

Meeting of:	Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 16 May 2023
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Healthy Living and Social Care
Report Title:	Performance Evaluation Inspection of Vale of Glamorgan Social Services
Purpose of Report:	To update Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of the recent inspection
Report Owner:	Director of Social Services
Responsible Officer:	Director of Social Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Operational Manager, Legal Services
Policy Framework:	This report is consistent with the Policy Framework and Budget
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Scrutiny Report provides an overview of the performance evaluation of Social Services that took place in January 2023. 	

Recommendation

1. That Scrutiny Committee considers the Performance Evaluation Inspection Report completed by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

Reason for Recommendation

1. To ensure that Members are informed of Care Inspectorate Wales's assessment of the Vale of Glamorgan County Council's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation.

1. Background

- 1.1 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is the independent regulator of social care and childcare. They register, inspect and take action to improve the quality and safety of services for the well-being of the people of Wales. CIW aim to provide independent assurance about the quality and availability of social care in Wales; safeguard adults and children, making sure that their rights are protected; improve care by encouraging and promoting improvements in the safety and quality of social care services; and inform policy, standards and provide independent professional advice to the people developing policy, the public and social care sector.

- 1.2 This inspection followed Assurance Checks which took place in March and November of 2021.

- 1.3 The inspection was framed around the following principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (The 2014 Act):

People – voice and control

- 1.4 How well is the local authority ensuring all people are equal partners who have voice, choice and control over their lives and can achieve what matters to them?

- 1.5 How well is the local authority ensuring the workforce is sufficient in numbers, suitably skilled, experienced, and supported?

Prevention

- 1.6 To what extent is the local authority ensuring the need for care and support is minimised, and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring the best possible outcomes for people are achieved?

Well-being

- 1.7 To what extent is the local authority ensuring people are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm?

Partnerships

- 1.8** To what extent is the local authority able to assure itself effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for people?

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The current context for delivering social services is very challenging and this was recognised by CIW through their inspection. They recognised the pandemic recovery and cost of living crisis as the context within which social services is working and the resultant high levels of demand and increased complexity of people's needs.
- 2.2** The Performance Evaluation Inspection report (Appendix 1) is formatted to provide an overall summary and then for each of the 4 principles to be examined through the identification of 'strengths' and 'areas for improvement'. These are for Adult Services and Children & Young People's services. The contribution of the Resource Management and Safeguarding division of the directorate is included within these areas.
- 2.3** The summary and overall findings reflect positively upon the work of Social Services staff, their managers, and corporate colleagues.
- 2.4** The identified 'areas for improvement' will be transferred into the Social Services Reshaping Board's action plan to ensure that suitable actions are developed to advance the service and that they are completed appropriately.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** In reviewing the performance of Local Authorities in Wales, CIW also takes into account the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This puts the efficacy and impact of Local Authorities' approach to planning and financial decision-making at the heart of their considerations.
- 3.2** The Inspection Report has been produced in collaboration with staff, service users and carers.
- 3.3** The report examines our integrated arrangements and our relationships with our partners.
- 3.4** The 'areas for improvement' will require further collaboration and actions to ensure that the service responds for the longer term.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no Climate Change and Nature Implications as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report however the identified 'areas for improvement' clearly state that the current resources are not keeping up with demand. In a very challenging context the Council has awarded additional funding to the Directorate for 23/24 to meet identified cost pressures.

Employment

- 5.2** There are no employment implications resulting from this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** CIW has powers to review Local Authority social services functions as set out under section 149 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. This includes reviewing: the overall exercise of Local Authority social services functions in Wales; the way in which the social services functions of a particular Local Authority are exercised; the exercise of a Local Authority social services function of a particular description (including the power to inspect two or more Local Authorities where they are working together through regional arrangements); the exercise of a Local Authority social services function by a particular person or persons.
- 5.4** There were two Welsh speaking inspectors available, enabling CIW to provide an active offer of conducting parts of the inspection process in Welsh.

6. Background Papers

Appendix 1 Inspection Report

Performance Evaluation Inspection of Vale of Glamorgan County Council

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Introduction

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out a performance evaluation inspection of children and young people's services (C&YPS) and adult services (AS) in the Vale of Glamorgan County Council ('VoG'/the local authority) in January 2023. The purpose of this inspection was to review the local authority's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation, on behalf of Welsh Ministers.

