

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	The Executive
Date:	17.09.18
Subject:	Children and Families Services Progress Report
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Llinos Medi
Head of Service:	Fôn Roberts, Head of Children and Families Services
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Local Members:	Relevant to all Members

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s
<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>As Elected Members you are fully aware of the background regarding the Service Improvement Plan and that this is regularly reviewed by the Children’s Services Improvement Panel.</p> <p>Since the last report the focus of the work within the Children & Families Service has been:</p> <p>1. <u>Recruitment and Retention</u></p> <p>The service has advertised for “Experienced Social Workers”, and despite the national shortage of such workers has recently been successful in recruiting two experienced Social Workers. The service has also implemented the contingency plan, which is to recruit Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) into these posts and then employ for experienced agency social workers “over capacity” for a period of 1 year. This is to support the NQSW’s throughout their first three years in Practice framework, which is a statutory framework. We have recently appointed 5 Newly Qualified Social Workers to the Service. We will continue to recruit until we have appointed permanent Social Workers.</p> <p>The Executive agreed in May 2018 to release £268,008 additional funding from the Council reserves to fund the additional requirements regarding recruitment. This money is used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employ 7 NQSW to the fieldwork teams from October 2018 (3 already appointed); • to support the 7 NQSW by going over establishment by 4 agency Social Workers for 12 months; • to extend the legal capacity within the Service (which is currently 1.5 FTE) by

employing an additional 1 FTE Solicitor for a period of 12 months;

- to recruit 3 agency Social Workers and 1 Practice Leader over establishment to work on Legacy Cases.

The Legacy Cases Team are in place and are auditing, assessing and progressing legacy cases to the correct plan or to the Courts. These cases are either:

1. Cases that have had poor decision making historically
2. Cases that have drifted
3. Cases not on the right plan
4. Professional tolerance in neglect & emotional abuse
5. Lack in an inquiring mind social work approach

A consultation exercise has taken place in relation to the re-structuring of both the Child Placement Team and Family Support Team. The consultation period has now closed. These are the last but one sections of the Service that are being restructured. The restructure will reduce the number of workers within the teams and will make more effective use of resources. There should be no job losses as there are other vacancies within the Service.

2. Independent Support Team (IST) Report

The Independent Support Team (IST) has been working with the Service to support improvement following the inspection upon request of the Director of Social Services. They had particularly focused on the following areas:

- Check on concerns expressed by the Head of Service regarding the quality of practice;
- Measure progress in developing an effective Workforce Strategy;
- Establish the extent to which a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) was in place.

They have undertaken a considerable amount of work with the Service and have been reviewing various aspects and providing feedback on what is working well and what needs to be improved. They presented their final report to the Children's Services Improvement Panel during July 2018.

The IST stated that *"there are a number of encouraging and positive features that have become apparent during the IST's work and it is important that every effort is made to sustain and build upon them"*:

- *There is a clear leadership/ management structure in place;*
- *The Director of Social Services has played a prominent part in leading the response to the CSSIW Report and in work to strengthen the performance of children's services.*

- *She is supported by a Head of Service appointed in November 2017. He has considerable and relevant experience and is showing clarity of purpose and great energy in tackling the improvement agenda.*
- *The team of 4 Service Managers are all experienced and respected professionals;*
- *The Authority responded quickly to the 2017 Inspection Report by producing a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan, initiating action to implement its constituent parts and monitoring progress on each of these on a regular basis. It is important to acknowledge the important part which the Interim Head of Service played in developing the SIP and in coordinating the ongoing review of progress made;*
- *Arrangements were made to provide Social Workers with improved management, mentoring and support and a new operational structure involving the creation of 9 Practice Leader posts each responsible for a small team of Social Workers was put in place;*
- *All the Practice Leaders were in post by August 2017;*
- *Working arrangements at an operational level between the service and Corporate HR are good and result in efficient recruitment to vacant posts and relevant staff training and development programmes;*
- *The Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Improvement Unit has, under the leadership of its new Service Manager, made significant changes to the way it operates. It is now in a position to report regularly on the service's performance and, by working with the other Service Managers, to contribute to service improvement;*
- *The Early Intervention and Prevention Service is led by a highly committed Service Manager, is functioning well, is increasing in effectiveness and is model which other authorities could usefully learn from;*
- *It is important to recognise that there are some signs of improvement in the quality of practice. However, there remain concerns about the extent to which this is consistently the case;*
- *Staff are generally positive about the changes that have taken place and identify the need for change, particularly in the service model to be developed in the Authority;*
- *The Chief Executive is giving time to overseeing progress in improving children's social services, is clear about his expectation that this should be brought about and provides practical and financial support when particular problems need to be addressed;*
- *The Leader of the Authority has formalised her support to the service by chairing the Children's Services Improvement Panel and also undertaking the responsibilities of the Social Services Portfolio holder. The latter is an unusual arrangement in the context of local government in Wales and is to be much welcomed in the situation faced by the Authority;*
- *The level of political understanding, particularly on the part of Senior Members, of the issues being tackled within children's social services is high. This is evidenced in the deliberations of the Improvement Panel, in the performance of the Children's Champion and in the engagement of the Chair of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.*

Taken together, these form an impressive range of factors that bode well for the

achievement of continuing improvement across children's social services in the Authority.

