

<b>Isle of Anglesey County council</b>	
<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Corporate Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date :</b>	<b>11.7.2017</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Children's Services progress report</b>
<b>Portfolio Holders(s)</b>	<b>Cllr Llinos Medi Huws</b>
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<b>Local Members</b>	<b>Relevant to all Members</b>

## **1.0 Recommendation**

1.1 Members to note progress to date.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 Children's Services on the Isle of Anglesey were inspected by the CSSIW during October and November 2016. Members will be aware that the Authority has established a Member panel<sup>1</sup> to ensure the monitoring of progress and also to hold the Service to account. The Panel will receive detailed information on progress and summary progress reports will be submitted to every scheduled meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

## **3.0 Scope of the inspection**

3.1 The inspection focused on how children and families are empowered to access help and care & support services and on the quality of outcomes achieved for children in need of help, care & support and/or protection, including children who have recently become looked after by the Local Authority. The inspection also evaluated the quality of leadership, management and governance arrangements in place to develop and support service delivery.

## **4.0 Recommendations of the CSSIW Report**

4.1 The Final CSSIW report was published on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017. The report had 14 recommendations:

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<sup>1</sup> Children's Services Improvement Panel

#### 4.2 **As a priority:**

1. The authority should progress its commitment to developing a framework for the provision of preventive work with children and families that will deliver an integrated service and provide early help and support that effectively delays the need for care and support.
2. Effective, multi-agency quality assurance systems and training arrangements should be established to ensure that thresholds for assessment to statutory children's services are understood by staff and partners and are consistently applied; this should include the development of a multi-agency child protection thresholds protocol incorporating recent Welsh Government guidance.
3. Senior leaders in social services and the police should continue to work proactively together to ensure improvements to the quality, consistency and timeliness of child protection enquiries.
4. The council should continue to support senior leaders to improve their knowledge and understanding of the complexities and risks involved in delivering children's services to assure themselves, partners, staff and communities that their responsibilities are discharged to maximum effect.
5. A robust workforce strategy should urgently be developed to include short, medium and long term aims for recruitment and retention of social workers.
6. Arrangements for team managers and senior practitioners should be reviewed to ensure capacity to effectively and consistently provide management oversight of decision making, challenge and direction for staff across the service; a leadership and development programme should be made available to build resilience.
7. Senior leaders should take steps to improve the frequency, consistency and quality of front line staff supervision; an assurance mechanism must be implemented to ensure compliance and quality.

#### **Over the next 12 months:**

8. Strong political and corporate support for children's services must continue to ensure the service improvements needed are prioritised and the pace of improvement accelerated and sustained.
9. Multi-agency arrangements should be established to strengthen operational plans to support effective co-ordination of statutory partners' completion of Joint Assessment Frameworks.
10. The quality of assessments and plans should be improved to ensure that they are consistently of a good quality, with a clear focus on the needs, risks and strengths of children and families, and that desired outcomes, timescales and accountabilities for actions are clear.

11. The quality and consistency of record keeping should be improved; all staff and managers should ensure that their records are of good quality, are up to date and are systematically stored.

12. The local authority and partners should work together to develop a cohesive approach to the collection and analysis of information about the needs of communities, that includes the voices of children and families. This should be used to inform the shaping of strategic plans to achieve effective alignment of service delivery between information, advice and assistance services, the preventive sector and statutory services.

13. Performance management and quality assurance arrangements, including scrutiny of service demand and routine auditing of the quality of practice, needs to be embedded so that managers at all levels have timely, relevant and accurate performance and quality assurance information to enable them to do their jobs effectively and to deliver improvements.

14. Caseloads and reports regarding the quality of workers' performance should be continuously monitored to ensure there is sufficient capacity for workers to engage effectively with children and their families.

4.3 Due to the significant concerns identified in the inspection CSSIW will consider undertaking a re-inspection of Anglesey children's services within 12 – 18 months from the publication of their report.

4.4 In response to the findings and recommendations, the authority has put the following arrangements in place:

- A revised Service Improvement Plan (SIP), incorporating all of the Recommendations made in CSSIW's Inspection Report
- Put new Project Management arrangements in place, with an internal Improvement Group of officers meeting on a monthly basis, and reporting to the Senior Management Team and to the Executive.
- Established a new Panel of Elected Members following the recent local authority elections, which will report to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

4.5 In addition to this, the Chief Executive is holding weekly meetings with the Director of Social Services, the Head of Children's Services and the Head of Human Resources, to oversee the development and implementation of the Workforce Strategy, and to ensure that there is appropriate pace in making key appointments to the posts of Service Manager and Practice Leaders.

## **5.0 Focus of the work**

5.1 We are focusing on three or four key issues at a time, to ensure that the improvements are phased, deliverable and are sustainable. Over time, we will reviewing the effect of all the changes to ensure that they are effective. Our focus over the past four months has been on the following aspects:

## 5.2 **Workforce Strategy**

- 5.3 A new Workforce Strategy has been developed, with support from Human Resources, and an Action Plan is now being developed to ensure key action points are prioritized (SIP 1.1; CSSIW R5)
- 5.4 Four newly-qualified Social Workers have been recruited and will join us over the summer; we now have an open recruitment for experienced Social Workers and one experienced Social Worker will commence in post in July. This will enable us to reduce the number of agency Social Workers on a managed basis during 2017 (SIP 1.2)
- 5.5 We consulted staff on a new structure during February and March 2017. We have now begun the appointment process, with both Service Manager posts filled. We have appointed to 3 Practice Leader posts internally and the remaining 5 posts are being advertised externally with a closing date at the end of June (SIP 4.2; CSSIW 6)
- 5.6 The new Information, Advice and Assistance team -Teulu Môn – has been established and will continue to be strengthened over the next few months (SIP 4.3).
- 5.7 Responsibility for Families First and Team around the Families was transferred to Children’s Services in April 2017, and the delivery of preventative services will be improved as new services are developed and commissioned (SIP 4.4; CSSIW 1)
- 5.8 A Staff Survey was conducted at the end of 2016, and the analysis was made available to the Head of Service (Operations) in March 2017. The key messages have been shared with staff at Staff Conference, and through the Service’s Staff Bulletin in April 2017.
- ## 5.9 **Quality Assurance, Supervision and Improving Practice**
- 5.10 A new Supervision Policy has been developed by the Practice Learning Co-ordinator, working with managers and consulting staff. The Policy was launched in March, and implementation is being monitored. Training to improve supervision skills, including holding difficult conversations, has been held in June 2017 (SIP 1.3; CSSIW 7). There are tracking arrangements in place to ensure all staff comply with the requirements of the new policy and that supervision, support and guidance for staff is a core practice within the Service.
- 5.11 An initial Audit of files was undertaken in February 2017. The findings have been discussed with staff to ensure that there is an improvement in practice. Further audits will be undertaken over the summer to ensure that there is an improvement in practice and supervision (SIP 2.1; CSSIW 10).

- 5.12 Service Managers and Team Managers are putting an increased emphasis on the quality of Record Keeping to ensure that weaknesses are addressed (SIP 3.5; CSSIW 11).
- 5.13 A comprehensive training programme was been put in place for May and June which focused on areas that the inspection highlighted for improvement, including Supervision, the IFSS model of working, Collaborative Communication, Risk Model and Motivational Interviewing (SIP 4.1). The impact of the training on practice will be reviewed (SIP 2.1; CSSIW 10).
- 5.14 The profile of Looked After Children has been reviewed, with the aim of reducing the numbers who are placed out of county. The process for agreeing all placements is currently being reviewed to ensure that costs are taken into consideration although meeting the wellbeing needs of children and young people will continue to be a priority. Joint funding arrangements with Education and Health partners are also being reviewed to ensure shared funding agreements are agreed as soon as possible.
- 5.15 We have established an internal Panel to review children placed in Residential care chaired by the Head of Service to monitor their care and support plans, to ensure that LAC Review decisions are swiftly implemented, that placements are meeting their needs and they provide value for money. The Panel will ensure that all providers are meeting their contractual obligations and that expenditure is closely monitored. Consent for all residential placements now requires the approval of the Head of Service.
- 5.16 The option of re-opening a residential setting in Holyhead was reviewed, and a decision taken that this is not a feasible option. (SIP 3.1)

## **6.0 The next phase in implementing the Service Improvement Plan**

### **6.1 Quality Assurance**

- 6.2 The Quality Assurance Framework will be strengthened and embedded within the Service (SIP 3.2; CSSIW 13 & 14)
- 6.3 The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit has been strengthened. We have appointed an additional Independent Reviewing Officer commencing at the end of June which will increase capacity. Additional administrative support and re-establishing the post of Quality Assurance Manager will strengthen support to the operational Teams to implement and sustain the improvement needed in practice (SIP 3.2).
- 6.4 Managers will continue to focus on improving the quality of Social Work practice in relation to case recording, assessment, analysis of risk, LAC Reviews, LAC visits, CP visits, Core group meetings and Pathway Plans (SIP 3.3). Currently performance remains inconsistent.
- 6.5 A further audit of files will take place in July, and targeted interventions will be undertaken if it is apparent that individual Social Workers have not improved

the quality of their practice since the Inspection and the Audit undertaken in February 2017.

