

## ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL Scrutiny Report Template

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Corporate Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> September, 2019</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Social Services Improvement Panel</b>
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	<b>Progress update on the work of the Social Services Improvement Panel (formerly the Children's Services Improvement Panel)</b>
<b>Scrutiny Chair:</b>	<b>Cllr Aled Morris Jones</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder(s):</b>	<b>Cllr Llinos Medi Huws</b>
<b>Head of Service:</b>	<b>Alwyn Jones, Statutory Director of Social Services / Fôn Roberts, Head of Children's and Families' Services</b>
<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Anwen Davies, Scrutiny Manager</b>
<b>Tel:</b>	<b>01248 752578</b>
<b>Email:</b>	<b>AnwenDavies@ynysmon.gov.uk</b>
<b>Local Members:</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>

### 1 - Recommendation/s

**R1** The Corporate Scrutiny Committee is requested to note:

- Progress made to date with the work of the Social Services Improvement Panel in terms of achieving its new work programme
- Areas of work covered during Laming Visits, as a means of further strengthening accountability, knowledge and understanding of Panel members
- The ongoing development programme for Panel members much of which is delivered in-house
- That the draft Corporate Prevention Strategy will be considered by the Committee in the Autumn, 2019
- The outcomes of the recent self-evaluation to measure impact and added value of the former Children's Services Improvement Panel
- The need to revise the terms of reference to reflect the recent decision to extend the scope of the Improvement Panel to include both adults' services and children & families services.

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

- Good progress has been made on implementing the new fostering package but there has been a slight delay in opening the first of our Cartrefi Clyd Môn<sup>1</sup>. This has happened as we needed to re-advertise the post of registered manager. A suitable registered manager has now been appointed and the Service will shortly advertise for a trainee registered manager position in preparation for the next development phase of our Cartrefi Clyd Môn service. The actions taken should be noted.

<sup>1</sup> Formerly referred to as Small Group Homes

**R3 National LAC Reduction Strategy:** recommend to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee that the response to Welsh Government should include:

- Reference to our strategy for preventing children from coming into care
- Not to set a target for the reduction in the number of Looked After Children on the Isle of Anglesey.

**R4 Annual Social Services Complaints Report:** recommend to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee that the Improvement Panel scrutinise the document to the future.

## 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 is responding in a robust manner to the recommendations of two Care Inspectorate Wales reports on children's services<sup>2</sup> and that steps are in place to mitigate any risks. Also, the recommendations following a recent inspection of older people's services<sup>3</sup>.

## 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. Is the Scrutiny Committee satisfied with the work undertaken by the Panel thus far?
2. Are the actions of the Panel to date sufficiently robust and at an appropriate pace?
3. Are there any suggestions to further strengthen the work of the Panel?
4. Are there any other areas that need to be scrutinised by the Panel?

<sup>2</sup> Dated March, 2017 and December, 2018

<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing this report the Authority is awaiting a copy of the final inspection report from Care Inspectorate Wales

## 5 – Background / Context

### 1. CONTEXT

As previously reported, Members will be aware that scrutiny has developed over the past 2 years through the work of 3 scrutiny panels. This report summarises progress made to date as regards the **Social Services Improvement Panel** (formerly the Children's Services Improvement Panel<sup>4</sup>).

#### Panel Governance Arrangements

Members will be aware of the robust governance arrangements in place to underpin the work of the Improvement Panel<sup>5</sup> and it is intended to continue to convene monthly Panel meetings to the future. A process is in place for quarterly progress reporting by Cllr Richard Griffiths, as the Corporate Scrutiny Committee representative on the Panel.

Also, Members will recall that the Portfolio Member for Social Services sought the Committee's<sup>6</sup> approval for the establishment of a Social Services Improvement Panel covering both adults' services and children and families services. This proposal<sup>7</sup> was approved with immediate effect thereby enabling:

- i. Adults' services to have the same level of scrutiny as the Children's & Families Services have had in recent years
- ii. Elected Members to develop more detailed knowledge of the processes and challenges in Adults' Services

Membership of the Panel has been confirmed as those Members serving on the former Children's Services Improvement Panel which also includes those Members representing the Corporate Parenting Panel (as observers):

