

Dyddiad / Date: 14 January 2016

Dear Councillor McGarry

Thank you for your letter dated 22 December and I do apologise for the delay in responding to the issues that you raise.

You are correct in your assumptions that our report is a performance evaluation of Cardiff social services for the year 2014/15. However, it is not an “end of term” report which seeks to judge the council nor is it a definitive or comprehensive explanation of all aspects of social services in Cardiff; it could never be. Social services departments are large, complex organisations which are very dynamic and subject to constant change. The report does provide a high-level summary which provides lines of inquiry and areas for improvement. It should not be read in isolation but used in conjunction with other information members of the scrutiny committee will be sighted on i.e. it is only one piece of evidence members should consider.

I am concerned that some of your members feel the evaluation report gives the impression Cardiff social services are performing well. In some areas the council is, in others it is not. We consider the report to be balanced and that it provides a fair and proportionate analysis of the services provided by the council and highlights both good areas of practice as well as areas of concern.

I would like to draw the elected members to the following areas of the performance evaluation that identifies areas for improvement.

Our opening sentence reads *‘The council continues to face significant challenges in transforming services in light of increasing demand and financial pressures, alongside preparing for the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act’*

This is followed by the opening statement in paragraph 1.3 regarding key areas of performance as follows, *'Performance indicators demonstrate some key areas of performance still require improvement. In adult services improvements are required in reducing the number of people waiting for hospital discharge. In children's services there has been an increase in the number of children being looked after by the council. Performance in the area of intake and assessment needs continued improvement'*.

The report on page 2 identifies the nine areas for improvement from the annual performance evaluation for 2013/14. Our report identifies further improvement is required in four of these areas.

Page 3 of our evaluation identifies areas of practice that CSSIW want to follow up in 2015/16 these include

- *the council's approach to improve performance in the number of delayed transfer of care from hospital;*
- *the commissioning arrangements for residential and domiciliary care;*
- *performance within children's services, in particular intake and assessment and children in need;*
- *progress on the payment by results initiative in enabling young people to be provided with a service in Cardiff; and*
- *readiness for the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (SSWB Act).*

Within adult services we specifically identified the challenges the council faced in re-commissioning domiciliary care services and specifically the impact of the implementation of the new model on the reduced capacity in the market. This is an area that we have already followed up as part of our national review of the commissioning of domiciliary care service.

The lack of any quality element in the commissioning of residential care was raised in regard to ensuring people were offered a wider choice and a quality service to meet their needs.

As you state in your letter we did raise concerns within our evaluation regarding the decline in performance in the number of people awaiting discharge from hospital. This was an area we discussed at our quarterly engagement meetings with the director of social services. Our report identifies this could be attributed to the new commissioning model for domiciliary care and delays in delivering the supported housing project to support the re-ablement service.

In considering the key national priorities for adults, the report commented that it is not clear who is leading the preventative agenda for older people's services. In summary, our report identifies five areas for improvement that the council needs to consider in adult services.

Within children's services the first four paragraphs (6.24 – 6.27) of our report highlights the decline in the percentage of Looked After Children reviews completed, the need to improve the personal advisor services, the need to improve the number of Looked After Children who have a personal education plan and the decrease in the completion of core assessments completed within the statutory timescale. The report highlights five areas for

improvement in children's services. It is because of our concerns we are undertaking a full inspection of children's intake and assessment service in January.

When considering the extent to which leadership and governance promotes improvements in outcomes for people we have identified three areas for improvement which focus on the stability of leadership and direction within the department.

The annual performance report is written in a constructive manner which not only reflects the above areas of improvement but also highlights areas of good practice. Throughout the year we met with the director and senior officers to raise concerns or discuss good practice and innovation throughout the year.

Where we do identify areas that may warrant further analysis we would consider undertaking a review or site visit to the particular area of practice. The past three years has seen us undertake site visits to the intake and assessment team, physical and sensory impairment team, community mental health team and visit to the managed team in children's services. In addition we have undertaken a review of Looked After Children's services as part of a national review in addition to supporting the Wales Audit Office inspection of services provided to older people.

This year we will complete an inspection of domiciliary care services as part of our national review and as I have said undertake a further formal inspection of the intake and assessment team in children's services.

As you have pointed out in your letter there are challenges in looking at comparative data, and as discussed at scrutiny it is difficult for us to consider Cardiff against all Wales' average although we do compare Cardiff with other larger cities in Wales. As you are aware on a number of metrics Cardiff is exceptional and very different in scale, (demography, economy and diversity) to any other councils in Wales. This difference is statistically significant. Our analysts advise us the most valid comparison would be against an English city such as Walsall or Newcastle but as the legislative and policy requirements are different that poses some difficulty. We accept some data / ratios do appear to offer comparison but one has to take account of the very different volumes and the very different complexities in the cases being presented in different council areas. One also has to take into account the fact that whilst data sets are carefully defined, in practice the way information is coded and captured varies considerably between councils depending on the local arrangements for providing services. For example, what is regarded as a carer's assessment in one council area will be quite different to what is regarded as an assessment in another. Similarly with reviews of adult care, some councils will count "telephone reviews" or reviews undertaken by an independent provider, others will only count in depth, face to face reviews completed by a reviewing team. We therefore treat a number of indicators with a degree of caution.

For your information we do employ a team of specialist analysts to scrutinise the data provided for each council and they advise Area Managers on each council's performance. Furthermore all of our evaluations are considered as part of a moderation process which includes independent scrutiny (an ex director of social services) to ensure they are fair and balanced and that any concerns have been highlighted.

We really value the role played by members of scrutiny committees and it is important that people who undertake the scrutiny role are independent, impartial, diligent and robust. I

appreciate you writing to me and the level of interest your fellow committee members have in Cardiff's performance.

I hope this letter provides some explanation and reassurance and I am happy to discuss these issues further when we next meet.

As you will be aware the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 will bring a change in our role and engagement with the council and elected members. There is greater emphasis on the council's self-evaluation and indeed this is the last year we will be producing an annual evaluation report for councils. However we will continue to inspect council services and meet with scrutiny committees.

I look forward to working with you and your committee in securing improvement in the quality services to the people of Cardiff.

Yours Sincerely

Bernard McDonald

Area Manager

CSSIW – Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales