

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 13/11/2019

Dear Craig,

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Focussed Activity

This letter summarises the findings of our focussed activity in Flintshire on the 9 & 10 of October 2019. The inspectors were Glenda Lloyd Evans, Senior Manager and Sian Roberts, Inspection Manager.

Overview

The focussed activity provided an opportunity to focus on information, advice and assistance and the experience of care experienced children focussing on the reviewing process in children's service.

Findings

Wellbeing.

- Children and parents can be confident the local authority is promoting the upbringing of the child by the child's family, in so far as doing so is consistent with the well-being of the child. "What matters" to children and their parents were captured in most of the cases we audited. We saw a focus on the outcomes children /parent want to achieve. In one case we noticed how the police officer had taken the "what matters" approach. This was clearly recorded in CID 16 and shared with the local authority.
- We saw evidence of compliance with statutory requirements in relation to how often children at risk and care experienced children are seen by social workers. The same was true in relation to the required frequency of statutory reviews.
- Concerns with regards to insufficient legal advice was shared with us. Whilst we did not see any evidence of this impacting on practice senior managers

Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru (AGC)
Swyddfa Cyffordd Llandudno
Swyddfeydd Llywodraeth
Sarn Mynach
Cyffordd Llandudno
Conwy
LL31 9RZ
www.arolygiaethgofal.cymru

☎ 0300 790 0126
✉ ciw@gov.wales

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
Llandudno Junction Office
Government Offices
Sarn Mynach
Llandudno Junction
Conwy
LL31 9RZ
www.careinspectorate.wales

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

must consider the potential risk and ensure arrangements are in place to ensure practitioners /managers have access to legal advice in a timely manner.

People – voice and choice

- The voice of the child was central and we saw evidence in most cases of review records being written in appropriate language for children and young people. We did see some examples where the language was complex. The local authority will want to ensure records are consistently and appropriately written for children and young people.
- We saw evidence of good recording of the communication between independent reviewing officers and children. We heard of the efforts to make better use of technology as a means of communicating and engaging with children. However in one case the views of care home staff were recorded rather than the child. The service needs to ensure practitioners routinely record the efforts they've made to communicate with children and young people.
- We saw and heard of examples of children being actively encouraged to attend reviews. However in one of the cases we audited a child wasn't encouraged to attend the first or second review. The local authority must ensure itself that all reviews are arranged at a place and time when children/young people are able to attend.
- In most cases, children were being offered advocacy appropriately. However in one case where the child was expressing dissatisfaction at remaining in placement, it would have been better practice for advocacy to have been offered sooner.
- We saw good and consistent managerial oversight in cases. We heard of appropriate strategies for independent reviewing officers to escalate cases should this be required. There are processes in place to address areas of poor practice should this be recognised.
- We met with committed and dedicated staff who place children and families central to their work
- We were told that senior managers were very approachable. Flintshire was described as a "good place to work".
- Some practitioners told us supervision was inconsistent and how the practice of recording supervision had changed following the implementation of the new supervision policy. Practitioners said the electronic system didn't encourage discussions between supervisor and practitioner. Managers will need to ensure all practitioners are able and confident to access supervision notes.

Partnership

- We saw and heard how Flintshire Children's Service has worked with a range of key partners to develop and deliver preventative services. This has involved working with other department within local authority such as education and housing as well as other relevant partners.
- We saw evidence of staff who are co-located communicating well and working together to improve outcomes for children and families.
- Flintshire Children Service recognise the need and has been working towards strengthening their working relationship with Adult Mental Health Service. In the cases we audited we did not see evidence of the Early Help Hub engaging with colleagues in Adult Mental Health Service. This was true in a case where the Police specifically asked for the information in CID 16 to be shared with mental health service. This was with a view to an earlier intervention and avoid a further escalation which could impact further on the lives of the children in the family.
- We saw detailed recording of the information gathered, and the decisions made at the Early Help Hub multi-disciplinary meetings .The analysis was not routinely recorded and in some cases we were unable to gain an understanding of the rationale for the decision. The lack of recording could impact on future decision making and a practice issue managers should review.

Prevention

- In the Early Help Hub we saw an emphasis on helping parents to develop their own abilities, their coping mechanisms and strengths to identify and manage problems.
- We saw community based solutions supporting families and a focus on keeping families together in a safe, supportive and stable environment.

Areas for improvements

- Managers need to ensure themselves of the effectiveness of the implementation of the new supervision policy.
- Whilst the service continues to have ongoing discussions with Adult Mental Health, managers must ensure practitioners communicate on individual cases.
- Managers need to ensure the evidence of the analysis which informs decision making is recorded at the Early Help Hub multi-disciplinary meeting.

Methodology

- We reviewed a sample of case files to the Early Help Hub and a sample of referrals focussing on looked after children reviews.
- We spoke with staff from Early Help Hub and attended a multi-disciplinary team meeting.

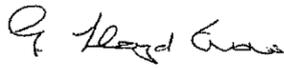
- Interviewed a group of practitioners, senior and team managers from children social work teams and a group of independent reviewing officers
- We gained feedback from LAC Health Nurse.

CIW will reflect the findings of this focused activity in our annual Local Authority Performance Review letter.

I would like to extend our thanks to all those who helped with the arrangements for this work and to staff who spoke with us.

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Yours sincerely,



Glenda Lloyd Evans
Senior Manager – CIW Local Authority Inspection Team