We sought to answer the following questions aligned under the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (The 2014 Act).

1. **People - voice and control**

How well is the local authority ensuring all people are equal partners who have voice, choice and control over their lives and can achieve what matters to them?

How well is the local authority ensuring the workforce is sufficient in numbers, suitably skilled, experienced, and supported?

2. **Prevention**

To what extent is the local authority ensuring the need for care and support is minimised, and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring the best possible outcomes for people are achieved?

3. **Well-being**

To what extent is the local authority ensuring people are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm?

4. **Partnerships**

To what extent is the local authority able to assure itself effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for people?

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect people. The scope of the inspection included:

- Evaluation of the experience of adults and children at the point of the performance evaluation inspection.
- Evaluation of the experience and outcomes people achieve through their contact with services.

- Evidence of the local authority and partners having learnt lessons from recent experiences and plans for service developments and improvement.
- Consideration of how the local authority manages opportunity and risk in its planning and delivery of social care at individual, operational and strategic levels.

1. Summary

- 1.1. In common with many local authorities in Wales, VoG is experiencing a challenging time in relation to the provision of social care. Many of the pressures experienced by the local authority reflect the pandemic recovery context, resulting in high levels of demand and increased complexity of people's needs, including the impact of the 'cost of living' crisis.
- 1.2. There is strong senior leadership within social services. We were told by staff, stakeholders and partners that senior leaders are visible, accessible, supportive, and approachable. Feedback we gathered indicates a culture which is focused on well-being, building, and maintaining relationships and achieving safe outcomes for people. We heard and saw evidence of strong corporate and political support to the social services directorate, and a recognition of its challenges. This has resulted in increased funding to bolster the workforce and invest in preventative services for people.
- 1.3. There are clear strategic plans in place to monitor and evaluate improvements across both C&YPS and AS via the '*Social Services Reshaping Board*'. The Director of Social Services acts as chair and Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), its members comprise the corporate Strategic Leadership Team, directorate Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health.
- 1.4. CIW completed an assurance check of C&YPS in March and November 2021, in considering the findings of those assurance checks, during this inspection we found clear evidence of improvement and progress made by the local authority. This has resulted in better outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 1.5. There are plans in place to strengthen the quality of supervision within C&YPS through a bespoke strength based social work model '*Building on Strengths*'(BoS). We also heard how the local authority is working towards increased consistency in the use of the Information Technology (IT) case management system WCCIS.
- 1.6. Whilst the strategic vision is clear around BoS and is supported by robust implementation plans, further work is required before full implementation is achieved. This will mean changes are not only embedded but their value

and progress monitored and evaluated. It is acknowledged that post-covid recovery, recruitment challenges, workforce fragility and increased demand have made the embedding of change difficult. The local authority is mid-way into its 5-year development and implementation plan, the progress made to date is encouraging and demonstrates the improvements made since the two assurance checks undertaken by CIW in 2021.

- 1.7. Most people who receive support and services from VoG, do so in a timely manner, are supported to maintain their safety and well-being and their voices are heard.
- 1.8. We saw evidence of the active offer of Welsh language and people's language preference was seen in key documents such as assessments, care and support plans and reviews of care and support plans. Whilst we did not review any records in Welsh, we could see where it was stated as the preferred language. The Head of Adult Service, Head of Children Service and Director of Social Services assured us the VoG can offer Welsh language when this is the person's preference.
- 1.9. The work of the '*Reshaping Board*' is addressing the need to further develop a robust quality assurance system. We saw and heard about investment in supporting the local authorities' approach to quality assurance with newly appointed posts specifically to focus on this area of development. A quality assurance framework is being developed, in addition to monitoring being undertaken by chief officers across the directorate, which will include regular audits and scrutiny of data via improved management information dashboards to drive forward service improvements. This is an area of continued development for the local authority.

