



To:
Councillor Elliott King, Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Early Years) / Councillor Will Evans, Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Young People)

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Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Members for Children's Services following the meeting of the Panel on 29 October 2018. It covers update on Youth Offending Service, Performance Monitoring and feedback on Inspection Reports.

Dear Cllr King and Cllr Evans,

The Panel met on 29 October and discussed Western Bay Youth Offending Service, Performance Monitoring for September 2018 and the recent inspection reports on Foster Swansea and Child and Family Services.

We would like to thank Amanda Turner, Huw Fyfe and Carl Matthews of the Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service and Julie Thomas and yourselves for attending to go through the reports and answer our questions. We appreciate your 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:

Update on Youth Offending Service

We received an update on performance of the Western Bay Youth Justice Service and some of the challenges faced by the Service in the future.

We were pleased to hear that the number of first time offenders of children and young people in the region is falling substantially.

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We also heard that Swansea was the first Authority to introduce the bureau system which has successfully helped to divert a large number of children and young people away from having any criminal record.

We felt that the Youth Justice Service should be using case studies to identify and prove that intervention with young people is working. We also felt it would be useful to track young adults to check if this intervention continues to work once young people become 18.

We were informed that the number of custodial sentences imposed on young people in the region reduced to 9 in 2017/18 and that this is a real success story for the Service.

We were pleased to hear that despite the budget for Western Bay Youth Offending Service reducing from £4.2m in 2015/16 to £3.68m in 2017/18, there has been no negative impact on performance and no compulsory redundancies as a result of this. There are now 19 shared posts across the region compared to 11 in 2017/18. This is a good positive story for joint working.

It was good to hear that there are strong links between the regional Youth Offending Service and our Child and Family Services in the Authority and Info-nation so there is an integrated approach.

We were concerned to hear that Western Bay Youth Offending Service does not have immediate access to the CAMHS service and that they are making a case to the Health Board for having a defined route into CAMHS in a timely manner. The Panel feels strongly that the CAMHS service is not working effectively. This issue is being raised in lots of forums including the Education Scrutiny Panel. This is a serious ongoing issue which needs to be resolved.

We expressed our concern about what the effect will be of Bridgend leaving Western Bay. There are currently 19 shared posts in the region. There is a need to ensure none of the 3 areas are disadvantaged, particularly the children and young people in the areas.

Performance Monitoring

Julie Thomas went through the Performance Report for September 2018 highlighting the main points and answering the Panel's questions.

We heard that in respect of Looked After Children, the Department is undertaking an audit as there has been an upward trend in this figure and that it is hoped to bring a briefing report on this to the December Panel meeting.

We as a Panel feel that the Department is going in the right direction but there are a few issues we need to keep an eye on.

Feedback on Inspection Reports

Julie Thomas provided feedback to the Panel on the findings and areas for development from the two inspections undertaken by Care Inspectorate Wales in July

2018 - a full inspection of Children's Services in the Authority and an inspection of Foster Swansea.

We heard that Foster Swansea has consistently received positive reports in inspections.

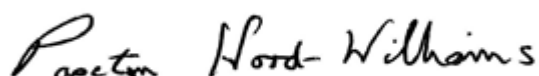
We feel that overall the inspection report on Child and Family Services is excellent but there is always room for improvement. We expressed our gratitude to Julie and the rest of the team as the progress that has been made has been through hard work and commitment and is excellent. Julie commented that she was pleased with the report but is not complacent and that is why the improvement plan has been put in place.

From a scrutiny point of view, the Panel will continue to scrutinise the Service and make suggestions and recommendations for improvement.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your views and comments on any of the issues raised but please note that in this instance, a formal response is not required.

Yours sincerely



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