

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL Scrutiny Report Template

Committee:	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
Date:	3 rd June, 2019
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:	Alwyn Jones, Interim Director of Social Services / Fôn Roberts, Head of Children's Services
Report Author:	Anwen Davies, Scrutiny Manager
Tel:	01248 752578
Email:	AnwenDavies@ynysmon.gov.uk
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 in terms of achieving its work programme
- That the new Service Development Plan has now been adopted, with the previous Service Improvement Plan having been brought to a close
- Areas of work covered during Laming Visits, as a means of further strengthening accountability and knowledge & understanding of Panel members
- The ongoing development programme for Panel members much of which is delivered in-house

2 – Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

Direct link with the Council Plan / transformation priorities. The Panel's consideration of the service development plan for children's services will provide assurance to the Executive that the Council are responding in a robust manner to the recommendations of two CIW reports on children's services¹ and that steps are in place to mitigate any risks.

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:

¹ Dated March, 2017 and December, 2018

- 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 an appropriate pace?

5 – Background / Context

1. CONTEXT

As previously reported, Members will be aware that scrutiny has developed over the past 18 months through the work of 3 scrutiny panels. This report summarises progress made to date as regards the **Children's Services Improvement Panel**.

Panel Governance Arrangements

Members will be aware of the robust governance arrangements in place to underpin the work of the Panel² and it is intended to convene monthly Panel meetings until at least the end of the current financial year (March, 2020). A process is in place for quarterly progress reporting by Cllr 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 been meeting on a monthly basis since July, 2017 (having now met on 21 occasions). This report focuses on the work of the Panel for the period **March, 2019 – April, 2019**:

- **Service Development Plan (SDP)** – an in-depth presentation was given at the April³ meeting of the Panel by the Head of Children and Families Services on the contents of the proposed new 3 year Service Development Plan. The SDP has since replaced the previous Service Improvement Plan with the 2 remaining priority areas yet to be fully implemented being transferred to the new Development Plan.

The Service Development Plan consists of 5 themes with the fifth providing a framework for a greater focus on outcomes for children / young people:

Development Plan Themes

- ✚ A confident and competent workforce to provide a consistent and effective service

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

³ Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 25th April, 2019

- ✚ Quality and timely assessments, care planning, interventions and decisions to protect, support and manage the risks to children: good quality chronologies, records and evidence and research tools
- ✚ Performance and quality assurance framework that supports the local authority in effectively managing its responsibilities towards children
- ✚ Appropriate social work interventions “at the right time” in order to enhance family life and support families at times of trauma
- ✚ Improve outcomes for children in care

The new Development Plan includes 14 development areas → 12 new areas and 2 that have been transferred from the previous SIP. The SDP will cover a three year period from April, 2019 to March, 2022, incorporating the following priority areas:

- i. 2 actions ragged Amber from the Service Improvement Plan (improvement in the quality of practice and performance & quality assurance framework)
- ii. Development areas following the re-inspection of Children’s Services by Care Inspectorate Wales during the latter part of 2018
- iii. Local priorities – how the voices of children and young people are heard in Children’s Services.

The Panel deliberations enabled Members to come to a view about the degree to which the proposed Development Plan was sufficiently robust to replace the Service Improvement Plan. Also, whether the Plan’s 5 themes are sufficiently robust as a framework and starting point.

- **Laming Visits** – Members will be aware that a robust reporting process is 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. Members reported back on the February, March and April Laming Visits under the strengthened governance framework. These Visits focused on:
 - ❖ **Family Group Conferencing (14/02/19)** – the Visit highlighted various aspects of the work of the Resilient Families Team, focusing on parenting services and family group conferences. Parenting courses are based on the Incredible Years programme (Bangor University)
 - ❖ **Hearing the voices of children and young people (22/03/19)** – the March Visit discussed the Voices from Care project which will run locally over the next 12 months. Objective → assist the Service to hear the voices of children and young people, especially those that are difficult to reach
 - ❖ **Foster Carers’ Meeting (12/04/19)** – early indications that the Service Fostering Strategy is having a positive impact in supporting foster carers.

- **Children leaving the care of the Authority** – in March⁴, the Panel considered the statutory responsibilities on the Council around children/young people leaving the care of the Authority with a specific focus on process, numbers and resources. The number of children in care has fallen from 158 → 146 during the second part of 2018; 12 children have left the care of the Authority. The Panel also noted a projected significant increase in the number of young people leaving the care of the Authority over the next year or so (34 in total). These young people will meet the eligibility criteria for care leavers' services.
- **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 – Children's and Families Services 3 year development plan and children with disabilities (including the role of the Specialist Children's Services Team).

3. MEASURING OUTCOMES AND IMPACT OF THE PANEL

3.1 Context

As previously reported, 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 significantly over the past year through the input of the Children's Services Improvement Panel. In April⁵, Panel members undertook a self-evaluation of its impact and reviewed 4 aspects of its work:

- ✚ What worked well
- ✚ Identify what impact the Panel has had
- ✚ Areas for improvement
- ✚ Member development needs

3.3 The outcomes of this self-assessment will be fully reported in the Panel's next progress report scheduled for September, 2019.

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

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee is requested to come to a view about the robustness of the Panel's monitoring thus far.

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

N/A

7 – Financial Implications

⁴ Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 27th March, 2019

⁵ Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 25th April, 2019

N/a

8 – Appendices:

9 - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):
Anwen Davies, Scrutiny Manager, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Council Offices, Llangefni. LL77 7TW

Cllr Richard Griffiths
Corporate Scrutiny Committee representative on the Children’s Services Improvement Panel / Children in Care Champion
Date: 07/05/19