Key findings and evidence

Key findings and examples of evidence are presented below in line with the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

2. People - Voice & Choice:

Strengths:

C&YPS

- 2.1. Care experienced children and young people receive the help and support they need, and they told us they know who to contact should they need something and used words like 'funny', 'supportive' and 'kind' when

describing the social workers that support them. We were told of a variety of ways that social workers engage with children and young people, resulting in them feeling listened to and valued.

- 2.2. We heard from care experienced young people that they can build positive and supportive relationships with the professionals around them. This means in times of need or crisis; they can get the help they need to prevent escalation. Of their Young Person's Advisor, one care experienced person told us 'my YPA is amazing and supportive. She cares.'
- 2.3. There is evidence in most social care records, that children, young people and their families' views are captured and recorded. We found examples of assessments and child protection conference reports, which were child focused and written in a way the child or young person could engage with and understand.
- 2.4. The local authority prioritises interactions with children, young people, and their families, who's well-being is at the forefront of their service delivery. There is a committed and dedicated workforce, with evidence of employees within C&YPS going above and beyond to ensure children and families safety is prioritised and they remain together where possible and receive the support and intervention they require.
- 2.5. The local authority responds creatively to challenges in recruitment, by employing social workers from over-seas and promoting a 'return to practice' scheme. It has received funding for additional social care officer posts, to compliment and support operational teams. In doing so, this has increased the local authority's potential for the '*grow your own*' scheme to be successful via seconded pathways to social work qualification.
- 2.6. A wide range of learning and development opportunities are provided by the VoG for social workers, social care officers and foster carers. We heard about peer support offered within locality teams and how there is a culture of being able to discuss challenges to promote learning. We saw the '*kit bag*' of direct work tools provided to relevant staff, aimed at promoting engagement with children and young people; and heard how it is used to frame direct work sessions with children and young people and elevate their voices. We were told it is not effective for older young people and social workers questioned the inclusivity of the '*kit bag*' design in working with children and young people with certain disabilities or communication difficulties. Though it is acknowledged that the '*kit bag*' is not intended as a prescriptive direct work tool and is to be used as appropriate depending on suitability.

- 2.7. Most of the staff who responded to CIW's survey said they would recommend working for the VoG to a friend and over half said that they have a manageable workload. Staff told us that they feel well supported by managers and that there is a focus on staff well-being. Staff also told us in the survey about workforce instability, increase in demand and complexity along with the impact of the pandemic, but with overriding positive messages about working for the VoG and the quality of intervention with families. Most practitioners reported receiving regular supervision from their managers, both formal and informal, we saw evidence of regular supervision taking place.
- 2.8. We saw how BoS is beginning to embed into practice, for example the re-design of the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) and one example of strengthened supervision which was undertaken through the BoS approach.

Areas for Improvement:

- 2.9. Despite there being evidence of regular informal and formal supervision, the examples we saw varied in content and quality. Some had a clear focus on staff welfare, including training needs, but some records demonstrated limited evidence of an opportunity to reflect on practice. **Supervision practice and recording should be strengthened to ensure there is time for staff to reflect on their involvement with children and families and for supervisors to have sufficient oversight of the work being undertaken.**
- 2.10. We found the records lacked evidence of practitioner reflection, managerial oversight and decision making in respect of children and young people. We heard and saw that not all social care records are up to date in WCCIS, resulting in challenges around preparation for supervision and undertaking robust oversight of case management decision making for line managers.
- 2.11. Staff told us the WCCIS system is 'clunky' and 'inefficient' and not supporting practice. Service development leads are aware and in the process of redesigning forms in line with the '*Building on Strengths*' model. Through the '*Reshaping Board*', a task and finish group has been established which aims to address this and maximise the use of WCCIS. **The local authority must continue to work towards achieving consistent use of WCCIS which results in social care records of children being updated regularly and which reflect key decision making.** This is a theme emerging from the learning of recent child practice reviews.

