

REPORT TO: POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL CABINET

REPORT FROM: INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF THE PCC IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD

REPORT DATED: 10 AUGUST 2018

1. Background

The Improvement and Assurance Board was established in April 2018 with a clear purpose which is to 'assist the Leader in driving forward the required change and improvement in the Local Authority'.

It is important to recognise that, whilst specific improvements are required following CIW inspections covering both Adult and Children's Social Services, the Board's remit goes beyond this. The Authority commissioned a review of 'Leadership, Governance, Strategy and Capacity', and this is also overseen by the Board.

Simply delivering on the specific recommendations from the external reviews will not necessarily deliver sustainable improvement; hence, the Board has an interest in all of the transformation activity of the Council, which is aimed at meeting current and future service and financial challenges.

This report is a highlight report; it does not seek to detail all of the work currently underway or planned. That level of detail is covered elsewhere, in for example;

- the minutes of monthly Board meetings
- the monthly performance reports
- the monthly improvement plan reports

This report will now comment on key issues in relation to Corporate, Children's Services, and Adult Social Care, seeking to both acknowledge progress and highlight immediate challenges.

2. Corporate Matters

2.1 Senior Leadership

It is pleasing to note the appointment of an experienced Acting Chief Executive. The subsequent appointment of a permanent Director of Social Services, creating as it does clear and stable leadership, was a vital step forward. The recent appointment of a permanent Head of Children's Services is again a very important step, establishing a clear and stable leadership base. The new Director maintaining a focus across social care and beyond is a developing

strength. However, it is vital that the Authority, together with the Acting Chief Executive, consider now the long term senior management arrangements needed to sustain improvement. These arrangements need to be established prior to the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive in order to create continuity and minimise timescales for change. This review must deal with not simply structures, but capacity, capability, and leadership style.

Key members of the leadership team are now focused on ensuring that the Corporate Centre and Services work as one to deliver the Council's vision and the required improvements. It remains a challenge to fully embed this approach and culture, and this challenge will be tested as the vision and financial/service strategies are further worked up in the coming months.

2.2 Vision, Finance and Service Strategy

Since the report on 'Leadership, Governance, Strategy and Capacity' some notable progress has been made. Work has been undertaken on establishing a vision, and a framework has been established for ensuring a service and financial plan is established in a structured way. Work is underway in terms of establishing the Authority's approach to transformation, which will be aided by a WAO review, which is imminent.

However, it is inevitable that improvements in social care will come at a significant cost in the medium term. The Authority has made some provision within the budget; it is as yet unclear as to whether this will be sufficient. All authorities face difficult decisions, as the financial consequences of social care improvement have to be funded, impacting directly on other services, given the finite financial resources. This challenge will undoubtedly need to be resolved in the coming budget cycle. Social care must demonstrate value for money, but this is unlikely to, in itself, contain the financial impact.

2.3 Performance Management

Major progress in defining what 'good' looks like; determining the information needed to manage performance; and providing performance reports has been made in recent months. The Children's Services report is now well developed and the Adult Services approach is under active development.

These reports provide a solid base for both performance and service improvement work. The approach to performance management is being rolled out to the frontline, and this is to be welcomed.

However, establishing the systems and processes is the first step. The greater challenge, as recognised by the Authority, is to create a performance management culture throughout the workforce.

It is also imperative that the focus on performance management is matched by a robust approach to quality assurance.

2.4 Political Leadership and Scrutiny

- Senior politicians are members of the Improvement and Assurance Board, and have made positive and constructive input at all times.
- The Leader and Cabinet members are regularly engaged with the independent members of the Board, and relationships are positive.
- The Leader is actively engaged with Cabinet colleagues in overseeing, on a regular basis, the improvement activity.
- Member development activity has been undertaken in recent times, supported by the WLGA.
- There is as yet no clear consensus on the adequacy of scrutiny arrangements, with markedly different views expressed. Further work with the WLGA is planned, and it is vital that this issue is resolved. All appear agreed on the importance of robust and challenging scrutiny but not on how this should be achieved.