The following are the conclusions that the IST have reached following working with the Service:

- It is important to recognise the challenge which the Authority faced in responding to the findings of the CSSIW Inspection Report and the recommendations that it contained. A Service Improvement Plan was quickly prepared and a comprehensive improvement programme implemented. Important structural changes, including the creation of a new tier of Practice Leaders each with small team of Social Workers, were put in place and new Service Manager arrangements were implemented. An Early Intervention and Prevention Service has been established in accordance with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and this provides a model which others could usefully emulate. The Director was successful in securing Corporate and Political agreement for these changes and was able to appoint a new Head of Service by November 2017. The new staffing arrangements were implemented over a commendably short period of time.*
- The pace of change in children's services has been considerable and the IST has seen during its work that a noticeable improvement in morale and a commitment to the direction being taken within the service has been achieved. Encouraging progress has also been made in reducing the service's dependence on Agency Social Workers and in increasing the number of permanent appointments that it has been able to make.*
- The inadequacy of WCCIS has however had a detrimental effect on the Authority's efforts to improve. Its serious limitations have been referred to throughout this Report. Managers are very clear about the problem, and a programme of work aimed at tackling the system's deficiencies is now in hand. This will need sustained attention and it is to be hoped that the service will be able to move to a position where it can achieve, at both operational and strategic level, what it had initially hoped it would get from the system.*
- In the view of the IST, there are major issues which will need on going attention if the Authority is to build upon the encouraging platform it has now created. These are identified in the Report and have been shared with Senior Officers as our work has progressed. We should like at this point to pay tribute to the open and positive way in which staff within children's services and across the Authority together with Councillors have cooperated with us during our work. Managers have throughout ensured that we have had the access that we needed and have responded positively by addressing the issues we have raised. This is evidenced at a number of points in the Report and particularly in the section entitled "Matters which Require and are Receiving Priority Attention". This is the appropriate point to record our thanks to them all.*

Findings and recommendations from the report are being considered in order to continue

with improvements within the Service.

3. Improvement in Performance Indicators

There is a marked improvement against Performance Indicators (PIs) during the last quarters. It should be noted that due to the relatively low numbers of children on the Child Protection Register and children and young people who are looked after within the Local Authority, it only takes a small amount of children and young people (2-4) to make significant changes to the PIs, but it can be clearly seen that there have been improvements.

The following evidence the improvement during Quarter 1 of 2018/19 compared to the cumulative figures for 2017/18 on these specific national Performance Indicators and local Performance Indicators:

	Key Performance Indicator	2017/18 Cumulative	Q1 2018/19
PM C-24	The percentage of assessments completed for children within statutory timescales (42 working days).	67.57%	96.39%
PM C-27	The percentage of re-registrations of children on local authority Child Protection Registers (CPR) within 12 months of previous end of registration.	6.35%	0%
PM C-32	The percentage of looked after children who have experienced (1) or more changes of school, during a period or periods of being looked after, which were not due to transitional arrangements, in the year to 31 March.	32.29%	0%
PM C-33	The percentage of looked after children on 31 March who have had 3 or more placements during the year.	9.15%	1%
PM C-34	The percentage of all care leavers during previous year (2016-17 for 2017-18 and 2017-18 for 2018-19) who are in education, training or employment at 12 months after leaving care.	38.00%	63%
PM C-36	The percentage of care leavers who have experienced homelessness during the year, to include all 16-24 year old relevant young people.	5.00%	4.00%
SCC006	The percentage of referrals during the year on which a decision is made within 1 working day.	86.31%	96.00%
SCC/010 (Local)	The percentage of referrals that are re-referrals within 12 months.	15.00%	11.87%

The figures are encouraging and show that the Service is improving against performance indicators, and the Service is working hard to ensure that the improvement is maintained and further improved.

4. Positive Comments

The number of positive comments have increased within the Service which is a very positive improvement in terms of the quality of the service that is provided to children, young people and families on Anglesey.