#### Social Services Improvement Panel: Membership

Councillor	Function
Llinos Medi Huws	Council Leader; Portfolio Member for Social Services; Young People's Champion
R Meirion Jones	Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Youth and Culture
Gwilym Owen Jones	Chair of the Partnership & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Richard Griffiths	Representing the Corporate Scrutiny Committee; Children in Care Champion
Bryan Owen	Leader of the Opposition
Kenneth P Hughes	Shadow Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Youth and Culture
Peter S Rogers	Shadow Portfolio Member for Social Services
<b>Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel (as observers)</b>	
Alun Mummery	
Margaret M Roberts	

<sup>4</sup> The scope of the Panel has been extended to also include adult social care

<sup>5</sup> Corporate Scrutiny Committee convened on 4<sup>th</sup> September and 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2017

<sup>6</sup> A meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee convened on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2019

<sup>7</sup> Proposal recommended by the Adults' Social Care Transformation Board (22/05/19) and the Children's Services Improvement Panel (23/05/19)

## 2. FOCUS OF WORK OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PANEL

The newly constituted Panel has put a revised forward work programme in place covering all aspects of social services. As a starting point, priority is being given to adult services matters during the training & development sessions at the beginning of each Panel meeting. Children's services matters are prioritised for scrutiny on the agenda.

This progress report includes reference to the last meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel (23/05/19) and the first two meetings of the new Social Services Improvement Panel (convened on 27/06/19 and 23/07/19) – thus covering the period **May** → **July, 2019**:

- **Service Development Plan (SDP) for Children's & Families Services** – the Service Development Plan covers a 3 year period<sup>8</sup> consisting of 5 themes and 14 development areas (2 of which have been transferred from the previous Service Improvement Plan). Detailed consideration was given at the July<sup>9</sup> meeting of the Panel to Theme 5 of the SDP – Improving Outcomes for Children in Care, covering the following development areas:
  - Public Law Outline
  - Aftercare services
  - Adoption and post-adoption support
  - Education attainment and outcomes for Children in Care

Panel deliberations have enabled Members to come to a view that it has a level of confidence in terms of achieving on the Theme 5 development areas. Also, the Panel noted the need to ensure continuous momentum in order to fully realise the Service Development Plan.

- **Laming Visits** – Members will be aware of the strengthened governance framework underpinning Laming Visits which includes robust reporting arrangements by Members following individual Visits. The objective is to bring the Panel closer to cases and create the conditions for Members to fully appreciate the complexity and challenges of the responsibilities of the Service eg by meeting front line staff to discuss casework in general. During this period, Members reported back on the May, June and July Laming Visits which focused on:
  - ❖ **Complaints and positive comments (21/05/19)** – the Visit highlighted a 3 step process when dealing with complaints received under the Social Services complaints procedure → Step 1 (informal), Step 2 (formal) and Ombudsman. A template for responding to Stage 1 complaints has recently been introduced with the aim of improving response times. The Panel has requested that consideration be given to the process, steps and implications associated with Members considering the Annual Social Services Complaints Report –

<sup>8</sup> The Service Development Plan for Children's & Families Services covers the period April, 2019 → March, 2022

<sup>9</sup> Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019

with a view to the Improvement Panel scrutinising the document to the future.

- ❖ **Meeting with families who have been supported by the Children's & Families Services (18/06/19)** – the June Visit met with families who have been supported by the Service. A powerful session with 4 key messages emerging for the Council:
  - i. it is a significant challenge for families to cope with a change of social worker
  - ii. the Authority should consider the need for additional social workers in order to reduce the number of cases allocated to individual caseworkers
  - iii. input by the Resilient Families Team was praised
  - iv. drug dependency has a significant negative impact on families.
- ❖ **Visit to Bryn Hwfa, Rhostrehwfa (22/07/19)** – visit to the respite care provision for children/young people with significant care needs. The current location of the service is limited in terms of space and layout but the Panel noted that this had been identified as a development priority in 2/3 years' time.

- **Care Inspectorate Wales & Health Inspectorate Wales inspection of older people's services** – in June<sup>10</sup>, the Panel considered the arrangements and process for the inspection of older people's services during July, 2019<sup>11</sup>. It was noted that there were 3 objectives driving the inspection – identify how effective we are in promoting independence; factors that encourage good outcomes and any barriers. The inspection fieldwork focused on the experiences of 57 older people through the care and support system, using the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 as the basis for the fieldwork. At the time of writing this report, the Council are awaiting the final inspection report.
- **Performance management data** – ensuring a performance framework that supports the local authority in effectively managing its responsibilities towards children. This included looking at a summary of 2018/19 performance in children's services (both against national performance indicators and also financial performance).

