

MEETING: **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

DATE: **01 December 2016**

TITLE: **External Audit Reports**

PURPOSE: **To submit a summary of implementation steps established by the services in response to external audit reports and their recommendations for consideration by the Audit Committee**

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CABINET MEMBER: **Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Audit Committee has a responsibility to consider the external audit reports, including national reports, the recommendations contained therein, and the implications of these for governance, risk management and control, ensuring that arrangements and processes are in place to ensure that these recommendations are implemented.

## **2. Continuity from previous report**

Further information / explanation on the following issues are identified in the special meeting on the 23rd of June 2016.

2.1 Following on from the 2013-14 CSSIW Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance and the 'Awareness and use of advocacy services' improvement area is the Department satisfied that every individual is offered an advocacy Service.

"Every child and young person who is eligible for statutory advocacy services will receive information on how to contact the service which is provided on a regional basis by Tros Gynnal Plant on an 'issue based advocacy'. Carers and parents will receive information about the service and how to refer to them if the child or young person so wishes. Some children chose to contact formal advocacy service and we keep the numbers of children and reasons for contact and monitor them quarterly with the provider, but a high number of children choose a person who is close to them, for example carer, parent, social worker to advocate on their behalf instead of going to a formal service."

2.2 Under the 2013-14 CSSIW Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance and the improvement area 'Timeliness of child protection conferences' is it possible to get more information around why some officers aren't able to attend the conferences, and what possible steps are needed to resolve the issue?

"It can be seen from the statistics that there has been a significant increase in the number of conferences during 2015/16. This was a very busy period, with complex cases and the number of families with more than 2 children, (e.g. 5 in one family and 8 in the other). The workload was particularly challenging and

it's easy to forget that conferences are only a small part of the work duties of employees. There were more strategy meetings, more cases before the courts and there were times when it was difficult for department's resources to cope with the workload. Reasons why some conferences were held outside the timetable:

i) Child Protection Guidelines give 15 working days to carry out child protection investigations and bring the case to a conference. If several cases require S47 investigation at the same time it is difficult to ensure that all of them are carried out within 15 days. There's no point in holding a conference if the investigation is not complete and sufficient information is unavailable.

ii) Police resources are also scarcer and it is difficult to organize a joint investigation where necessary, when Police and / or the Social Services have limited staff to do the job, or when relevant staff is already busy with cases.

iii) Chair availability. For most of the period, one officer was available to chair (now another officer is available and chairs 2 conferences a week). Arfon is allocated two days a week for holding conferences, and a day a week in Dwyfor / Meirionnydd. It was customary for the Chair during busy periods to chair the 8 to 10 conference a week. Given the intensity and difficult nature of these meetings and the need to travel to some of them, this represented very high "productivity", which was difficult to hold safely. It is difficult to find a free "slot" for conference on occasion.

iv) Occasionally, illness is a factor, employee or chair.

v) All agencies involved in the field are trying their best in the face of a challenging financial climate. The Police have made the decision that they will not send representatives to conferences reviews. This means that one statutory agency is initially absent. Other agencies may be absent, e.g. Schools (who struggle at times to fill the gap to enable staff to attend). Children's community Doctors try to attend, but they work across large areas and often cannot come. To be "quorate" 3 statutory agencies need to be present. The chairman considers if it is possible conduct the conference with the representatives and information available. At times, it is necessary to postpone, and this is an exception."

### 2.3 Is it possible to have the figure of how many NEET young people we have in Gwynedd?

"October 2016

139 16/17 year old NEETs - Layer 5 data Careers Wales which is the national system to track young people

305 18-24 year old NEETs (unemployed) - DWP data from NOMIS

Total of 444 (October 2016)

For your information if the 444 stay NEET and do not engage with the world of work as adults they would cost the country £71 million (Cole et al 2010)

In addition for your information we have also received the 2015 NEET figures, these are for year 11 pupils who left school this year NEET - 1.8%. 1.8% is among the best in Wales i.e. we have fewer young people leaving school NEET than the national average.”

- 2.4 Under the 2013-14 CSSIW Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance and the improvement area ‘Raise awareness of the implications and requirements of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and improve the governance arrangements for the operation of the procedures’ noted the tremendous increase in applications since the court ruling in the case of Cheshire West. The Committee asks how the Department deals with this and what is the response to this increase.

“- Safeguarding responsibilities in its entirety is being fully transferred back to the Department  
- We intend to appoint a Protection and Quality Assurance Manager to take scrutinising ownership of these issues across the Department. The Manager will manage and lead on the work of a new Unit working across the department (the protection and quality assurance unit)  
- DoLS work will be a key part of this unit’s workload.  
- After establishing the role of Quality Assurance and Protection Manager a bid will be submitted to make the current DoLS role permanent. The Protection and Quality Assurance Unit will be established with the majority of the team making DoLS (BIA) assessments and sharing the workload under the leadership of the new Manager  
- A confirmation has been received that we will receive a small budget (just under £ 20K) to help us handle the increasing workload. We will use the budget to pay for assessments and paying fees to help complete assessments on the waiting list.

It is important to remember that this increased workflow pattern is seen across Britain, with a number of concerns raised and the issue put on the Regional Safeguarding Board and the Gwynedd and Anglesey adult operational safeguarding Group agenda. Therefore, it is far from being a matter for Gwynedd only.”

### **3. Summary of report in Appendix I**

Below is a summary of the reports provided in Appendix I

- 3.1 Presented in Appendix I is a list of inspections carried out by external auditors over recent years as well as their proposals for improving, their action plans and progress that has occurred to date. The committee will need to consider whether it is satisfied with the progress that has taken place.
- 3.2 The information is set out in chronological order for ease and includes the responds to national reports as well as those specific to Gwynedd.
- 3.3 A list of the reports and sources can be seen in Appendix 2.
- 3.4 Of the 69 proposals / recommendations that are included in Appendix I, a summary of progress are as follows:

<b>Progress</b>	<b>Number</b>
Not started	4
Being planned	2
In progress	34
Complete	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>

3.5 It can be seen that **29** out of **69** have been completed

#### **4. Content of future reports**

4.1 At the moment we report on all recommendations which state that they are yet to be completed from reports that go back many years, 2012 by now. We therefore ask you to consider whether it would be more appropriate for reports that are published annually, for example the Annual Performance Evaluation of Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, to include the latest report only.

4.2 This is with the view that anything that has not been addressed in the previous report will be included in the latest report.

#### **5. Recommendations**

**5.1 The committee will need to decide if it is satisfied that the recommendations and proposals for improvement in the auditors' reports listed in Appendix I have been implemented. Deciding if it is to call any matter in for further consideration, either to the full committee or to the Controls Improvement Working Group.**

**5.2 Consider if historical annual reports need to be included in the list for verification or not.**