## **6.6 Working with Partners**

6.7 The findings of the CSSIW's Inspection Report was discussed in the North Wales Safeguarding Children Board in March 2017, ensuring a collective understanding of the issues, and a commitment by partners to work with the Isle of Anglesey County Council to improve services for children.

6.8 Meetings have been held with key partners including North Wales Police, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the Education Service. Commitment to improved co-operation was secured, and a commitment to on-going dialogue at a strategic level to create better conditions for operational co-ordination. In discussion we have identified a range of multi-agency case auditing; with the selection of themes for audit being guided by the CSSIW Inspection report. The remit can and will be expanded as we embed the multi-agency approach into our assurance plans (SIP 3.4; CSSIW 2).

6.9 The CSSIW's report has been discussed at the Gwynedd and Anglesey Local Delivery Group; it has been agreed that the Terms of Reference of the Group's Quality Assurance sub-group be reviewed to ensure the work of the group is driven by a need to improve current multi-agency safeguarding practice (SIP 3.4; CSSIW 2).

6.10 Children's Services are leading a Gwynedd and Ynys Mon Task and Finish Group under the Local Delivery Safeguarding Group to create a local Child protection multi-agency Practice Guidance with the focus on improving practice and safeguarding arrangements. A draft document will be ready by October (SIP 2.2; CSSIW 3).

## **6.11 Improved services for children, young people and families**

6.12 Preventative Services will be reviewed, and a new strategy developed jointly with partners, to ensure more effective services and commissioning, to reduce the number of children and young people who need to be placed on the Child Protection Register and who need to be Looked After (SIP 4.4; CSSIW 12).

6.13 We have started to practice differently and more intensively with a small number of families following a similar model to the work of the Intensive Family Support Services (SIP 2.1). This is the work the Resilient Families Team will be undertaking to support children living at home: both preventing the need for accommodation and supporting return home plans (SIP 5.2).

## **6.14 Elected Members and Senior Leaders**

6.15 The agenda for the Members Panel meetings will focus on monitoring and challenging the implementation of the Service Improvement Plan, holding the

Director and Service to account. This will be complemented by training and visits to support senior leaders and members to improve their knowledge and understanding of the complexities and risks involved in delivering children's services (SIP 1.5; CSSIW 4).

- 6.16 The Protocol for the Director of Social Services will be reviewed to ensure that corporate arrangements are effective (SIP 6.1).

## 7.0 Budgets

- 7.1 Budgets for Children's Services continue to be under pressure. There are two contributing factors:

- **Agency Staff:** 2017 is a transitional year, whilst we make appointments to the new structure for Children and Families' Services. Over time, our dependency on Agency Social Workers will reduce. However, in the short term we will continue to need the services of agency staff to enable us to meet our statutory obligations to children and young people.
- **Out of county placements:** To mitigate the cost of these placements the Service has implemented an action plan for 2017/18. This includes strengthening the processes in relation to children/young people coming into care, reviewing children/young people currently in residential placements, increased placement options on the Island, reviewing funding approval for residential placements and continuing with targeted recruitment campaigns. Consent for all residential placements now requires the approval of the Head of Service.

## 8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The implementation of the Service Improvement Plan is progressing. We are achieving good outcomes for a number of our children and we have received positive comments on the quality of our work, especially in Court cases. We continue to challenge and support professional practice, in particular the quality of assessments, recording and analysis of risk within the Service. Whilst we are making good progress in implementing the Workforce Strategy, it will take time for the new structure and ways of working to be embedded.
- 8.2 CSSIW will be undertaking further case file auditing and discussions with a few of our families towards the end of July and I am confident the cases we have identified will provide evidence of improvement in the quality of practice. The challenge now is to ensure this standard is seen consistently right across the Service.