

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL Scrutiny Report Template

Committee:	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
Date:	4 th June, 2018
Subject:	Children's Services Improvement Panel
Purpose of Report:	Progress update on the work of the Children's Services Improvement Panel
Scrutiny Chair:	Cllr Aled Morris Jones
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Llinos Medi Huws
Head of Service:	Caroline Turner, Assistant Chief Executive / Fon Roberts, Head of Children's Services
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Local Members:	Not applicable

1 - Recommendation/s

R1 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee is requested to note:

- Progress made to date with the work of the Children's Services Improvement Panel both in terms of achieving its work programme and preparation work taken to measure impact and added value
- That all work-streams pertaining to the Service Improvement Plan appear to be on target thus far. This was recently reported to the Local Authority by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)¹ following their assessment of the Council's self-evaluation of progress to date
- The ongoing development programme for Panel members much of which is delivered in-house

R2 Escalate the following matter for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to be aware:

- Although good progress has been made on implementing the revised staffing structure, some social worker posts remain filled by agency workers. This is being addressed by developing our own experienced social workers by supporting experienced support workers to qualify and by recruiting newly qualified social workers. The actions taken to address this should be noted.

2 – Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

Direct link with the Council Plan / transformation priorities. The Panel's consideration of the service improvement plan for children's services will provide assurance to the Executive that the Council are responding in a robust manner to the recommendations of the recent CIW report on children's services (dated March, 2017) and that steps are in place to mitigate any risks.

¹ Correspondence dated 11/01/18 from Care Inspectorate Wales: Review of Progress in implementation of Children's Services Improvement Plan

3 – Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members

To assist Members when scrutinising the topic:-

3.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities [**focus on customer/citizen**]

3.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality [**focus on value**]

3.3 A look at any risks [**focus on risk**]

3.4 Scrutiny taking a performance monitoring or quality assurance role [**focus on performance & quality**]

3.5 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:

- Long term
- Prevention
- Integration
- Collaboration
- Involvement

[**focus on wellbeing**]

4 - Key Scrutiny Questions

At the request of the Panel:

1. Does the Committee have any views on the priority of the work streams included in the Panel work forward programme?
2. Are the actions of the Panel thus far sufficiently robust and at pace?

5 – Background / Context

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Members will already be aware that scrutiny has developed over the past few months through the work of 3 scrutiny panels namely - Finance Scrutiny Panel, Schools Review Scrutiny Panel and the Children's Services Improvement Panel. This report summarises progress made to date as regards the **Children's Services Improvement Panel**.

1.2 Panel Governance Arrangements

As previously reported to this Committee², robust governance arrangements are in place to underpin the work of the Panel and it is the intention to endeavour to continue to convene monthly Panel meetings during 2018. A process is in place for quarterly progress reporting by Councillor Richard Griffiths, as the Corporate Scrutiny Committee representative on the Panel.

2. FOCUS OF WORK OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PANEL

2.1 The Children's Services Improvement Panel has now met on 10 occasions, namely –

- 17th July, 2017
- 21st August, 2017
- 25th September, 2017

² Corporate Scrutiny Committee convened on 4th September and 13th November, 2017



- 26th October, 2017
- 28th November, 2017
- 19th December, 2017
- 23rd January, 2018
- 26th February, 2018
- 20th March, 2018
- 25th April, 2018

2.2 This report focuses on the work of the Panel for the period February – April, 2018:

- **Service Improvement Plan (SIP)** – an overview of the Service Improvement Plan at each meeting of the Panel to ensure that the entire programme remains on target. Also, to enable the Panel to identify any early indication of slippage or lack of progress. The Panel requested progress reports on the following aspects as part of its ongoing monitoring of the SIP:
 - i. Part 4 Complaints: professional workers
 - ii. Staff supervision arrangements
 - iii. Staffing structure / workforce issues and impact of improvements on practice
 - iv. Discussions with North Wales Police
 - v. Practice Improvement Plan and Standards

Good progress reported. Also, it was noted that some social worker posts continued to be filled by agency staff and which needed to be filled on a permanent basis.

Detailed consideration was given by the Panel to 2 themes in the Service Improvement Plan:

-  **Theme 4³ (SIP)** – social workers working proactively with families to manage risk – spending much more time working alongside families helping them to change so that the family is a safe place for their children
-  **Theme 5⁴ (SIP)** – enhancing family support services targeted towards providing intensive and speedy support at point of family breakdown aimed at keeping the family together.
- **External evaluation** – it was noted that the Independent Support Team would be reporting back to the Panel in July⁵ on the findings of their review of progress in implementing the Service Improvement Plan (SIP).
- **Laming Visits** – a robust reporting process now in place for Laming Visits with the objective of bringing the Panel closer to cases, creating the conditions for Members to appreciate the complexity and challenges of the responsibilities of the Service eg by meeting front line staff to discuss casework in general. Panel Members reported back on the January and February Laming Visits under the strengthened governance framework. These Visits focused on:
 - i. Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team (23/01/18) – Team role, with particular focus on the Team contribution to Theme 2 of the Service Improvement Plan (quality assurance of practice and case recording)

³ Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 25th April, 2018

⁴ Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 20th March, 2018

⁵ Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel to be convened on 4th July, 2018

- ii. Respite facility for children with disabilities (Bryn Hwfa) (16/02/18) - site visit, contribution of the facility in supporting children and young people with significant care needs.

