



To:
**Councillor Elliott King, Cabinet Member for
Children Services (Early Years) / Councillor
Sam Pritchard, Cabinet Member for
Children Services (Young People)**

Please ask for:
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14 May 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Members for Children Services following the meeting of the Panel on 29 April 2019. It covers Performance Monitoring and Welsh Government's Looked After Children Reduction Expectation.

Dear Cllr King and Cllr Pritchard,

The Panel met on 29 April to discuss the Performance Monitoring report for March 2019 and to receive an update on the Welsh Government's Local Authority Looked After Children Reduction Expectation.

We would like to thank Julie Thomas and Chris Francis for attending to discuss 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:

Performance Monitoring

Chris Francis took the Panel through the performance report for March 2019, identifying areas of improved performance and areas where improvement is required.

Page 10 – Wellbeing. We heard that the number of repeat referrals in the month has increased. It was identified that a family of 7 was re-referred to the department which accounted for this increase.

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Page 11 – Supported Care Planning – Assessments. We heard that progress is being made in increasing the percentage of 42-day assessments carried out within timescales. We were pleased to hear this.

Page 16 – Safeguarding – Reviews and Allocations. The Panel was concerned that the percentage of children on the Child Protection Register that have been registered previously, is increasing. We noted that the ‘emotional abuse’ category is increasing and we need to understand why. We are interested to see how ‘Emotional Abuse’ is categorised. We feel it is very subjective. The Panel will therefore be adding an item to its work programme for 2019-20 on ‘Why children become looked after’.

Page 17 – Safeguarding – Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Missing Children and Professional Abuse. We heard that there has been a big increase in the number of children managed under the CSE Protocol and the number of children going missing/absent without authority. We also heard that a new officer has been appointed to look into these areas, so the increase may be due to better identification and recording. This is a concern to the Panel and they will want to monitor this closely going forward.

The Panel is concerned that there is going to be an increase in the number of independent children’s homes in the area and that there could be a child protection threat if the Authority and police cannot deal with the number of LAC as a result. We were informed that there is no regulation on the number of children’s homes and that the issue has been flagged with Welsh Government.

Page 23 – Permanence – Leaving Care. We feel it would be useful for the Panel to have a Glossary of classifications with the next Performance Monitoring report.

Update on Welsh Government's Local Authority Looked After Children Reduction Expectation

Julie Thomas presented an update and answered the Panel’s questions.

We heard that Welsh Government representatives have visited the Authority and been briefed on plans to safely reduce the number of Looked After Children.

The Panel emphasized how important schools are in driving this forward. We expressed our concern that more and more children are being home schooled. We were informed that this issue has been raised with WG.

We heard that WG was very impressed with the examples provided of Service development.

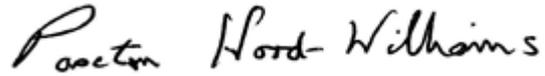
The Panel would like to see some examples of tools and techniques employed by frontline staff in family engagement to encourage parents and children to discuss issues, feelings, relationships and to plan a way forward to improve their situations. This will be added to the work programme for 2019-20.

The Panel congratulated Julie Thomas and her team for all their hard work in managing the business. The Convener informed the Panel that WG representatives had acknowledged how good this is when they visited the Authority.

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

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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