These deliberations have enabled the Panel to conclude that performance has improved across Children's and Families Services. Also, that there is a degree of confidence in the ability of the Service to deliver on efficiency savings during 2019/20.

- **LAC Reduction Strategy** – in May<sup>12</sup> the Children's Services Improvement Panel received a presentation on the outcomes of a recent visit from Welsh Government regarding the proposed national strategy to reduce the number of children in care. After detailed consideration, the

<sup>10</sup> Meeting of the Social Services Improvement Panel convened on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2019

<sup>11</sup> The inspection fieldwork took place during the week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> July and week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2019

<sup>12</sup> Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2019

Panel resolved to recommend to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee that the response to Welsh Government should include:

- ✚ Reference to our strategy for preventing children from coming into care (eg interventions of the resilient families team)
  - ✚ Not to set a target for the reduction in the number of Looked After Children on the Isle of Anglesey.
- **Corporate Prevention Strategy** – the Panel received a verbal presentation by the Statutory Director of Social Services / Head of Adult Services at its July<sup>13</sup> meeting on the work of preparing a corporate prevention strategy as the basis for preparing an annual action plan thereafter. It was noted that the draft prevention strategy will be considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in the Autumn.
  - **Updates on individual work streams** – in July<sup>14</sup> the Panel received updates on the following work streams:
    - i. **Fostering Strategy**  
There has been a significant increase in the number of foster carers recruited since the introduction of the new strategy in January, 2019. It was noted that the Service is likely to over achieve against its recruitment target during 2019/20 and beyond.
    - ii. **Cartrefi Clyd Môn**  
The first property is being prepared for occupation and a second in the process of being identified. A Registered Manager has now been appointed. There is a reported slippage in realising this work stream due to a couple of factors – recruitment of a suitably qualified registered manager and regulation requirements. Availability of suitable housing has also been a factor. It is likely that the first Cartref Clyd will be operational in December, 2019.
    - iii. **Elective Home Education**  
The Panel have been updated on the national and local picture as regards elective home education. It has been noted that the Authority have prepared a comprehensive response to the current Welsh Government consultation on draft statutory guidance.
  - **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 three months included – Ynys Môn Early Help Hub (children’s services), Care Inspectorate Wales & Health Inspectorate Wales inspection process for older people’s services and Single Point of Access (adult services).

### 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 former Children’s Services Improvement Panel is however an example of where

<sup>13</sup> Meeting of the Social Services Improvement Panel convened on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019

<sup>14</sup> Meeting of the Social Services Improvement Panel convened on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019

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 two years through the input of the former Children's Services Improvement Panel. In April<sup>15</sup>, 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 Outcomes of the Self-evaluation by Members of the Children's Services Improvement Panel**

3.3.1 The following questions were used as a framework to enable Members to evaluate the contribution of the Panel on the journey towards improving Children's Services:

**Q1** In terms of the work of the Panel, what were the highlights for you as individual Panel members during the past year?

**Q2** In your opinion, what impact did the Panel have in challenging and holding Children's Services to account in implementing a significant improvement journey?

**Q3** Are there any aspects of the Panel's work that could be improved or delivered more effectively in moving forward?

**Q4** What effect has being a member of the Panel had on you as an individual?

**Q5** What development needs do you have in order to support you in your role?

**Q6** Any general observations on the influence and / or impact of the work of the Panel on decision making processes?

3.3.2 This work stream has evidenced 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
- Better understanding by Elected Members of the complexities and risks in Children's Services in order to be able to effectively scrutinise, hold to account and identify priorities in moving forward

3.3.3 Development areas were identified by Panel members as part of the self-evaluation and these have been summarised under 6 key themes:

- ✚ Laming Visits
- ✚ Panel forward work programme
- ✚ Partnership working
- ✚ Frequency of meetings

<sup>15</sup> Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2019

-  Member development needs
-  Measuring scrutiny outcomes and impact

These themes have been included in the Panel's forward work programme and progress will continue to be reported to this Committee on a quarterly basis. Based on the findings of this self-evaluation, Members decided that RAG status **GOOD** (YELLOW – with significant elements being Green) best reflects the Children's Services Improvement Panel's contribution to the improvement journey in children's services.

A copy of the report on the self-evaluation is attached (**Appendix 1**).