In the April meeting, the Panel undertook a review of arrangements and examined the impact of Laming Visits during 2018/19. The rota for monthly Visits during 2018/19 was confirmed. During its deliberations, the Panel noted that Laming Visits had 2 main purposes, namely:

- Opportunity for Members to understand Children's Services in order to be able to effectively scrutinise and hold officers to account
- Opportunity for staff to gain access to Elected Members and express their opinions.

- **Partnership working** – a detailed discussion with the Head of Learning on the contribution of the Learning Service to the children's services improvement programme. Reference was made to the need to further strengthen partnership working with children's services particularly around the following areas:
 - i. Budgetary pressures in both children's services and the learning service concerning children and young people in out of county residential placements
 - ii. Contract management in order to ensure value for money
 - iii. Benefits of working arrangements based on school catchment areas
 - iv. Fully realising the potential of the Additional Needs and Inclusion Service in supporting children and young people with complex needs
- **Performance Management** – the Panel also considered a number of performance related matters:
 - i. Looked After Children data – providing detailed analysis of the LAC population and impacts for service planning/modelling and provision to meet future care and support needs of children and young people
 - ii. Financial performance and the input of the Finance Scrutiny Panel
 - iii. Performance against key performance indicators (KPIs) – including corporate scorecard KPIs for children's services, staff absence levels due to sickness and complaints management

It is the intention of the Panel to ensure ongoing consideration to performance related matters in order to challenge and seek assurance that service improvements have an impact on performance.

- **Training / awareness raising sessions** – incorporated into the Panel work programme, these sessions are convened at the beginning of each Panel meeting. Topics covered over the last few months included – Intensive Intervention Service (all aspects of the service including protocols, processes, scope of work of the 4 teams - Resilient Families Team; Child Placements; After Care, Support Services); Protocol for the role of the statutory Director of Social Services (requirements, scope and local arrangements).

3. MEASURING OUTCOMES AND IMPACT OF THE PANEL

3.1 Context

Capturing and assessing the impact of Scrutiny is a challenge to achieve as the outcomes of scrutiny activities are not always tangible and often do not lend themselves to being measured in a systematic way. Also, it is not easy to measure the effectiveness of Scrutiny's ability to influence decision makers through discussion and debate. The journey of the Children's Services Improvement

Panel is however an example of where the input of scrutiny has added value and influenced the way in which proposals have been implemented by the Council.

3.2 Children's Services Improvement Panel

Scrutiny of the improvement journey in children's services has matured over the past year, through the input of the Children's Services Improvement Panel. Care Inspectorate Wales have commended this development journey:

"....We recognise the continued corporate commitment provided to ensure that children's services improve and the willingness to reach a shared understanding of the challenges being faced. Similarly, the increased scrutiny and challenge from elected members has been a positive development....."

This work-stream has thus far resulted in the following positive outcomes:

- A team of Members , drawn from across the political parties and groups, who have developed a high level of knowledge about the complexities of children's services and a level of expertise in the service area
- Development of a model of working that focuses on a smaller group, encouraging good attendance and teamwork
- Creating conditions that are conducive to effective Scrutiny eg there has been a tangible improvement in the level and depth of questioning by the Panel
- Scrutiny activity is well planned, efficient and objective and based on evidence from a range of sources.

Panel Members will undertake a self-evaluation at the next meeting of the Panel⁶ in order to:

- i. measure the impact of the Panel on the improvement programme in Children and Families' Services
- ii. enable Panel Members to grade the RAG status of Theme 1.5 of the Service Improvement Plan for children's services. This is concerned with progress to date against 2 recommendations of the recent Care Inspectorate report⁷ which directly relate to the role of Members.

The outcome of this self-evaluation exercise will be reported to the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

4. MATTERS TO BE ESCALATED FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE PARENT COMMITTEE

The following matters be escalated for consideration by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee:

- 4.1 Although good progress has been made on implementing the revised staffing structure, some posts remain filled by agency workers. This is being addressed by developing our own experienced social workers by supporting experienced support workers to qualify and by recruiting newly qualified social workers. The actions taken to address this should be noted.
- 4.2 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee is requested to come to a view about the robustness of the Panel's monitoring thus far.

⁶ Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel to be convened on 24th May, 2018

⁷Inspection of Children's Services: Isle of Anglesey County Council (March, 2017)

6 – Equality Impact Assessment [including impacts on the Welsh Language]

N/A

7 – Financial Implications

N/a

8 – Appendices:**9 - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):**

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Cllr Richard Griffiths

**Corporate Scrutiny Committee representative on the Children's Services Improvement
Panel / Children in Care Champion**

Date: 23/05/18