

REPORT TO: POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL CABINET

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

REPORT DATED: JUNE 2019

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”.

This is the fourth report of the Independent Chair and should be read in conjunction with the previous report to avoid repetition.

The Board remit covers Adult Social Care, Children’s Social Care, corporate and transformational activity. The January report set out, in broad terms, the agreed priorities in each area. This report will continue to use those priorities as the framework for the current assessment.

This is a highlight report and does not cover all aspects of work undertaken or planned, that level of detail is covered elsewhere, for example:

- Monthly board minutes, agendas and papers;
- Monthly performance reports;
- Improvement plan progress reports;
- CIW inspection reports as published

This report will now cover key aspects in relation to the identified priorities.

2. Corporate Matters

2.1 Senior Leadership

Appointments to the new Leadership Team are now complete. A Director of Transformation is now in place and the new permanent Head of Service for Adult Social Care has now commenced with the Authority.

The Board is pleased to note that the Chief Executive is taking a personal lead on Education. This adjustment ensures that the Director of Social Services can concentrate exclusively on the delivery of the necessary improvements required in Social Care.

The Chief Executive is currently reviewing the support arrangements and is planning to put in place interim arrangements, pending the outcome of the recent ESTYN inspection, which is expected in early September.

The past 12 months has seen significant change in the Senior Leadership, which was a necessary pre-condition to the delivery of widespread and sustainable

improvement. It is undoubtedly the case that some improvement has been delivered during this transitional period. However, during the next 6 to 12 months the new team will need to drive change at a significantly higher pace and in a sustainable manner. Now that permanent senior staff are in place it is imperative that they own the process of giving assurance to the Board, the Minister, and more importantly the public rather than continuing to allow others to seek assurance.

The nature of the task is also changing. Significant progress has been made in putting in place appropriate frameworks, policies and strategies. The emphasis in the coming period continues to be on driving the service level changes this work demands in a sustainable way. Focussing on performance management and quality assurance are of equal and vital importance.

2.2 Vision, Finance and Service Strategy

It remains the view of the Board that the extra costs being experienced in both Adult and Children's Social Care are highly unlikely to be offset by any efficiencies or savings within the service in the short term. Other Council services will undoubtedly need to be reviewed in order to maintain a balanced budget going forward. This financial challenge is of course not unique to Powys.

The recently appointed Finance Director has advised the Board of the new approach being taken to deal with service and financial planning. The focus will be on the money that the Council spends not cuts. It will also challenge the organisation to think about outcomes rather than services. This approach signals a major culture change, which is in line with best practice. It will however be hugely challenging and will take several budget cycles to become embedded. The process for early and extensive engagement of elected members is now underway and is of vital importance.

As indicated earlier the service strategies required in Children's Social Care are largely in place, it is now time to up the pace on making the delivery of the strategic intent the day to day lived experience. The Director of Transformation reported the corporate transformation plan at the most recent I & AB meeting.

2.3 Performance Management

Progress continues to be made in developing a performance management culture, whilst there is inevitably still much more to do. The Board has recently supported a revision of the Children's Services performance report to focus more on outcomes.

There is also increasing evidence of the development of meaningful data at a service level that can be used to inform the improvement and transformation effort. A good example being work recently undertaken to map the service user experience in Adult Social Care.

The Authority recognises the need to give equal importance to the performance indicator regime and Quality Assurance work. This needs to be demonstrated in the coming period.

2.4 Political Leadership and Scrutiny

- It remains the case that senior politicians are actively engaged in the improvement work and the Board
- The Leader continues to oversee the improvement work on a regular basis
- The Chief Executive is undertaking a review of scrutiny effectiveness and engagement of the whole Council

The Board welcomes the work to be done on member involvement and wishes to see it build on review work already undertaken in the last 12 months of this improvement journey.

2.5 Children's Services

Rather than repeat the priorities from the January report I will highlight current key issues.

Workforce

The implementation of the new structure is progressing; however, it remains the case that the service relies on the support of agency staff. The revised structure, to ensure sustainability, is in the process of being implemented. The original intention was to complete this work by April, but now realistic full implementation is anticipated by mid-July. The Board received a detailed analysis of progress to date. Without a stable; competent workforce, the sustainability of all improvement work will continue to be at risk; this remains, in the view of the Board, the single most important issue.