The last financial year saw an increase in positive comments from the previous year. During 2017/18, 96 positive comments were received by Children and Family Services with 32 being from other professionals, whilst 64 were from service users, their representatives or family members, or foster carers.

The Service has received 33 positive comments during quarter 1 of this year which is encouraging for the Service. Complaints to the Service have also reduced, however it must be acknowledged that due to the nature of the Service and the functions it carries out, we will inevitably receive complaints.

5. Corporate Performance

Considerable improvement has been seen in terms of the performance of the Service in relation to achieving corporate performance standards.

Where historically the Service has not performed as well with achieving corporate standards such as reaching the corporate sickness absence target and completing the mandatory on-line training modules, the Service is now performing better against targets.

In relation to online training compliance in Children's Services has improved significantly, with an average compliance rate of 99% as at 24 July 2018, compared with an average of 57% at the end of the six-week acceptance periods.

6. IOACC Foster Carers Celebration Event – 10th July 2018

The service recently organised a fostering celebration event to say "thank you" to all local authority foster carers and family & friends (connected persons) foster carers.

This was an opportunity, not only for foster carers to meet the senior leadership team, staff and elected members of the Council, but was also, more importantly, an opportunity for the authority to formally recognise the valuable work that foster carers do, 24-hours-a-day, with some of Anglesey's most vulnerable children and young people.

Councillor Llinos Medi invited foster carers one by one to each receive a certificate of thanks and to share a few words about their fostering experiences. Whether mainstream or kinship, newly approved or more experienced carers, they all voiced heartfelt instances of what it means to help a child fulfil their potential and the joy in seeing them thrive and achieve.

The service was also pleased to be able to announce free Isle of Anglesey Leisure Services Membership for approved Council foster carers and for looked after children and young people at the event. Having previously agreed to provide free leisure membership for Anglesey care leavers, we are very grateful to the leisure service for extending this to

include all Anglesey foster carers and children looked after.

The need for this event arose out of discussions between the Service and its foster carers at the Anglesey Foster Care Forum. The forum agreed that some form of formal recognition as an acknowledgment of the role of foster carers by the Local Authority as a corporate parent, was important. Previously the Local Authority held an annual 'long service awards' ceremony for foster carers, however not for a number of years. The celebration event was very different and the first of its kind in Anglesey.

Feedback from foster carers who were able to attend was positive, with comments about the celebration, and how it highlighted how valued they are by all levels of staff and administration within the Authority.

The Service wishes to thank the elected members who attended the Celebration Event.

7. Strategic Partners Workshop- 19th July 2018

The Service has been working hard to improve partnership working and in particular with strategic partners. A Strategic Partners Workshop was held on the 19th July 2018 in order to share progress with partners and to ask them to continue to be a part of the journey to improvement. The workshop explained the findings of the inspection and outlined how the Service has responded to the recommendations made by CIW. The progress made over the last year was shared and the priorities for 2018-19 were discussed and future developments outlined.

8. Financial Implications

As of the Quarter 1 budget monitoring, the Service is forecasted to overspend by £1.28m for 2018/19. This is after the release of the reserves and contingencies for Resilient Families/Edge of Care, Agency Staff Costs and Looked-after Children. Nonetheless, this is a significant improvement on the outturn for 2017/18 which showed an overspend position of £1.78m.

The Head of Service continues to scrutinise all contracts and will at times challenge costs in particular to looked after children provision. An effort is also made to reduce spending across the service and this in turn has reduced the projected overspend to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To confirm that the Committee is satisfied with the steps taken to progress implementation of the Service Improvement Plan and the pace of progress.
- To confirm that the Committee is satisfied with the pace of progress and improvements made to date within Children and Families Services.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

Not applicable.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

The Service needs confirmation by the Executive that they are satisfied with the steps taken to progress implementation of the Service Improvement Plan and improvements made to date within Children and Families Services.

CH – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

Yes.

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

Yes.

DD – Who did you consult?

What did they say?

	DD – Who did you consult?	What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	This was approved by the SLT on the 28 th August 2018.
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	As above.
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	N/A
4	Human Resources (HR)	N/A
5	Property	N/A
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	N/A
7	Procurement	N/A
8	Scrutiny	The report is due to be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on the 12 th September 2018.
9	Local Members	N/A
10	Any external bodies / other/s	N/A

E – Risks and any mitigation (if relevant)

1	Economic	N/A
2	Anti-poverty	N/A
3	Crime and Disorder	N/A
4	Environmental	N/A
5	Equalities	N/A
6	Outcome Agreements	N/A
7	Other	N/A

F - Appendices:
FF - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):