- 2.12. Independent Reviewing Officers told us it can be challenging to ‘make sense’ of a child or young person’s situation from reading their social care record on WCCIS. We heard from staff that recording on social care records is considered as being important but is not prioritised due to work-load pressures and capacity issues, this was supported by what we saw. Social work recordings are an opportunity to demonstrate how decisions are reached and should be a mechanism for the child or young person’s lived experiences to be highlighted and their voices elevated. We recognise this work is being developed through the BoS approach and monitored via the *‘Reshaping Board’*. **The local authority should consider this an area of priority and seek to address it at pace, focusing on providing clarity to staff around the expectations of recording which must be timely, accurate and reflect what is happening for the child.**
- 2.13. There are opportunities for the local authority to work regionally and look across other local authorities that have WCCIS well established to understand good practice in its use and maximise its potential as a valuable data collection and reporting tool which can drive practice and ensure quality.
- 2.14. Most people who responded to the survey stated that it is very difficult to contact social services and reported issues with communication with social workers, specifically around calls being returned. **The local authority should consider this further to ensure effective and timely communication with people is prioritised.**

Adult Services

Strengths:

- 2.15. People’s views about what matters to them are sought and remain central to the work undertaken. All the social care records reviewed contained evidence of the voice of the person. Consent to share information is consistently considered and most [92%] of the people who responded to our people survey state they were treated with dignity and respect “most of the time” or “all of the time” when they contacted the local authority.
- 2.16. We saw some examples of people, including carers, being provided with the opportunity to tailor and manage their own care and support using direct payments. In the care and support plans we reviewed there was evidence of the offer of direct payments and when this was not the person’s preferred option the reason for refusing the direct payments was

recorded. This is an area the local authority needs to continue to strengthen across AS.

- 2.17. Many of the AS respondents to CIW's staff survey said they were well supported by colleagues and managers. They also indicated their workloads were manageable. Managers commented they have a committed and dedicated workforce. Workers valued the accessibility of managers and senior leaders.
- 2.18. Practitioners and managers' report receiving appropriate training to undertake their roles, and practitioners are positive about having access to on-line training/information.

Areas for Improvement:

- 2.19. Whilst we saw the need for advocacy considered by practitioners, this was not consistent. The local authority currently co-ordinates its commissioning of advocacy services on a regional basis. Practitioners and partners told us of the delays in identifying an independent professional advocate for some people. We were made aware that current arrangements are under review. The local authority, through its joint commissioning arrangements, must ensure services are available and responsive to people's needs and preferences. **The local authority must strengthen the advocacy offer and ensure the importance of advocacy is understood by all practitioners.**
- 2.20. We saw evidence of some carers being offered an assessment of their needs and completion of carers assessments and support plans. Some carers and families spoke positively of the relationship established with individual practitioners and of the support they had received. We also heard from some carers whose experience had been less positive and who had not been offered a carers assessment. **The local authority should continue to work in partnership with the health board, to ensure practitioners consistently comply with the general duty to promote the well-being of the carer.** This will ensure their needs are consistently being considered and supported alongside the cared for person.
- 2.21. One social care record reviewed showed a delay in a person's eligible needs being met. The carers were left with no option but to fund a significant package of care whilst the local authority and local health board were in dispute over responsibility for funding. **The local authority must**

ensure it continues to work with statutory partners to agree to meet a person's eligible needs whilst a dispute is being resolved.

- 2.22. Most practitioners report receiving regular supervision from their managers. Supervision records viewed vary in content and quality. **The local authority must ensure robust management oversight of practice and reflective conversations are taking place, with sufficient information noted to evidence decision making.**
- 2.23. Responding to complaints within statutory timescales has become increasingly challenging for the local authority, due to pressures in the services and increased complexity of complaints across the directorate as a whole. Arrangements are in place for monitoring complaints and the sharing of information with senior managers which includes identifying trends and learning. **The local authority must ensure complaints are consistently responded to in accordance with the prescribed timescales in the "The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014".**

3. Prevention

C&YPS

Strengths:

- 3.1. FACT (Family Achieving Change Together) provides intervention to families to prevent family breakdown and improve outcomes for people. We heard how the local authority has recently reviewed the way this service can be accessed, which has led to increased capacity within teams.
- 3.2. Alongside recruitment and retention issues there has been a significant increase in the complexity of need and the demand for services. In response the local authority restructured part of its C&YP service, the Intake and Family Support teams. Team managers told us they welcomed the restructure, and it was to the benefit of people and staff. We were told by operational managers that the restructure has resulted in there being no waiting lists and a stronger 'front door' at C&YPS. This has meant the local authority can respond flexibly to the changing needs of families.
- 3.3. The local authority has developed the Families First Advice Line (FFAL), which provides a single point of access to 14 services. Education partners talked positively about using this service to access support for young carers. It is analysing the services offered to understand which are most

used and helpful to the cohort of children and young people they work with.