Practice Framework

The Authority has adopted "Signs of Safety" as its operating model. Staff are being trained and the implementation is underway. However, successful implementation is very dependent on achieving workforce stability. It is also the case that implementation is resource intensive and the Board has sought assurance that the new structure contains sufficient resource. The Board received an update on progress and evidence of some significant progress at an individual case level.

Top 5 Performance Indicators

Since the Board was established these indicators have improved significantly. However, they are not yet at best practice levels and performance in the last few months has been stable rather than improving. The Board acknowledges that workforce instability affects the position, but clearly, further significant improvement is required as the new structure is implemented. The service is now able to account for all cases falling outside planned timescales.

Looked After Children Numbers

There is no right or wrong number, but significant increases have occurred since the CIW inspection. The First Minister has established an advisory group that is visiting all authorities with a clear remit to share good practice and frankly, drive down numbers. Powys positively engaged with this process and seeks to ensure it is at or near sector leading practice.

CIW Inspection Recommendations

These are monitored regularly, internally, and by the Board and the report is available. It is important that the monitoring report is reviewed and revised to ensure clear accountability is given to named individuals to complete the various tasks by a specific date.

Leadership and Support

Children's Social Services is a highly demanding area of work. Visible leadership, setting clear expectations is a crucial element in high performing services. The Head of Service has set out a clear programme of activity to deliver on this vital agenda and to actively support staff in their activities. The Board supports this and sees it as a key determinant of success.

Further Children's Services Matters

Whilst there has been some visibility and discussion on the following issues the Board will need to be assured in the next quarter in relation to:

- The extent to which high cost provision has been recommissioned;
- The approach being taken to tackle child sexual exploitation;
- The effectiveness of prevention and early intervention services in directly assisting statutory services

The Board has now been provided with assurance that work is well underway in relation to CSE.

2.6 Adult Services

The Board has been regularly briefed in relation to the pressures on domiciliary care provision. The Authority has put great effort into maintaining local supply against a backcloth of rising demand and failures in the provider sector. This work is to be commended but is not the only challenge faced by the service.

Service Transformation

The Head of Service, in the absence of the Director, presented to the June Board a first draft transformation plan. The Board provided feedback to be incorporated in future drafts. The overall approach was recognised and endorsed by the Board. However, there remains significant work to be done on the more detailed delivery plan.

It is vital that at the July Board meeting, the Director presents a detailed delivery plan, that will allow the Authority to monitor both implementation and the achievement of outcomes.

This report must cover, as a minimum;

- A vision for Adult Care;
- Establishment of a clear practice model, delivering consistency, quality and a focus on safeguarding;
- A strategy to engage partners in the development of alternative models, including technology assisted care;
- Development of community capacity and personal resilience.

How this approach deals with the impact of demography, loneliness, isolation, increasing demand and service shortfalls must be clearly articulated. The Authority has developed good quality data on client pathways, and this will be used to inform the transformation effort.

Practice

Whilst it is obviously to be affected by the transformation report, there is an urgent need to immediately address the performance indicators in relation to strength based and outcome focussed practice, which are currently worryingly low. The Head of Service reported on progress to the June Board, and this analysis needs to feed into the transformation plan.

Capacity by Service Area

Current performance management reports do not identify clear issues by service area, learning disability, sensory impairment, mental health etc. The Authority needs to develop reporting which demonstrates performance across service areas in order that any issues arising are clearly visible and can be addressed via the transformation plan.

2.7 Conclusions

Now that a full Senior Management Team is in place, it should be possible to increase the pace and extent of improvement activity. This report identifies key areas of progress along with matters upon which the Authority needs to progress and provide assurance in the next quarter. The priorities set out in the January report are agreed as the framework for all the required activity, and clear evidence against each priority is required.

It continues to be the case that it would assist both the Authority and the Board if the Director provided a short summary report at each Board meeting capturing the headline against each agreed priority, as agreed with the Chief Executive.