services and activities did not always provide what they needed.

More work is required to improve the timeliness of carer's assessments and to encourage carers to take up services, although generally support for carers in Vale of Glamorgan Council has increased over the last year. Carer support officers are located in all adult teams. They offer short-term support and can assist with respite grants. A carers' hub has also been made available in Penarth and plans are underway to open 'drop-in' facilities in other locations.

The social work workforce in Vale of Glamorgan Council is relatively stable and morale good. Staff we met with during our focused activity told us they received good support, training and supervision. In adult services there has been successful recruitment when vacancies have arisen; less so in children's services although recruitment to key vacancies has been achieved throughout the year. Where vacancies remain these are covered by agency staff who are largely longstanding. Recruitment of Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHP) has also improved but remains fragile; agency staff are used to cover some posts and Vale of Glamorgan Council has taken steps to enhance recruitment to remaining vacancies.

The local authority continues to be challenged by the registration requirements for domiciliary care workers. At time of publishing this report a significant number of the domiciliary workforce were not registered, as required, with Social Care Wales.

We continue to monitor implementation of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) which has identified the local authority, in common with many others in Wales, is unable to assure itself people's human rights are not being breached by being deprived of their liberty unlawfully. Our joint national report on DoLS will be issued in due course.

Prevention

Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to the provision of early help and preventive services, recognising the impact in terms of improving outcomes for people as well as alleviating pressure on regulated services.

For example, Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS), a multi-disciplinary provision is focused on preventing the need for hospital admission as well as aiming to support hospital discharge in a timely way. During our focused activity in adult services we saw imaginative

investment of Integrated Care Funding. However, there is a significant capacity issue in independent sector domiciliary care leading to delays in the provision of packages of care for people. VCRS is responsive to these delays and able to mitigate in some cases. Despite this development, there has been a rise in the rate of people aged over 75 years delayed in hospital for social care reasons during 2019-2020 as a consequence of these challenges.

In children's services, the numbers of children looked after has reduced during 2019-2020 against a previously rising trajectory. The Children Looked After Reduction Board has focused on safe risk taking. The new structure has facilitated social work capacity to review and, where safe to do so, revoke Care Orders. Investment through the Integrated Care Fund has been used to support this work in respect of stepping down kinship placements. Placement sufficiency remains challenging.

During 2018 our programme of work focused on care experienced children and young people. The [report](#) is published on our website. Key findings highlight areas for improvement in respect of profile, sufficiency, practice, partnerships, stability, governance and corporate parenting. Many of the areas we have identified for improvement continue to be considered by Welsh Government's Ministerial Advisory Group on improving outcomes for care experienced children and young people and we also hope local authorities will consider their own contribution to addressing these findings. We will monitor with interest the development of much needed commissioning and market position strategy to map future demand for services and help shape the market.

In December 2019 we wrote to all local authorities asking for information about The Public Accounts Committee report following their enquiry into care experienced children, specifically recommendation 5 concerning the effectiveness and frequency of end of placement reviews. Thank you for your response. We note confirmation of VGCC compliance with part 6 code of practice as well as good practice in relation to disruption meetings and consideration of how to support children and young people facing placement breakdown most effectively.

Partnerships

A range of effective well-established effective partnerships are evident within the statutory sector. Strategic regional arrangements between Cardiff Council and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (CVUHB) are well developed with Regional Partnership and Safeguarding Boards providing oversight of improving outcomes for people. A number of joint planning and commissioning groups, such as disability groups, children's and mental health partnerships and fostering and adoption arrangements result in service provision that meet regional and local population needs.

The local authority also maintains a strong approach to supporting the third sector evidenced by the protection of funding for third sector investment.

Strategic partnership working is effective within adult services, evidenced by three integrated senior manager posts. The Head of Adults Services is an integrated role which is long established in the Vale, the structure within the remit is also integrated which provides added value to working across the social and health care sectors. In addition, The Head of Integrated Care is also a regional post, working closely with operational managers in all three organisations across the partnership, VGCC, Cardiff Council, and the CVUHB, to

design systems and process that provide a consistent approach but recognise variation in need across local and regional boundaries.

In children's services strategic partnership working is also effective. For example, the development of a corporate strategy for children who need care and support in which partners explicitly recognise their responsibilities regarding improving outcomes for children and families. A regional adolescent service (11+) service has been implemented. A regional family group meetings and therapeutic service are also under development along with Cardiff Council, CVUHB and third sector partners.

The Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) has not yet been adopted by CVUHB. There is no time frame set for this to take place. Strategic decision making is required by CVUHB to address this issue. Ongoing uncertainty creates challenges to the management and efficiency of workflow and increases risk where information is not shared with professionals involved in an individual's care. Access to each other's systems also remains problematic. However, during our focused activity in adult services we saw many examples of positive information sharing between social care and health care staff that promoted best outcomes for people.

CIW Performance Review Plan for 2020-2021

Our scheduled thematic inspection programme for 2019-2020 focused on prevention and promoting independence for older adults in the community, and for the current children's services thematic inspection the focus is on prevention, partnerships and experiences of disabled children. Due to the current emergency situation relating to COVID-19, we have paused the publication of our older adults report and paused all activity relating to the disabled children's review. We will advise you in due course when we envisage recommencing our inspections.

We hope to publish the older people's national report in due course and want to take this opportunity to thank you for your local authority's contribution to this.

Due to the unforeseen circumstances we find ourselves in, we are currently reviewing and considering our work plan for the remainder of 2020-2021.

CIW worked together with HMI Constabulary (HMICFRS), HMI Probation, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Estyn to develop a model of joint inspection of child protection arrangements in Wales (JICPA). This approach was piloted during the autumn of 2019. This was a fantastic example of new ways of working across Wales and a real drive towards collaboration and integration in public services.

We continue to work closely with Social Care Wales to support improvement in social care services.

You will note that this letter has been copied to colleagues in Audit Wales, Estyn and HIW. CIW works closely with partner inspectorates to consider the wider corporate perspective in which social services operate, as well as local context for social services performance.

We will publish the final version of this letter on our website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lou Bushell-Bauers', with a small horizontal line to the right of the signature.

Lou Bushell-Bauers
Head of Local Authority Inspection

Cc.
Audit Wales
HIW
Estyn