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**Professor Andrew Davies
Chair of Swansea Public Services
Board**

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Overview & Scrutiny

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BY EMAIL

Summary: This letter is from the Public Services Board Performance Panel. It follows the meeting on 3rd April 2019 looking at the Early Years Objective and Public Services Board Governance, we also had the Statutory Member Q&A.

Dear Professor Davies,

On 3rd April 2019 the Panel met with yourself, Gary Mahoney (Early Years Progression Officer), Allison Williams (Family Resource Manager), Paula Davies (Health Visiting Lead for Swansea), Alison Jones (Flying Start Link Teacher) and Claire Fauvel (Principal Public Health Practitioner).

We are grateful to all officers for taking time to attend this meeting considering their busy schedules and for giving us the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the Panels thoughts.

Statutory Member Question and Answer Session

We are grateful to you for attending and answering questions.

We heard how the Well-being Plan, when it was developed reflected where the Public Services Board (PSB) was at the time and the process involved in developing it was largely dictated by legislation and timescales. We were told that if the PSB was being set up now, it would likely be done differently and more time would be allowed for relationships to be established.

We were told that PSBs have developed in complex ways with some organisations such as Natural Resources Wales sitting on multiple PSBs and contributing to every one of them. We feel that this is unreasonable and ineffective for those organisations who have to do this. When asked about the option to make PSBs regional you said that there were no imminent plans for this to happen.

You explained that the Governance Review you will propose should simplify the structure and aims to streamline the work which is currently being undertaken. We look forward to seeing how this is received by the other members.

We heard that time frames need to be reviewed to ensure that the work which is being undertaken is 'smart' and there is clarity in the framework which is currently in place. You also said the work streams are being reviewed and that leadership is being looked at to make sure it is effective. We were told that a new structure could improve long term strategic aims and contribute to changes but this is still at an early stage, we are interested to see how this develops over the next year.

When asked about scrutiny, you explained that effective governance requires effective scrutiny and that this leads to improved decision making and a raised profile of the issues being scrutinised. The Panel are glad that the role and importance of scrutiny is recognised.

We expressed a concern that accountability can be difficult as the scrutiny of an individual organisations performance is not the purpose of the scrutiny undertaken, but rather that organisations performance in relation to the PSB aims and objectives. You agreed and explained that making multi-agency decisions is difficult due to the sometimes contrasting aims of the PSB and the organisation. We agree that this is an ongoing issue.

In previous meetings we have stated that the PSB can take up a lot of officer time without having the associated financial support for the work. You accepted that although the financial input from organisations is minimal, the impact on officer time to deliver and organise the work (especially in relation to report development) can be quite high. The issue of pooled budgets was raised again which the Panel support, but you explained that although this could be an option it needs to come after relationships and processes are developed and that these processes need to be developed in the best interests of the Service Users.

Early Years Objective

We had a very thorough presentation from some of the workers delivering under the Early Years Objective. The amount of work which is being undertaken within Early Years is very impressive. We heard how the work aims to cover pregnancy to a child's second birthday in the first instance but there is recognition that work like this is essential during a child's younger years in general. We know that investment in Early Years is most effective, both for the wellbeing of the child and in relation to financial investment and we feel this is the kind of preventative work which should be being undertaken.

We heard how the work which is being delivered is very collaborative and includes senior figures and commitments from Police, Health, Council and a range of other organisations. We were told that the 'Healthy Hearts. Happy Faces' was an excellent example of truly collaborative work which could not have been achieved by one organisation on its own. As a result of social media use, which is easily accessible to

many people, there is huge attendance at events like the Teddy Bears Picnic and National Play Day, this is very positive.

We were told how there is more focus now on physical literacy encouraging confidence, competence and motivation in relation to movement for children. We heard how children need to be taught and nurtured to use and maintain these skills and we are happy to hear that the children are enjoying it and the feedback was that they wanted more.

We heard about Flying Start work including aims and objectives of the project. Although Flying Start was established outside of the PSB you explained how the work which is being done links in to the 7 well-being goals and 5 ways of working. We were told how Flying Start is improving children's performance by measuring the distance travelled from when a child starts to when the child moves on to school. We heard how the transition to Flying Start is undertaken in a thoughtful way allowing for a 'soft' start including visits to the setting and open days to meet staff and become familiar with activities. The routine and relationship which is developed mirrors school and helps both children and parents adjust into routines and processes similar to school to assist with a successful nursery commencement. We feel this is really important.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been discussed at this Panel previously. We heard how many of the beneficiaries who link in with projects under Early Years have experienced at least one, and often multiple ACEs, showing that the projects are targeting the correct people. We heard how people who have experienced ACEs are more likely to perpetuate them as an adult so breaking that cycle is essential for well-being. We were interested to hear that Health Visitors are integral in this work and there is new work being undertaken in relation to peri-natal mental health.

We heard how Health and Social Care needs more prevention work and that early intervention and prevention has proven outcomes not only in financial terms, but is the most effective way of dealing with issues. This also requires an investment in the workforce and a consideration of the physical location of services, which are more successful when a 'hub' or shared location is in place.

We expressed in the meeting that the presentation was thorough and the work it discussed was very impressive, however, we would like to understand how much of this is a direct result of the PSB. We know that Flying Start and the 30 Hour Free Childcare Scheme are not a result of the PSB and pre-date the work of the PSB. Can you explain how this links to the work of the PSB and therefore be claimed as a success under the PSB objectives?

Governance

You told us that there would be a new structure presented at the Core Group and we would have feedback around how this is progressing. We do have a query around other PSBs and their governance structures. You alluded that other PSBs have 'work plans' which they report on. We will explore Swansea's version and provide feedback.

Other Business

The voluntary sector was not really mentioned during the presentation, despite the substantial amount of experience and work, which they contribute to Swansea in respect of Early Years.

The Panel do have some additional observations, which they would like some clarification on;

- The voluntary sector contributes greatly to Early Years work; can you confirm which voluntary agencies are represented on the Early Years Strategy Group?
- Regarding the First 1000 Days Conference in November 2017, were any voluntary sector agencies involved? If this was the beginning of the strategy, it is important to ensure that all stakeholders contribute. If the voluntary sector were not involved, how can they be in the future?
- Can you confirm how the voluntary sector have been involved with the GP Early Years Workers?

We would welcome your thoughts on any part of this letter but in particular would like responses to the following by 22nd May if possible;

1. We know that Flying Start and the 30 Hour Free Childcare Scheme are not a result of the PSB and pre-date the work of the PSB. Can you explain how this links to the work of the PSB and therefore be claimed as a success under the PSB objectives?
2. The voluntary sector contributes greatly to Early Years work; can you confirm which voluntary agencies are represented on the Early Years Strategy Group?
3. Regarding the First 1000 Days Conference in November 2017, were any voluntary sector agencies involved? If this was the beginning of the strategy, it is important to ensure that all stakeholders contribute. If the voluntary sector were not involved, how can they be in the future?
4. Can you confirm how the voluntary sector have been involved with the GP Early Years Workers?

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Mary Jones

Convener, Public Services Board Scrutiny Performance Panel

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