



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Date 02 October 2023
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Summary: This is a letter from the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Care Services following the meeting of the Panel on 13 September 2023. It covers Presentation by Young Carers and Adolescent Strategy.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 13 September 2023 to receive a Video Presentation by Young Carers and to discuss the Adolescent Strategy and Action Plan.

We would like to thank you, Julie Davies, Gavin Evans, Helen Howells, Helen Williams and Egija Cinovska from the YMCA 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.

Presentation by Young Carers

We received a video presentation from young carers on the Young Carers Forum who have helped shape a Plan to support young carers.

We queried how the Service finds out how many young carers there are and what percentage are being reached. We heard PSE sessions have been held in schools and awareness raised through the 'Understanding Young Carers' professional training. We noted that Swansea's statistic matches the national statistic ie three young carers in every single classroom in the UK, so the number is huge. We were informed young

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carers are identified through PSE sessions, they listen to the presentation, engage in activities, and complete a questionnaire stating if they would like to identify as a young carer. They can access support in school through lunchtime clubs or can access support within the YMCA. We heard more and more referrals are being received for young carers, who are offered different support from training to trips and activities. We also heard the Service is growing as it is receiving so many referrals, and from a Service point of view would benefit from more workers to ensure the support is there at the right time and the quality of service does not fall.

Officers confirmed that the YMCA supports any age, gender, person who needs support within our communities.

We queried who the presentation is going to be shared with and were informed the Plan has been to a number of strategic partnerships to seek agreement from strategic leads from all different sectors and has been positively met. We heard that from young carers feedback, one of the main things is to ensure all schools are on board and that there is a champion for every school. Officers confirmed teacher representatives sit on the Young Carers Forum, information has been sent out to all schools around young carer training and team managers in Education have been asked for young carer champion representatives.

We commented on the language used in the presentation and felt it was quite grown up. We feel if it is going to be used in schools with younger children it would be helpful to use simpler language and be a bit more 'fun'.

We queried how long the YMCA Young Carers has been set up and where they are in the journey and heard it was set up seven years ago. Officers commented that they feel it has been successful because young carers have shaped it and told the Service exactly what they need. We as a Panel feel really positive about where the Service is going with this and is grateful for all the work that has been done.

Adolescent Strategy and Action Plan

Officers attended to brief the Panel on this issue including actions and achievements to date and ambitions for the future.

We wondered why advocacy was not mentioned in the report as every looked after child has that offer. Officers provided reassurance that all children they deal with are given the offer and encouraged to take it up.

We queried if the position of Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) still falls within Social Services, (officers confirmed it does), and if the Service feels it has enough staff in those areas currently. We heard in Adolescent Services you are starting to see challenges recruiting social workers, however, alternatively qualified staff are being recruited to help with increased demand for support and staffing levels for IROs are quite healthy. We were informed the Service is currently struggling with lack of resource in terms of access to enough support around emotional health and wellbeing that should be coming from Health and also with access to accommodation. We noted

that Housing is currently reviewing its housing strategy and is aware there is insufficient capacity to meet demand.

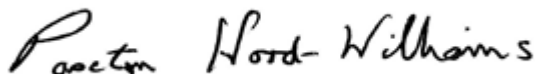
We felt that there is more talk about the Youth Justice System in the report and asked if this is an indication that more youngsters are beginning to present with problems. We heard that in terms of accommodation, more young people are presenting needing additional support and it is difficult to know the cause specifically. We were informed in terms of youth justice, you are not seeing significantly more numbers of young people coming through at the statutory end but are having different conversations in respect of exploitation, so the prevention offer within youth justice is growing significantly in terms of that.

We queried if the Service is satisfied with the way Barnardo's deliver on contracts and heard there are no issues with Barnardo's in terms of quality of provision. The Service has regular reviews with them, and you are being proactive about what may need to be modified because people's behaviours have changed significantly, believed to be in response to covid, and this has forced you to think about how you offer services and where you offer services from.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paxton Hood-Williams". The script is cursive and fluid.

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