#### **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 Good progress has been made on implementing the new fostering package but there has been a slight delay in opening the first of our Cartrefi Clyd Môn. This has happened as we needed to re-advertise the post of registered manager. A suitable registered manager has now been appointed and the Service will shortly advertise for a trainee registered manager position in preparation for the next development phase of our Cartrefi Clyd Môn service. The actions taken 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 – 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):**

Anwen Davies, Scrutiny Manager, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Council Offices, Llangefni. LL77 7TW

**Cllr Richard Griffiths**  
**Corporate Scrutiny Committee representative on the Social Services Improvement Panel / Children in Care Champion**  
**Date: 08/08/19**



**MEASURING THE IMPACT OF SCRUTINY  
SELF-EVALUATION BY MEMBERS OF THE  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT  
PANEL**

April, 2019



## **INDEX**

- 1. Background**
- 2. Measuring Outcomes and Impact of Scrutiny**
- 3. The Task**
- 4. Self-Evaluation Questions**
- 5. Conclusions**
- 6. Next Steps**

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Regulator expectations → leadership, management and governance Care Inspectorate Wales expect that:

“Leadership, management and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance and together establish an effective strategy for the delivery of good quality services and outcomes for people. Meeting people’s needs for quality services are a clear focus for councillors, managers and staff.... Leaders, managers and elected members have sufficient knowledge and understanding of practice and performance to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively.”

## 1.2 Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection Reports

Two Care Inspectorate Wales inspection reports have been published during the past 2 years on Children’s Services in the Council<sup>1</sup>:

### Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection: March, 2017

The first report made 2 recommendations directly related to the role of Members:

- *“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*
- *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....”*

### Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection: December, 2018

The second report concluded the following as regards the contribution made by Members to the improvement journey in Children’s Services:

- *“..... There is strong leadership and governance in IoACC. Members of the Council were able to demonstrate their contribution to children’s services improvement journey. They were able to demonstrate their knowledge of key challenges facing the council and how they interact to impact upon children and families....*
- *Elected Members had a clear understanding of their role and with officers are aware of their responsibilities as Corporate Parents. Members were equally clear of the need for accountability at all levels and the importance of quality assurance systems and processes being able to identify any dips in performance or missed opportunities and support improvement before they escalate...*
- *Members demonstrated commitment to improving services for children by agreeing the terms of reference of the Children’s Improvement Panel before the last election immediately after CIW’s last inspection. The*

<sup>1</sup> Inspections of Children’s Services: Isle of Anglesey County Council (March, 2017 and December, 2018)

*improvement panel has continued to meet monthly and members report their confidence has grown and the panel is productive, giving them insight to progress being made in the service”.*

### 1.3 Role of the Children’s Services Improvement Panel

The current Children’s Services Improvement Panel was established in July, 2017 as a standing sub-panel of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, with the following aims:

- Developing a model of working on children’s services matters focusing on a smaller group to enable Members to become more involved, develop a level of subject expertise, encourage good attendance and teamwork
- Strengthen the capacity of Members to challenge performance by improving the quality of information regarding services and experiences of children and families who receive support and / or services
- Forum to discuss information regarding Service risks, as a basis to inform the forward work programme of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee
- Forum to develop a group of Members with the expertise and ownership to lead discussions with regard to children and young people’s issues in the Corporate Scrutiny Committee
- Offer support to the Young People’s Champion and the Children in Care Champion, a new role since the 2017 Election.

## 2. Measuring Outcomes and Impact of Scrutiny

### 2.1 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. There are however some local examples where the input of scrutiny has added value and / or influenced the way in which proposals have been implemented by the Council. The work of the Children’s Services Improvement Panel is a positive example in this regard.

### 2.2 Improvements and Performance of Children’s Services

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.

#### **What Care Inspectorate Wales had to say about the Panel’s contribution**

In a recent review of progress<sup>2</sup> in implementation of Children’s Services improvements, Care Inspectorate Wales commended the contribution of the Panel:

*“... 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...”*

---

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence dated 11/01/18 from Care Inspectorate Wales (Review of Progress in implementation of Children’s Services Improvement Plan)

## 2.3 Self-evaluation

### Context:

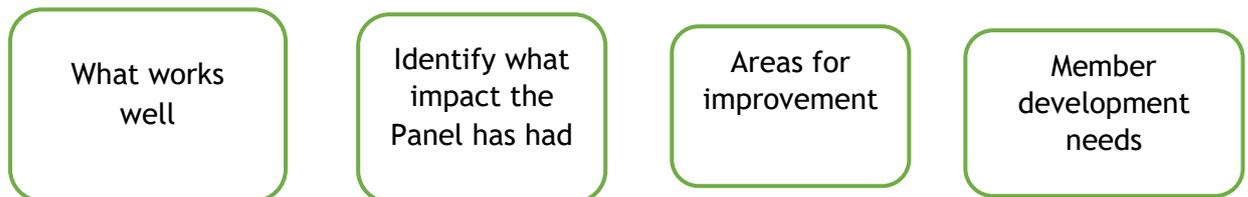
Since the local government elections in 2017, the Council has been working hard to introduce a more rigorous approach to member led forms of accountability through a revised scrutiny structure. As part of this structure, Members continue to invest in and actively contribute to scrutiny through the work of our 3 standing panels.