- 3.4. The 'Active Offer' of advocacy is being provided to children and young people, we found examples of how advocacy plays an important role in elevating the voice of the child or young person.
- 3.5. The best examples of social work practice in C&YPS aims to keep families together and prevent family breakdown through implementation of care and support including the delivery of appropriate support services and bespoke therapeutic intervention. This has improved outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.6. In the context of safeguarding, children and young people's safety is promoted through the provision of a range of early help services and longer-term support measures aimed at reducing risk. For example, one family carer told us of the bespoke support package provided quickly, which enabled the young person to continue safely living with their family. An extensive support package was provided from a range of services working creatively together to successfully improve circumstances for the young person and deescalate risk. The family carer told us that they felt 'heard, valued and listened to' by the social worker and those working with the young person. This example supports the strong collaborative approach of the local authority, which we repeatedly saw and heard about, in keep children and young people safely within their families, resulting in positive outcomes.
- 3.7. C&YPS has a range of services working together to prevent home or placement breakdown. We heard and saw how the Youth Justice Prevention Officers play a positive preventative role and are skilled at building relationships with children and young people. We heard from foster carers that there is always an 'on call' senior manager to offer support and advice on an emergency basis.
- 3.8. There is robust oversight from the child protection (CP) and children looked after review chairperson (IRO). We saw evidence of challenge in instances where rationale for decision making was unclear from the records on WCCIS, this helped prevent drift and further delay in reaching timely outcomes for children and young people. We read how CP and IRO chairpersons sought the views of children and young people, which were clearly recorded. This was a notable improvement from the assurance check undertaken by CIW in March 2021.

Areas for Improvement:

- 3.9. There is a range of preventative services available in the VoG, however capacity is limited for some services, and others have waiting lists as demand is outstripping the resource. **The local authority must work with its partners and commissioners to analyse and understand the demand for and improve timely access to preventative services to minimise escalation of need and risk.**
- 3.10. The local authority is aware of and is monitoring waiting lists for carers assessments, which clearly impacts on providing early intervention and support for people. To address this, the local authority has employed a full-time carers worker who will sit within Early Help to undertake parent/carer and young carer assessments. **The local authority must monitor the progress of this and work toward reducing waiting lists.**

Adult Services

Strengths:

- 3.11. Senior managers fully understand access to early intervention and prevention is key to maintaining well-being and mitigating the demand on managed care services. An area of strength is the shared strategic commitment of the Vale Alliance Model to align assets, resources and maintain a focus on promoting people's independence.
- 3.12. The local authority has worked in partnership with the health board, third sector and other stakeholders to create the Well-being Matters Service. This is a single point of access to deliver a joined and co-ordinated access and response to support the well-being needs of adult residents in the local authority.
- 3.13. Like most local authorities in Wales there are substantial pressures on capacity within the domiciliary care market. The local authority is aware of and is monitoring waiting lists across service areas. Despite this demand, we saw some good examples of domiciliary care offered in a timely manner. Practitioners, managers and partners confirmed requests for urgent domiciliary care are prioritised and responded to in a timely manner.
- 3.14. Since our assurance check of AS in March 2021 the local authority has developed the role of 'Well-being Officer' who have recently been trained as Trusted Assessors. This approach has enabled the local authority to respond in a timely manner to requests for low level equipment and minor

adaptations. This has reduced the occupational therapy waiting list and ensures a timely response to promote or maintain people's independence.

