



# CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

Dinas A Sir Abertawe

Councillor Christine Richards  
Cabinet Member, Services for Children  
& Young People  
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**Overview &  
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CFS/03

**22 December 2014**

Dear Councillor Richards

## **Child & Family Services Performance Panel, 15 December 2014**

The Panel met on 15 December to consider the Child & Family Services 3 year budget proposals report which was presented to Cabinet the following day.

The panel would like to thank you and officers for attending. You provided a thorough and detailed explanation of the budget proposals which included both savings and investments to provide services and good outcomes for children and families.

The panel was broadly supportive of the budget proposals and the panel remained committed to supporting the Safe LAC Reduction Strategy which continued to achieve good results in terms of reducing the numbers of looked after children and expenditure. The panel felt that the Prevention and Demand Management strand of the proposals was key to the continued success of the Safe LAC Reduction Strategy.

The panel felt that while the proposed savings of £2.7m over the next 3 years represented a 16% reduction in the overall budget for Child & Family Services, which was significantly less than the savings to be made in other services across the Council, it still remained an ambitious savings programme. The panel supported the proposed savings on the basis that the safety and safeguarding of all children known to social services was assured.

The panel welcomed your reassurance that your department takes decisions to improve practice and keep children safe, which has the effect of reducing

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the numbers of looked after children and in turn enabled the department to make savings and efficiencies.

The panel was interested to learn more about the Prevention Fund and the internal bids that related to child and family services which have been submitted. We discussed this with you and you agreed to provide the panel with more detail on the submitted bids.

The panel was pleased to hear that under the Efficiency strand of the budget, the Western Bay Regional and Local Commissioning of residential care placements will help to drive down costs of placements. However, the panel was concerned that given the numbers of local authorities involved, it could put pressure on services and placement numbers.

The panel was concerned about the proposal to reduce in-house emergency residential care to a 2 bed short term facility. However, we were assured that department performance data had shown that the service was under capacity and that the LAC Reduction Strategy had reduced the demand and need for emergency residential care bed. In addition, Child & Family Services could link with other teams and services to reduce recourse to residential care; the option of commissioning emergency beds from the independent sector would remain an option.

The panel further probed on this issue and voiced its concern about the potential for a family with 2 or more children that needed emergency residential care beds. We wanted to be sure that there would adequate provision for the small number of cases that needed emergency residential care. You assured us that emergency foster carers were available who would provide emergency beds for sibling groups of two or more children should the need arise.

The panel welcomed the proposal to invest in consultant social workers to enable more social workers to become experts in the Signs of Safety model in order to expand the use of it and enable more children and families to benefit from it.

The panel welcomed the proposals and savings to be made from the re-modelling of the post-16 service. The panel has had a keen interest in this over the last year and we will be receiving a report on the development of the proposed service in the new year.

The panel did have some concerns around the impact that the Domestic Abuse MASH could have on LAC numbers so it is proposing to include a report on this in its work plan some time next year.

The panel hopes that you achieve the savings and outcomes contained in the proposals and we look forward to being updated on progress next year.

I hope you find this letter useful and informative. I look forward to your response.

**Yours sincerely**

*Paxton Hood-Williams*

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