



To:
Councillor Mark Child
Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

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Date 11 September 2017
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing following the meeting of the Panel on 21 August 2017. It covers the key priorities and challenges for Child & Family Services in Swansea, the Performance Report for July 2017 and the Work Programme for the Panel.

Dear Cllr Child

The Panel met on 21 August and looked at the key priorities and challenges for Child & Family Services, the Performance Report for July 2017 and the Role of the Panel including the Terms of Reference and proposed Work Programme.

Overview of Child & Family Services in Swansea

The Panel would like to thank Julie Thomas and Owen Davies for the presentation which gave an overview of the Service and for answering questions on the key priorities and challenges and the performance report for July 2017. The Panel appreciates their engagement and input.

For your reference, I note here some of the issues that were raised:

The Panel was pleased to see that a plan is now in place which has the emphasis on being more efficient which should lead to better outcomes. The Panel was pleased to hear that internal specialist services are being developed but noted officers comments that it could be done better. The Panel welcomed the news that the number of children experiencing care is safely reducing. The Panel will monitor this during the year.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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The Panel felt the essential role of the Council as corporate parent was of interest to this Panel and would expect the Corporate Parenting Board report to be brought to the Panel annually.

Performance Report July 2017

Page 3 – Front Door

The Panel is concerned that both the figures for assessments completed in 42 days and for assessments completed in 10 days continue to be well below target. This concern was previously raised in my letter to you following the Panel meeting on 27 February 2017.

We support the department's approach to remedying this by developing an assessment dashboard and providing written guidance and training workshops on assessment triggers. Nevertheless, as we have stated previously, a fully functioning front door is an essential part of the service and we expect that proper attention will be paid to this issue over the coming months to ensure it improves. We will continue to carefully monitor progress.

The Panel is concerned that the Communities First Programme is coming to an end and how the lack of this provision impacts on Child & Family Services. We understand that the department is looking at how Local Area Coordination (LAC) can help mitigate some of this and we support this approach.

The Panel also notes that the volume of work at the Front Door is a worry for the department. We understand that C&FS is working with Prevention and Early Intervention about diversion and that there are a number of partners involved including Flying Start, EVOLVE, TAF plus universal services. We will monitor progress on this.

Page 5 – Child Protection Summary

The Panel noted officers' comments about the Child Protection process. Specifically that the department is not maximising opportunities from Signs of Safety. We were pleased to hear that this should improve now that a new manager and coordinator have been appointed who are enthusiastic and have new ideas.

The Panel is concerned that a number of the indicators around child protection are significantly lower than the target. We note officers' comments that the figures are not accurate due to recording error however the figures are still lower than the department would like. We suggest that implementation of the system that has been developed to improve performance in this area is undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity. We will monitor progress on this.

Page 6 – Child Protection – Additional Data

On the table - Child Protection Register – Time Registered by Gender – the Panel was pleased to see low numbers over the year and hopes that this trend continues.

Page 11 – Staff Supervision

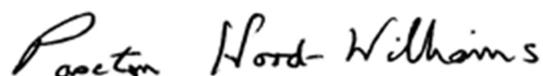
The Panel feels that a report on absenteeism and vacancies and agency workers would be useful and this needs to be added to the performance data set.

Role of the Panel

The Panel discussed the role of the Panel and the Convener and the Terms of Reference for the Panel. We also agreed the work programme for 2017/18 and this is attached (Appendix 1) for your information. We would welcome any comments you wish to make.

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your views on any of the issues raised and please note that in this instance, a formal response is required. Could we have your reply by 2 October 2017.

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'.

PAXTON HOOD-WILLIAMS
CONVENER, CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
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Appendix 1

Terms of Reference

Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel

1. Name:

Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel

2. Why this topic is important?

- Given the importance of, and past focus on Child & Family Services and, as it is potentially still an area of high risk, this warrants attention
- The service has made good progress but it is vital this is maintained and that further improvements are made across all areas of the service
- Continues to be an area of high demand and high spend - there are significant financial pressures in this service area
- Corporate Priority Area – Improvement Objective to ensure that people are safe, well and supported to live independently (Child & Family Services)

3. What is the purpose of the panel?

The Panel will receive and request relevant performance reports to monitor and challenge assessments on service performance and quality in respect of children's social services

On behalf of the Panel, the convener will write to the relevant Cabinet Member raising issues of concern, comments and recommendations as appropriate following Panel meetings.

4. Meetings:

The Panel will be expected to meet on an ongoing basis, 4-6 times a year.

The Panel will report periodically on progress to the Scrutiny Programme Committee.