### What drives self-evaluation locally?

We have prioritised providing periodic opportunities in the calendar for Member self-evaluation to enable review, reflection and learning. The objectives of this self-assessment exercise has been to:

- i. Take stock
- ii. Review, evaluate and reflect
- iii. Establish a foundation for the next period
- iv. Confirm Member ownership.

This is the second self-evaluation<sup>3</sup> to be undertaken by the Children's Services Improvement Panel. The purpose of this self-evaluation has been to provide a framework for Panel Members to review 4 aspects:



## 3. The Task

3.1 Elected Members were invited during a recent meeting of the Children's Services Panel<sup>4</sup> to grade the RAG status of the Panel's contribution to the improvement journey using the following framework:

- **Unsatisfactory** – important areas for improvement outweigh strengths
- **Adequate** – strengths outweigh areas for improvement
- **Good** – many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
- **Excellent** – many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice

## 4. Self-Evaluation Questions

4.1 Elected Members used a series of questions as a framework to enable them to evaluate the Panel's contribution to the Children's Services improvement journey:

<sup>3</sup> The first self-evaluation was completed by the Children's Services Improvement Panel in May, 2018

<sup>4</sup> Meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel convened on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2019



Q1. In terms of the work of the Panel, what were the highlights for you as individual Panel members during the past year?

Q2. In your opinion, what impact did the Panel have in challenging and holding Children's Services to account in implementing a significant improvement journey?

Q3. Are there any aspects of the Panel's work that could be improved or delivered more effectively in moving forward?

Q4. What effect has being a member of the Panel had on you as an individual?

Q5. What development needs do you have in order to support you in your role?

Q6. Any general observations on the influence and / or impact of the work of the Panel on decision making processes?

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Elected Member Observations on the Children's Services Panel

78%<sup>5</sup> of the Panel's Elected Members participated in the self-evaluation. Below is a summary of what they had to say:

#### Q1. What were the highlights for you as individual Panel members during the past year?

Our depth of understanding of the complexities of Children's Services continues to improve

Without a doubt the highlight for me has been the publication of a positive Care Inspectorate Wales inspection report in December, 2018. We should be proud of the conclusions both in terms of operational matters and the role of Members and senior managers

#### Laming Visits:

Seeing the impact of the new staffing structure on the shop floor has been a definite highlight for me

Development sessions at the beginning of each meeting is an effective way of raising awareness and educating us as Members about the Service. This is an opportunity to enquire and ask questions and these should continue

There have been so many highlights this year and for me bringing the Service Improvement Plan to a successful close stands out as one of the significant achievements

<sup>5</sup> 7 of the 9 Panel members



The level and depth of our questioning has greatly improved over the past year, reflecting a much better understanding of children's services and increased confidence to scrutinise. We now ask more probing questions

**Q2. What impact did the Panel have in challenging and holding Children's Services to account in implementing a significant improvement journey?**

For me, the greatest impact of the Panel has been the leadership and support Members have demonstrated to improving children's services

Our ability to ask probing questions now adds value to the improvement journey in Children's Services. There is evidence that our questioning has enabled positive change. Our success will be measured in the new Service Development Plan

It is true to say that there is evidence of joint ownership and understanding of the improvement journey in Children's Services across the political groups

The Panel has developed well over the past year and we have had honest conversations with officers about the challenges facing the Service. It is important that Members are fully aware of these challenges

We are leading more and contributing to discussions with our co-Members in committees when matters arise concerning children's services

We have a responsibility to question and challenge. The Service now see us as critical friends, which is having a positive impact on the improvement journey



**Q3. Are there any aspects of the Panel's work that could be improved or delivered more effectively in moving forward?**

I think that shadowing social workers would enable us to have a greater appreciation of their day to day work and the specific challenges of working in children's services

I sometimes think that we have too many items on the agenda. The topics covered in the development session at the beginning of each meeting are very informative and often result in further discussions. We should allow time on the agenda for this

