



**To:**  
**Councillor Louise Gibbard**  
**Cabinet Member for Care Services**

**Councillor Hayley Gwilliam**  
**Cabinet Member for Community Support**

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**BY EMAIL**

**cc Cabinet Members**

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the relevant Cabinet Members following the meeting of the Panel on 5 December 2023. It covers Performance Monitoring, Improvement Programme and CMET. A formal written response is required.

Dear Cllr Gibbard and Cllr Gwilliam

The Panel met on 5 December 2023 to discuss the Performance Monitoring Report for September 2023 including a briefing on qualitative auditing, and to receive an update on the Child and Family Improvement Programme. The Panel was also briefed on 'Contextual Missing Exploited and Trafficked' (CMET).

We would like to thank you both, Julie Davies, Kathryn Sillman, Linzi Margetson and Kelli Richards for attending to present the items and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learned from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response.

### **Performance Monitoring**

We received an overview of performance for September 2023 and were briefed on how qualitative auditing works and the areas being focused on currently within the Directorate.

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We discussed how qualitative auditing is looking at the processes and techniques being used to make sure they are working in the best way possible, and also the importance of training. We queried if the Academy is being brought into it and were informed the Directorate looks at work across the board and the Academy is part of this. We feel satisfied from the performance report that things looked reasonably settled.

We discussed how Welsh Government is planning to move away from the current computer system, Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS). Cllr Gibbard confirmed it is currently in the engagement phase and agreed to look into the benefits, timeline etc of the new system and report back to the Panel.

### **Child and Family Improvement Programme**

We received an update on the Improvement Programme from officers. In relation to Residential Care, we believe the Service is still struggling to find appropriate properties to purchase and modify. We queried the current capacity and if the Council is still having to send children out of county to get appropriate accommodation. We were informed the Service is seeing an increase in numbers of children in residential care, partly linked to insufficient foster care placements available, however, officers hope the position will improve over the next few months. We heard there are currently four in-house beds, and you are looking to increase this to 15 over the next three years, but this depends on identifying properties in the right place and right condition. We noted that alternative ways are being looked at to achieve this.

Regarding Section 4.2 Staff Reward and Recognition, we feel this is an important section of the report and it is an opportune time of year to ask Cabinet Members and officers to take back to staff the Panel's thoughts and gratitude for the work they have done. We are very pleased with the performance within the Department and look forward to it continuing for the next 12 months and thereafter.

Regarding Section 4.4 Recruitment and Agency Staffing, we requested an update on the current position. We were informed that recruitment of social workers continues to be a challenge. However, the Service has continued to expand the alternatively qualified workforce, which is good news in terms of people being on the pathway to become qualified social workers through that route. We noted there are currently five agency social workers across the Service, which is low compared to other Local Authorities. We were pleased to hear that an area where the Department has been successful is recruitment into the Council's social work Academy for newly qualified social workers, with 11 newly qualified social workers currently in the Academy. We are very impressed with the Academy set up.

### **Contextual Missing Exploited and Trafficked (CMET)**

We received a briefing from officers including an overview of the CMET Team, a summary of recent developments and progress and examples of activity undertaken.

We queried how often the 'pop up' youth club in Mayhill is held and what happens for the rest of the time. We heard the Team now has a blended approach. We also heard that Mayhill is held once a week but there are five Local Authority youth clubs

altogether, all held on different nights in different areas, and the hours staff work in them has increased. We noted that on the other nights, youth workers go out and about in the community to the places young people spend time and that not all young people want to go to a youth club. We were informed there are also a few independent youth clubs running in the area.

We are very impressed with the CMET Team's commitment and hard work.

We heard from Cabinet Members how proud they are that the Team was highly commended in Wales Safer Communities Awards 2023 for its progressive and innovative work. We agree this is a great achievement.

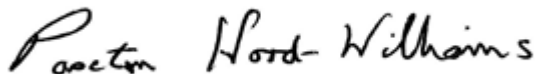
### **Your Response**

We hope that you find the contents of this letter helpful and would welcome comments on any of the issues raised within. Specifically, we would appreciate information, as described in the letter, about:

- The new computer system proposed by Welsh Government.

Please provide your response to this, and any other comments about our letter by 18 January 2024. We will then publish both letters in the agenda of the next available Panel meeting.

Yours sincerely



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