



HEALTH SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24TH MARCH 2015

**SUBJECT: CSSIW NATIONAL INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND CARE
PLANNING OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS
WHO EXHIBIT VULNERABLE OR RISKY BEHAVIOURS**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the key findings of the CSSIW “National Inspection of Safeguarding and Care Planning of Looked After Children and Care Leavers” published on 30th January 2015 (attached at Appendix 1) and the correlating Caerphilly specific Inspection Report which was received in August 2014 (attached at Appendix 2).

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee will be aware that as part of the CSSIW’s National Inspection, Caerphilly Children’s Services were inspected in March 2014. The findings of this Inspection were reported in August 2014 and an Action Plan to respond to the recommendations was developed (attached at Appendix 3).
- 2.2 The National Report was originally intended to be published in September 2014 and it was proposed that both reports should be presented to Committee together. However, there were significant delays and the National Report was not published until January 2015. As a result of the timetable slipping, Scrutiny Committee will see that many of the actions identified for Caerphilly have already been completed or are on track for completion.
- 2.3 The Local Authority Inspection Report focussed on 5 key questions and areas for improvement were identified for each. The National Report focuses on 4 key themes so it is not easy to compare the findings of both reports however, the areas for improvement identified in the Caerphilly Report also feature in the National Report and as a result, it is safe to assume that the issues identified locally are common to the majority of Local Authorities across Wales.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Safeguarding, Looked After Children and Care Leavers are all key statutory duties and responsibilities of the Council.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 As stated above, the National Report focuses on four key themes as follows:

Theme 1: The Corporate Priority

- 4.2 This theme consists of seven key areas:
- Corporate Parenting
 - Partnership Working
 - Placements
 - Advocacy
 - Participation
 - Workforce and
 - Safeguarding Children Boards
- 4.3 The findings of the National Report resonate with the Caerphilly Report with key messages relating to how the Corporate Parenting priorities are identified and achieved, membership of the Corporate Parenting Group, engagement of key partner agencies and strategic links with other statutory Partnerships and Boards.
- 4.4 Placement choice and placement stability were highlighted both locally and nationally as being particularly challenging for Councils and as a result key areas for improvement in Caerphilly include the revision of the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy and the co-ordination of services to support placements and prevent disruption and breakdown. Both areas are being addressed but will require time to deliver anticipated results.
- 4.5 Advocacy was recognised as being a priority for Looked After Children and Care Leavers but more attention needs to be paid to utilising the views of young people to inform practice development and service delivery. NYAS, the advocacy provider commissioned by Caerphilly are members of the Corporate Parenting Group and it is proposed that a young person will also be invited to join the Group to represent LAC and Care Leavers.
- 4.6 The National report refers to concerns in the Workforce particularly in relation to recruitment, retention and caseload levels. Committee is asked to note that these are not issues reflected in Caerphilly and indeed the Local Inspection reported a stable workforce who were clear that safeguarding is a priority and were clear about their responsibilities. In addition access to managerial support and the quality of supervision were reported to be particularly positive.

Theme 2: Care and Pathway Planning

- 4.7 This theme relates to Questions 2 and 5 in the Local Inspection Report and the National findings certainly reflect the position in Caerphilly. The quality of Care Planning is variable and often lacks focus on outcomes. For longer term, settled placements, planning often did not reflect updated assessments that had been undertaken. However, the quality of Pathway Planning was recognised to be stronger and more consistent being described by Inspectors as a dynamic process in Caerphilly.
- 4.8 The identification, assessment and management of risk was identified as a National priority for improvement. Whilst this was not identified as a specific area for Caerphilly to focus on, Children's Services had already identified the need to improve processes and implement a consistent and standardised model across the service area. As a result it is proposed to adopt a model recognised to be good practice within the National Report currently operating across a number of Local Authorities.
- 4.9 Committee will be aware of the tensions can exist between the Council and the Health Board in relation to the provision of adequate CAMHS support for children and young people. The National Report helpfully recognises that this is an issue that has to be addressed nationally. However, in response to the Inspection findings the five Gwent Heads of Service have formally written to the Directors Group to engage Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) and alert them to the Inspection findings.
- 4.10 Locally we are able to report that the highest priority CAMHS cases are provided with services when they are required however there is a recognised service gap for lower tier CAMHS

support and Scrutiny Committee will be aware that this has been adopted as a strategic priority by the ABUHB Child and Family Partnership.

Theme 3: Safeguarding

- 4.11 Both locally and nationally, CSSIW recognised that child protection processes were well embedded in practice and were being used appropriately and effectively. Specifically in relation to the focus group of the Inspection ie young people demonstrating vulnerability and risky behaviours, there was a recognition that the arrangements across Gwent for responding to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) were robust with the Gwent Missing Children Project playing a critical role in identifying risks and managing CSE cases.
- 4.12 Whilst recommendations in relation to risk assessment and risk management were made, Scrutiny Committee will be pleased to note that there were no areas for improvement in relation to safeguarding for Caerphilly.

Theme 4: Reviews

- 4.13 The National Report acknowledges consistent performance and compliance with statutory guidance and timescales for Reviews but identifies the need for improved monitoring of Care Plans by the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) between Statutory Reviews.
- 4.14 The effectiveness of the IRO role has been questioned by the National Report which recommends enhancing their Quality Assurance responsibilities and improving their engagement with Looked After Children and young people to make the Review process more meaningful.
- 4.15 This was a particular concern in Caerphilly with children and young people informing Inspectors that they preferred not to attend their Reviews because they did not feel involved and felt uncomfortable. Although the sample group was small, improving engagement and participation is clearly a priority for Children's Services and is addressed in the Action Plan.
- 4.16 Locally, although IRO's have worked to improve quality assurance, the Inspectors could find no evidence of this in the case files inspected and as a result recording practice needs to be improved.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report therefore a specific equalities impact assessment is not required.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no known financial implications arising from this report. There is a recognised need to invest in additional training for staff involved in risk assessments and risk management but the costs involved will be met through re-prioritising existing budgets.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel or HR implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The views of those consulted have been incorporated into this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Members note the content of both the Local Authority Inspection Report and the National Inspection Report and the progress made on implementing the Local Authority Action Plan.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure Scrutiny Committee is fully aware of the Inspection findings and are assured that progress is being made in response to the identified areas for improvement in Caerphilly.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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Background Papers:

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 CSSIW National Inspection Report – January 2015
Appendix 2 CSSIW Inspection of Caerphilly County Borough Council Report
Appendix 3 Caerphilly Children's Services LAC Inspection Action Plan February 2015