Areas for Improvement:

- 3.15. People's experience of contacting AS is varied. Some people, including carers, told us of the difficulty they experienced in speaking to the appropriate person or receiving a timely response. **The local authority must review its current arrangement to ensure people consistently receive a timely response when they contact Adult Services.**
- 3.16. Some statutory reviews are not undertaken in a timely manner. The local authority is missing an opportunity to ascertain whether people have met their personal well-being outcomes or continue to need support to do so. **The local authority must take the required action to ensure compliance with timescales for statutory reviews.**
- 3.17. The importance of timely hospital discharge is understood and remains a priority but providing domiciliary care to enable people to return home safely is a challenge for the local authority. **The local authority should continue to work strategically and operationally with its partners in the local health board to look for solutions to alleviate the situation.**

4. Well-being

Strengths:

C&YPS

- 4.1. We found effective and timely safeguarding responses in C&YPS resulting in positive outcomes for children and young people. Partners have a good understanding of thresholds and are communicated with during the safeguarding process, enabling them to be clear and contribute to the decisions being made about children. One partner stated that they felt the local authority is 'on the ball' regarding child exploitation and contextual safeguarding¹, this view is supported by what we read in social care records.

¹ Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Seeing the young person in the context of their peer relationships and communities.

- 4.2. Social workers responsible for safeguarding children and young people are confident in their ability to respond to safeguarding concerns and act where necessary, despite increases in complexity and demand. Responses to safeguarding reports are generally timely including strategy discussions and meetings involving relevant professionals.
- 4.3. Most staff told us how their well-being is prioritised by their managers and senior leaders, we were told of many examples how this commitment is demonstrated. Staff can seek support, advice and guidance and will receive it from across the management and leadership group. This is supported by the staff survey results, with 27 of 32 (84%) respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel well supported by managers.
- 4.4. The local authority commissions a psychology service to include consultation and reflective practice sessions for team managers and social workers, providing an opportunity to discuss complex and challenging issues. This promotes and strengthens resilience and well-being within teams.

Areas for Improvement:

- 4.5. We saw missed opportunities to avoid drift and to adequately safeguard some children and young people, this was a consequence of staffing pressures and sickness at the time. **The local authority must ensure that those most at risk receive the appropriate intervention, through decision making which is supported by robust management oversight even at times of heightened staff absence and vacancies.**

Adults:

Strengths:

- 4.6. Most of the assessments we reviewed were strengths-based, focusing on what matters to the person and the outcomes they wish to achieve. They were structured around the five elements of assessments and the result of a conversation between the individual, and where appropriate the carer /wider family, and the practitioner. The support provided by family, friends is recognised and valued, and their contribution recorded in most of the care and support plans we reviewed.
- 4.7. There is evidence of consideration of mental capacity, the mental capacity assessments we saw were of good quality with evidence of the

practitioner's knowledge and ability to practice in accordance with the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

- 4.8. We are assured of timeliness and proportionate responses to adult safeguarding reports. These are screened and most of the enquiries we reviewed were conducted within statutory requirements. The analysis and determination was mostly clearly recorded. Strategy discussions and meetings are generally held in a timely manner, involve the relevant professionals and it is evident the adult at risk is at the centre of the process. Practitioners in various teams undertake the section 126 safeguarding enquiries. Their confidence has grown due to the strengthening of the adult safeguarding team and the advice/guidance they provide.

Areas for Improvement:

- 4.9. Carers we spoke with told us how contingency and future planning was important in providing them and the cared for person with reassurance that suitable arrangements were in place. However, in the social care records reviewed, we saw little evidence of contingency planning taking place. **The local authority should review this area of practice.**
- 4.10. The local authority responds to immediate safeguarding concerns. Professionals in the safeguarding team working effectively with partners and colleagues from the wider local authority teams to protect adults at risk. Partners understand their duty to report, and we saw evidence of timely and appropriate reports being made to the Safeguarding Team. There was, however, little evidence of the outcome of sec126 enquiries being shared with the person making the report. **The local authority must review current arrangements to ensure the outcome of enquires are shared with the reporter.**

5. Partnership and Integration

C&YPS

Strengths:

- 5.1. We heard from partners, internally and externally that there is a culture in the local authority, from Director to front line practitioners, of good communication and a focus on partnership working. This helps ensure good outcomes for children and young people that need care and support.
- 5.2. A partner told us: *"The culture of the organisation is positive, and people go the extra mile to achieve the best for the people in the VoG"*

