

# GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



## Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 18 May 2021  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillors Dafydd Meurig and Dilwyn Morgan  
**Contact Officer:** Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director  
**Title of Item:** Care Inspectorate Wales Assurance Audit Letter

### 1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1. Cabinet Members are asked to accept the contents of the Assurance Audit Letter issued by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) regarding their findings about Gwynedd Council social services following the inspection held on 18-22 January 2021.

### 2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1. It is appropriate for the Cabinet to consider the contents of the letter in order to have confidence in the performance of Social Services, and to be aware of their strengths and priority areas.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. At the beginning of the year, Care Inspectorate Wales published a Quality Assurance report on Gwynedd Council's Social Services. The main purpose of this quality inspection was to see how well our social services continue to help and support adults and children.
- 3.2. As part of the inspection, CIW considered the safety and well-being of service users and prospective users, the safety of services, and the safety and well-being of the people who work in those services. Their main lines of questioning were based on the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and, in the letter, CIW has recorded its views and findings in accordance with these principles: People – Voice and Control, Prevention, Partnerships and Integration, and Well-being.
- 3.3. CIW has sent a letter to Gwynedd Council to explain its findings – see the appendix. As a Council, we are extremely happy with our performance and welcome the recommendations for future improvement.

## 4. MAIN MESSAGES DERIVING FROM THE LETTER

### 4.1. People – Voice and Control

4.2. It is evident that our staff have committed to the provision of social services of a high standard in Gwynedd. Robust evidence was seen that we kept in contact with people during the pandemic to offer support, with extensive activity recorded in both adults and children's services.

4.3. Nevertheless, some of the assessments seen remained overly focused on need, with a lack of clarity in recording personal outcomes. Consequently, we need to ensure that people's voices are heard, and that they are regularly recorded.

4.4. Within children's services, good examples of using innovative practice were seen, such as the effective child protection pilot project, to enable families and practitioners to clearly convey any concerns and intervention objectives. The findings of the staff survey showed that this was appreciated by practitioners.

4.5. We have committed to the provision of services in the individual's choice of language, with continuous assessments and care provided in Welsh as a matter of course.

4.6. We have a positive recruitment and retention method, without the use of agency staff, with evidence that this stability is beneficial to children and adults.

4.7. Senior managers and officers have a good understanding of the profile of looked after children, and there is good support in the field of corporate parenting in all parts of the Council. The number of looked after children had increased during the 12-month period examined by CIW, but by now, looking back at the 20/21 financial year, we see that the number of looked after children has reduced compared to the previous year.

### 4.8. Prevention

4.9. Senior managers understand that access to prevention procedures and early intervention are key to maintaining well-being and reducing the demand on statutory services, and the responses to the staff survey strongly reflect the view that preventative services are working well, and are acknowledged for reducing the need for statutory support. However, increased investment would be welcomed.

4.10. Within adults services, there were timely responses to requests for minor aids or home adaptations. However, the waiting times for occupational therapy support, such as washing assessments, need to be improved. To improve this, workforce planning work is underway to increase the number of occupational therapists that are available when people contact the Council.

4.11. In relation to supporting families, the staff survey strongly reflects the view that children's services are willing to be innovative and introduce new ideas for continuous improvement. One example of this during the pandemic was the information hub for children and families, which provided information for people on-

line and over the telephone about matters such as grief and mental health, and referred people for alternative support as needed.

#### 4.12. Partnerships and Integration

- 4.13. In the majority of files, there was evidence of practitioners nurturing a professional working relationship with people, based on cooperation and a shared understanding of what matters. There is good partnership working between professional workers, families and carers
- 4.14. We face challenges in supporting children's emotional needs with the lack of mental health services. The Health Board and we as a Council have found it difficult to reconcile services, with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) mainly focused on the needs of children with mental illness. For many of the children working with children's services, this clinical definition does not apply, and there is concern that no services are available to some children with very complex emotional needs. This matter is not solely relevant to us as a local authority.
- 4.15. The majority of providers and a small sample of third sector organisations that responded to the CIW survey noted that they had nurtured working inter-relationships and had received excellent support during the pandemic. They were praised for their timely use of new digital methods of working to ensure that we were able to communicate seven days a week. Our distribution of PPE was excellent, we prioritised the safety of care staff, and advocated on behalf of individuals in order for other agencies to support them. The adults services have been working effectively with partners to ensure that people can return home from hospital as soon as possible.
- 4.16. In relation to looked after children, all the statutory reviews and visits were conducted in a timely manner. The reviews reflected the views of the children, the carers and their parents, with good narratives relating to well-being. The plans were also be shared with Independent Review Officers and other partners, including health and education, in a timely manner to ensure that care is provided in a coordinated manner. Our foster carers noted that they had received excellent support from the fostering team. In order to support stable placements, an additional resource has been identified within the fostering team.
- 4.17. A group of young care leavers drew attention to the good support that they received from the 16+ team and their personal assistants. They described the way that they had been helped to seek employment and somewhere suitable to live. There was evidence that the 'When I am Ready' conversations had been held, although in a few cases, they could have been started earlier. Looked-after young people were supported to nurture independent living skills, but a lack of suitable accommodation could be an obstacle. In summary, from the cases viewed by CIW, children benefited from stable placements that met their needs, with good long-term outcomes.

#### 4.18. Well-being

- 4.19. Services for adults and children benefited from good corporate support, with an established senior management team that aimed to deal with care and support with a lifelong vision.
- 4.20. Within adults services the majority of the files recorded conversations about what mattered, that reflected people's circumstances.
- 4.21. There was a waiting list for formal reviews in adults services, but there was evidence of practitioners keeping in contact with people and amending their review methods as required. We need to improve the timing of care and support plan reviews as it is possible that some people do not receive the support that they require.
- 4.22. Practitioners expressed positive feedback about adult safeguarding, and this confidence was also reflected in responses to the provider survey.
- 4.23. In relation to disabled children and their families, Derwen Multi-disciplinary team has contacted people frequently during the pandemic to offer support. This has included practical support with aids and adaptations, emotional support in the form of telephone calls from a psychologist and a variety of activities for children during the summer holiday.

### **5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The matters that have been noted in CIW's letter have been incorporated in the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department. Work is underway to deliver the relevant improvements. The relevant scrutiny committee has also received a copy of this letter, and the committee will consider matters to scrutinise, in accordance with its work programme.

### **6. Views of the Statutory Officers:**

#### **The Monitoring Officer:**

It is appropriate for the Cabinet to accept this report in order to provide assurance in this key field. The report notes that the findings are positive, and this is to be welcomed.

#### **Head of Finance:**

I have received confirmation from the author that the decision sought here will not generate new financial commitments.