



**To/  
Councillor Jen Raynor  
Cabinet Member for Children,  
Education and Lifelong Learning**

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**BY EMAIL**

Summary: This is a letter from a Joint meeting of the Schools and the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills following a meeting on the 2 May 2019. It is about Looked After Children Educational Outcomes.

Dear Councillor Raynor,

**Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel – 2 May 2019**

On the 2 May 2019, the Schools Scrutiny Panel and Child & Family Services Scrutiny Panel came together to look at an issue that had been raised by both panels, the Educational Outcomes of Looked After Children. We would like to thank Mark Sheridan, Julie Thomas, Helen Morgan Rees, Kate Phillips and Helen Howells for attending the meeting.

Prior to our meeting, we received an email from a Youth Ambassador for The Fostering Network who is also a care leaver herself. She asked to address the panel on behalf of a number of Swansea's looked after children who have concerns about the cuts in funding for their bespoke, tailored 1:1 support and wished to share their individual experiences on how the loss of this service has and could impact on their lives.

We heard that these changes are the result of the LAC element of Pupil Deprivation Grant being diverted from specific LAC-centred support directly into mainstream schools instead. She said that the young people are having difficulty accepting this abrupt change and feel they have not had the opportunity to have their voice heard about such an important change. We heard they have established strong relationships, built respect and trust with their support workers, and do not feel that schools could replicate this. They also feel that it is not only about the support received from workers, but the support they receive from each other which has become like a family to them.

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU**

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She recognised that the decision had now been made but still wanted to raise these concerns with the Council so that it is understood and improvements can be made around future decisions. She asked for a response to the following points:

1. Why the decision was made?
2. Why the decision was made so abruptly not giving young people time to adjust adequately?
3. Why the young people effected were not consulted?
4. How LAC young people will be supported, now this service have changed?

Officers attending the meeting responded to the issues raised and apologised to the young people concerns for any hurt or upset they had felt. Explaining the uncertainty in how the Pupil Development Grant from Welsh Government will be used in future was a contributing factor; that they had worked hard to find a solution and keep the support workers, but it was not possible. Officers explained that support of the Tribe Group was really successful and valued but that it only reaches about 20 young people. Therefore, many young people are not being heard in Swansea as the resources are concentrated in one place. Officers also explained that the Diamond Project will continue with the University and that the Councils Children and Young People Participation Team will be picking up this activity. Officers agreed to respond to the above four points in writing and will send a copy of this response to the panel for information.

We then discussed the briefing report on the Performance of Looked After Children. We heard and welcomed the allocation of the LAC Pupil Development Grant on a cluster of schools basis, recognising that monies can then be concentrated and used in the best way for that group of schools. We would like to see young people consulted on how the money will be used to support them.

We also wanted to highlight the principle of Looked After Children and wider support for pupils being everybody's business and not just LAC Co-ordinators in Schools. We agreed with Officers when they said it is important that capacity is built within all schools to work with vulnerable pupils.

The difference between education outcomes of LAC pupils between KS2 and KS4 was raised. We wanted to understand why there is such a stark difference in performance here. Officers explained the figures shown are based on a small cohort of children each year and that these are not the same children, as children come in and out of care throughout the year. The data therefore will vary year on year because each cohort will have different abilities and this, because the figures are so small, can have a big impact on our results.

The education of LAC has proved an incredibly challenging area for Swansea for decades. Hearing from officers was helpful but looking at what can be done to actually improve educational attainment is key. We need to learn what works from children and young people who succeed despite the challenges they face. We need a detailed understanding of why these issues are so complex.

We felt the new PRU in Cockett is exciting because it will aim to tackle these and other long-standing education challenges. We are interested to hear how this new facility will improve the education of our most vulnerable children including LAC and how it being inspired by cutting-edge best practice?

We also heard that the L2i is very difficult to achieve for vulnerable pupils and that it is better for them to be tested on the progression they make rather than merely attainment. We recognise the importance of the value added measure. We were concerned to hear Value Added Measures are no longer easily available from the Welsh Government but are encouraged that we do have our own Vulnerability Assessment Profile.

We heard that there is a real will in Swansea to develop a more systematic approach to improving the outcomes of vulnerable pupils, recognising that it is not just down to schools and not just relating to LAC but also those children on the Child Protection Register and Special Guardianship Orders. We agreed with Officers, that we need to be able to see what difference we are making to pupils and need to support them to be as good as they can be. We understood that, because of the small number of pupils, it is difficult to sensibly compare cohorts to assess the effectiveness of LAC (and all vulnerable pupil) pupil performance. We queried whether use could be made of Fischer Family Trust performance data to identify the progress being made by LAC pupils on an individual basis. We were interested to hear about the intention to develop an Action Plan to deliver an integrated and outcome focussed approach. We would welcome more information on this as it develops.

We welcome your thoughts on any of the issues raised in our letter but would ask for a written response on the following issues by 1 July 2019.

1. How will the new facility in Cockett improve the education of our most vulnerable children including LAC?
2. How will it be inspired by cutting-edge best practice?
3. Can the use of alternative school data, such as FFT data provide a better mechanism for monitoring the educational progress of vulnerable children?

Yours sincerely,

**COUNCILLOR PAXTON HOOD WILLIAMS**

Convener, Joint meeting of the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel and the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel

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