- 5.3. The multi-agency placement panel, which includes representatives from health, education, and social services, work together in relation to child placements and complex care planning. Partners told us in this context the local authority performs strongly. They are able to appropriately challenge each other and to work together to achieve best outcomes for children and young people. A key strength is that education partners have access to WCCIS.
- 5.4. Partners told us about how services are developed co-productively, and how the VoG is open and willing to be part of and drive forward new initiatives. An example of this would be working with partners to invest in and develop new 'in-house' residential services.
- 5.5. Nearly all independent providers spoke positively about the support from the local authority around commissioning arrangements, where relationships have supported innovation and placement development. We heard from providers who told us that they had been consulted with and been part of shaping the new 'Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support' 2023-2027
- 5.6. A provider told us: *"We have amazing stories of young people who have turned their lives around, where they might have been written off in other local authorities."*

Areas for Improvement:

- 5.7. Demand is outstripping supply and current resources are not meeting the need of children, young people and their families. Discussions with providers, commissioners and budget holders should continue around how to improve the situation, to maintain good working relationships and ensure good outcomes for children and young people. We heard about waiting lists and delays in the provision of services as a result of demand in specific areas, such as advocacy, contact centre provision and parenting support. **The local authority should continue to monitor demand work creatively to minimise delay of provision of services to children, young people and their families.**

Adults:

Strengths

- 5.8. Partnerships were found to be working well at all levels and delivering an integrated, sustainable approach to meeting need and promoting well-being in line with legislation.

- 5.9. Practitioners are developing a professional relationship with people built upon co-operation and a shared understanding of what matters. Most [90%] of the people who responded to our people survey felt they were listened to either “sometimes”, “most of the time” or “all the time”.
- 5.10. There is a commitment to involving people in service design and delivery. People are participating in staff recruitment activities and service development. This enables them to influence decisions about care and support and the design of services.
- 5.11. There are effective partnerships focusing on commissioning, delivering and developing integrated, high quality care and support to ensure sustainable outcomes for people. Providers talked of a relationship of trust and equal partnership with the local authority. Third sector providers told us the local authority had a good understanding of the third sector and knew the community well. Another partner described their relationship with adult services as “constructive and supported” and we were told the local authority senior leaders were “accessible and with a passion for getting it right for the citizens”.

Areas for Improvement:

- 5.12. The local authority is developing an Older Persons Housing Strategy 2022- 2036 reflecting the long-term vision for housing provision for older people. During the inspection we heard of the challenges of finding suitable housing to support people with substance misuse and complex mental health needs. **The local authority must work with all its departments and key partners to develop housing provision for all adults in need of support or care and support.**
- 5.13. Partners must work together to ensure unpaid carers consistently feel their views are sought and heard. Not all carers spoken to were aware of the carers gateway. **The local authority and the health board must ensure carers supporting people with a primary health care need or relatives/friends in hospital are recognised, listened to, and supported.**

Next Steps

CIW expects the local authority to consider the areas identified for improvement and take appropriate action to address and improve these areas. CIW will monitor

progress through its ongoing performance review activity with the local authority. Where relevant we expect the local authority to share the positive practice identified with other local authorities, to disseminate learning and help drive continuous improvement in statutory services throughout Wales.

Methodology

Fieldwork

Most inspection evidence was gathered by reviewing the experiences of people through review and tracking of their social care record. We reviewed 30 social care records and tracked 10 in total, split equally between AS and C&YPS.

Tracking a person's social care record includes having conversations with the person in receipt of social care services, their family or carers, key worker, the key worker's manager, and other professionals involved.

We also; -

- interviewed 21 local authority employees
- interviewed a range of partner organisations, representing both statutory and third sector
- reviewed 10 staff supervision files
- reviewed compliments and complaints
- reviewed supporting documentation sent to CIW for the purpose of the inspection.
- administered surveys to staff, partner organisations and people
- Held focus groups of children, young people and adults who use the services of the local authority, resulting in CIW engaging with 35 individuals.

Welsh Language

There were two Welsh speaking inspectors available, enabling CIW to provide an active offer of conducting parts of the inspection process in Welsh.

Acknowledgements

CIW would like to thank staff, partners and people who gave their time and contributed to this inspection.