



To:
Councillor Mark Child
Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

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Date 19 April 2018
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Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing following the meeting of the Panel on 26 February 2018. It covers Early Intervention Prevention and Performance Monitoring.

Dear Cllr Child

The Panel met on 26 February and received and discussed Prevention and Early Intervention, the performance monitoring report for January 2018 and quarterly performance monitoring report for the third quarter 2017/18.

We would like to thank Rachel Moxey, Julie Thomas, Dave Howes and Owen Davies for attending to go through the reports and answer our questions. We appreciate their engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response. The main issues discussed are summarised below:

Prevention and Early Intervention

We were interested in how this work impacts on Child and Family Services and supported improvement.

Work was highlighted to tackle poverty and focus on prevention which would reduce demand for specialist services. This included close working with Child and Family Services, joint working on Family Support Commissioning, reference were made to specific activities to support children and families including fong parents (Jigso), such as Flying Start and Team Around the Family in Schools.

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We heard that a data set will be available in the future which could usefully supplement and support the Panel's monitoring of Child and Family Services. This would enable the Panel to see a bigger picture beyond just the activities that are under the control of Child and Family Services.

I acknowledged that things were at an early stage and that the impact of this would be included as an item in next year's work programme.

Some of the other aspects discussed included for example:

- Support for children with mental health issues, and role of Special Education Needs Coordinators and CAMHS
- The importance of early intervention to prevent problems from escalating.
- Likely future funding levels to support early intervention and early help services – as a Welsh Government priority it was envisaged that such services would continue to be supported not cut nevertheless it would help if funding is committed on a more long-term basis than annually
- Leaving care services – support for children leaving residential care at 18 and transition to independent living or supported accommodation
- 'Evolve' services which cover all early help and support to young people and families between ages of 11 and 24, including NEETS.

Performance Monitoring

We noted there has not been any significant change from the previous month in terms of overall numbers. It remained a generally healthy picture of performance.

The positives highlighted by the panel include:

- Whilst we still have concerns over the timeliness of assessment completion, we were pleased to see improvements around assessment activity – 100% children seen, and a high number seen alone – showing that the Signs of Safety practice framework is embedded
- All children subject to a child protection plan and those children experiencing care are allocated to a qualified worker
- Improved performance in the reviewing service
- Numbers of Looked After Children decreasing.

Our concerns were:

- Rise in the number of children being registered under the category of emotional harm
- Number of children placed in residential care reduced but more are being placed further afield
- Unusual trend in supervision in some of the case managing teams that will require investigation
- High level of re-referrals
- Young People transitioning to adulthood - high number of young people presenting as homeless.

A handout was provided showing 5 year caseload trend. We heard that it is a challenge every year to reduce demand. It was recognised that figures had plateaued to a manageable number since 2014/15.

We looked at a handout that provided Looked After Children rates per 10,000 5 year trend – comparison with 4 other authorities. It showed how Swansea has improved over the last 5 years. Swansea is doing reasonably well though numbers have plateaued. We recognise that engagement with early help services is key to sustainability of services for children and families and avoid people needing to come through the front door unless necessary.

We were pleased to hear that Child and Family Services in Swansea are recognised as innovative, such as Signs of Safety work, work done to upskill the workforce and the vision for CFS and the model. There are innovative approaches in CFS such as employment of therapists, clinical psychologists within the service to better address needs and support children at home. However it is too early to say if the new approaches work.

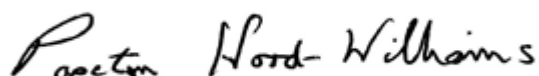
We only touched on the quarterly report due to time pressures. We discussed Youth Offending Service performance and although performing well some concerns arose about two custodial sentences occurring. We also discussed placement of Looked After Children we noted there are more out of county than in but robust arrangements are in place to track and avoid drift.

We asked for further information on sickness rates for Child and Family Services staff and also some information on LAC population by age and also the age ranges of new children becoming looked after to be provided as part of the performance monitoring at the next meeting.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your views and comments on any of the issues raised and please note that in this instance, a formal response is required. Could we have your reply by 10 May 2018.

Yours sincerely



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