Convene more mock case conferences during Laming Visits in order to gain a greater insight into the complexities of children's services casework

It would be beneficial for us to look at the work of other partners such as the Health Board, Youth Justice, Police etc

**Q4. What effect has being a member of the Panel had on individual Members?**

For me, the greatest impact of the Panel has been the leadership and support Members have demonstrated to improving children's services

I am now much more aware of the detail surrounding a number of different aspects of children's services

My confidence has increased as a result of presentations, Laming Visits and the opportunity to challenge and I feel well equipped to contribute when children's services matters are considered at committee meetings and at school governor meetings

**Q5. What development needs do the Elected Members have in order to support them in their role?**

Skills in order to analyse key performance indicator data in an informed way

A detailed look at the mechanics of Corporate Parenting

Children with mental health needs & role of CAMHS

Convene more mock case conferences during Laming Visits in order to gain a greater insight into the complexities of children's services casework

**Q6. Any general observations on the influence and / or impact of the work of the Panel on decision making processes?**

We get significant benefit from being Panel members

As a Panel, we need to continue to develop and mature eg by sharing information with other councils

There is no doubt that our level of understanding of the complexities of the Service has increased considerably over the past year

Our aim is to work as a "critical friend"

We are now able to ask probing questions and hold the service to account, ensuring that progress is maintained and reported to the Panel

Our attendance levels as Members has been consistently high over the past year. This shows political ownership and commitment to making a contribution to the improvement journey and creating the conditions for continuous improvement for the vulnerable children and young people of Anglesey

## 5.2 Outcomes

We are able to evidence some outcomes in light of our scrutiny work in Children and Families Services:

- A team of Members who have developed a high level of knowledge about the complexities of children's services and a level of expertise in this service area
- 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 that is well planned, efficient and objective and based on evidence from a range of sources
- Better understanding by Elected Members of the complexities and risks in Children's Services in order to be able to effectively scrutinise, hold to account and identify priorities in moving forward.

Based on the findings of this self-evaluation, Members decided that RAG status **GOOD** (YELLOW – with significant elements being green) best reflects the Panel's contribution to the improvement journey in children's services at this point in time.

## 6. Next Steps

### 6.1 Local Context

Keeping vulnerable children and young people safe is a critically important role and one that requires the Council and partners to work together effectively. There has been significant public attention in recent years due to high profile examples where the system has failed vulnerable individuals, with tragic consequences.

In reporting poor inspection outcomes, care inspectorates<sup>6</sup> often cite poor scrutiny practices amongst other system failings. Ensuring meaningful and robust scrutiny of policies and also support and / or services available to protect vulnerable children and young people is therefore a key element of the leadership role of Scrutiny members.

### 6.2 Priorities for the next period

Some matters have arisen from the self-evaluation which require attention over the next period. The following matters will therefore be prioritised on the forward work programme of the Panel:

#### Development Areas

THEME	HOW
Laming Visits	i. Continue to schedule monthly Laming Visits during 2019/20 and beyond

<sup>6</sup> Care Inspectorate Wales; Care Quality Commission (England)

THEME	HOW
	ii. Continue to include a range of topics / themes for the individual Visits eg mock case conferences; shadowing social workers
<b>Panel Forward Work Programme</b>	Forward work programme focusing on the quality of scrutiny with fewer items in order to add value.
<b>Partnership Working</b>	Add partnership working from the following areas to the Panel work programme: Health Board; Youth Justice; North Wales Police
<b>Frequency of Meetings</b>	Schedule monthly meetings of the Panel until the end of 2019/20
<b>Member Development Needs</b>	Add the following to the list of Panel development session topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills in analysing performance indicator data</li> <li>• Children with mental health needs &amp; role of CAMHS</li> <li>• Detailed look at Corporate Parenting</li> </ul>
<b>Measuring Scrutiny Outcomes and Impact</b>	Undertake a further self-evaluation by the Panel's Elected Members within the next 12 months

### 6.3 Review of Scrutiny Panels

This report will form part of a broader review by the Council of the work of all scrutiny panels<sup>7</sup> to ensure:

- i. Clear and robust work programmes
- ii. Appropriate pace and focus
- iii. Areas of focus are in accordance with corporate priorities.

Anwen Davies  
Scrutiny Manager  
[On behalf of Elected Members on the Children's Services Improvement Panel]

<sup>7</sup> Schools Progress Review Scrutiny Panel; Finance Scrutiny Panel; Children's Services Improvement Panel