3. Social Services – General

3.1 Workforce

Arguably the single most important challenge is workforce. The establishment of a fully supported workforce with the capacity and capability to deliver sustainably good services is paramount. Over-reliance on agency staff remains a key issue.

The Authority has recently adopted a workforce strategy for Children's Services which determines the structure and numbers required to deal with current workload. It has also established a process to determine the workforce requirements going forward, needed to provide a sustainable model in the longer term. This work is essential, and a similar approach in Adult Services is required. The 'softer' issues relating to culture and staff morale require attention at least equal to the management of quantitative data.

3.2 Safeguarding

Ensuring strong safeguarding arrangements for both adults and children is a key duty, and both inspection reports highlight this important agenda. A recent review of safeguarding in adults and children was undertaken 2-4 July. This highlighted some early signs of improvement, but re-emphasised the extent of improvement yet to be delivered.

3.3 Early Intervention and Prevention

In both Adults and Children, it is recognised by the Authority that its work in areas such as 'start well' and 'live well' is vital to delivering sustainability.

The Authority can demonstrate positive work on early intervention and prevention, with clear benefits to individuals. However, it recognises the need to review targeting to ensure that this work is complementary to and supportive of, statutory services. This work needs to be progressed at pace, if the benefits overall are to be delivered.

3.4 Partnerships

Understandably, recent activity has prioritised internal improvements, in order to deliver against inspection recommendations. This has included work with partners on immediate issues, for example, referral thresholds etc.

The sustainable model of social care will require a clear programme of work with partners; Health, Police, 3rd Sector, and others, and the Authority will need to resource this in the mid-term.

4. Children's Social Care

As stated earlier, the full detail is available in separate performance and improvement plan reports. This section simply highlights the headlines in terms of progress and challenges.

Progress

- A clear performance management approach has been established.
- Significant improvement in key performance indicators has been delivered.
- A short term workforce strategy is agreed.
- It is agreed that 'Signs of Safety' will be the practice model.

Challenges

- Increased LAC numbers and activity generally are impacting performance. The analysis and understanding of what is driving this activity and its likely future trend is key.
- There is a need to develop, as the Authority agrees, a safe LAC reduction strategy in the coming period.
- Whilst there is significant improvement in key indicators, these still need further improvement in order to meet the required standard and statutory requirements.
- The Authority is moving to ensure that the numeric improvements are backed by quality; this is clearly essential.
- 'Signs of Safety' must be resourced and driven, but stabilising the workforce is key to delivery; ensuring that the services are child centred whilst driving performance improvement is and will be a continuing challenge.
- In the coming months, a greater understanding of high cost/low volume activity will be needed.
- As stated earlier, the workforce strategy and early intervention prevention work needs to deliver, if sustainable improvement is to be delivered.

5. Adult Services

Again, the detail is available in other Corporate reports; this section simply provides highlights. The Board is in the process of drilling down into Adult Services, but safeguarding, timely service provision, and high quality social care practice are key issues.

Progress

- The CIW report has been fully embraced, and the Adult Services improvement plan amended to reflect recommendations. The plan is outcome focused.
- The performance report is developing and key PIs being agreed.
- Workforce challenges are recognised and a strategy is being developed.

Challenges

- The Authority recognises the impacts of demography, isolation, and other social factors, and is developing commissioning strategies and an overall vision for the services; this will need to be resourced and funded.

- A clear practice-based model needs to be established to ensure consistency and quality in basic practice, with a strong emphasis on safeguarding.
- An early resolution of the PPD access approach is both planned and needed.
- Ensuring that the needs of the individual in terms of personalisation are not lost in the drive for quantitative improvement.

Conclusion

The agenda overseen by the Improvement and Assurance Board is wide-ranging; covering as it does Corporate Leadership and Governance, Children's Services, and Adult Social Care.

The delivery of CIW recommendations on improvement is essential, but in itself may not deliver the sustainable improvements that are required.

There is evidence of political leadership, increased corporate working, and delivery of initial improvements.

However, the leadership, both politically and managerially, must drive the improvement and transformation work at pace. A culture based on accountability, ownership, performance management, and delivery is the aim, but the journey is a long one. Future inspections and reviews are imminent, and this work programme must continue as a priority.

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