



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Date 09 February 2024
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Summary: This is a letter from the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Care Services following the meeting of the Panel on 23 January 2024. It covers Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Corporate Parenting Board. A formal written response is not required.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 23 January 2024 to receive a presentation updating on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and to discuss the Corporate Parenting Board.

We would like to thank you, David Howes, Julie Davies, Josh Price, Louise Beckett and Claire Norman from the Health Board for attending to present the items and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learned from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Claire Norman, Lead Nurse CAMHS, Swansea University Health Board attended to update the Panel on progress over the last year stating there has been a more focussed attempt to work more within the community and with reorganisation of the Service there is one pathway route for interventions, which we were pleased to hear.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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We asked if there is a link between the increase in referrals among certain age groups and school absence during the pandemic and heard it is difficult to know but they would be surprised if there was not a link. We were informed there was a decrease in referrals during the pandemic but when the pandemic dropped off and the Service was accessed again, they were seeing young people that were much more unwell because they had not accessed services when they needed them, which has long term implications. We noted that evidence shows a worsening of young people's health across the UK, which may have happened anyway but is potentially worse.

In terms of the graph on page 11, it appears that referrals are beginning to drop off from the peak and we asked if this is likely to continue. We were informed they are hopeful that with the early intervention model that is being put in for utilisation of the school 'in reach' model, working in partnership with other agencies and bringing in other pilots in terms of supporting early access that can get consistency, they do not expect there to be a big peak again.

We queried the routes for referral, who can refer and if more have been coming through for example, from schools, self-referrals or GPs, or has it remained fairly constant. We heard it has remained fairly constant because there have not been any significant changes in terms of referral access routes over the years. However, in November 2023 they started linking in with school-based counsellors and have extended it so they can refer in as well. We noted this is a pilot for a year, but they envisage it will continue moving forward. We were really pleased to hear this. We also heard there can also be an unofficial referral route in from the School Language Service.

In terms of the graphs on page 13 and 14, we feel they are showing the improvement we would like to see but we did not understand how the trajectories are developed, as they do not seem to make sense compared with the actual figures. We heard when CAMHS moved over to the Health Board it was agreed that a conservative approach be taken in terms of trajectory.

We made an observation about the second graph on page 13. We acknowledged the improvements in the general trend of the curve but expressed concern that the axis starts at 100 and not zero, so it is a little misleading, and feel it would be helpful if the axes were the same so the true trajectories can be seen. We heard they will certainly take the point forward about the axes and make sure they are accurate moving forward.

Cllr Mary Jones who chaired the original scrutiny inquiry on CAMHS thanked the Panel for inviting her to the meeting for this item. Cllr Jones congratulated the Health Board on all their work. She stated she has heard very good things about it and knows it works. She feels it is a different service now to what it was when it started out as it had been appalling then. Cllr Jones was also pleased to hear there are now referrals through Education professionals. Cllr Jones feels there is one negative issue, which is access to the actual service, it is very difficult where it is located on the Kingsway in Swansea. We agreed there has been a massive increase in improvement in CAMHS and the service is fantastic. We are hopeful to see it continue.

We were informed that on 9th February 2024 there will be a children's mental health event, which will bring all the services available together for people to come and see

what is available. The Health Board hope some of the Panel will want to attend and they agreed to provide further information. [This information has been provided and circulated to Panel Members.]

Corporate Parenting Board

You provided an update and stated that Welsh Government launched a Corporate Parenting Charter in September 2023 and Swansea was one of the first to sign up to this. We heard the eleven principles in the Charter echo the Corporate Parenting Pledges developed in Swansea and which went to full Council on 25th January 2024.

We heard young people have shared their thoughts in a series of podcasts which will be available on the Council website, and you offered to share the links to these with Panel Members.

We noted that on page 22 paragraph 1.4 of the report, it states there were 479 looked after children but we could not get the numbers to add up to 479. We heard the numbers do not add up because only some of the main categories of where children are living have been included.

We queried how many out of county placements there are and were pleased to hear that less than a handful are living in England.

We noted the number of looked after children in November 2023 was 479 and asked if this was going up or down and were informed it has stayed roughly the same.

Regarding the Destination of Care Experienced, we asked if the Department is happy they are going on to something which is supported. We heard every child and young person up to the age of 21 has an allocated young person advisor, and up to age 18 has a social worker as well, so will have a pathway plan in place. We were informed the current challenge is having suitable accommodation when they become independent and the availability of appropriate employment opportunities and that you would like to see priority access to CAMHS for care experienced children and young people who need it. It was agreed that a full report on this issue be brought to the Panel.

We mentioned that we had concerns previously about outcomes looked after children are achieving and asked when we could see further information on this. We were informed 'Virtual Schools' is a good way of tracking how our young people are achieving educationally and the progress they are making. We heard in relation to the implementation of 'virtual schools', it is still being piloted across Wales and Swansea is a part of this pilot. Officers agreed to check with Education when a presentation on 'virtual schools' can be brought to the Panel in the new municipal year.

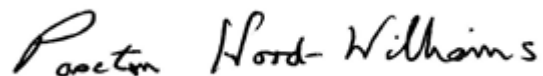
Your Response

We hope you find the contents of this letter helpful and would welcome comments on any of the issues raised within. On this occasion we do not require a formal written response but please provide the following information:

- Link to podcasts.

We will add items on 'Destination of Care Experienced' and 'Virtual Schools' to the future work programme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paxton Hood-Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

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