



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Date 08 April 2024
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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 12 March 2024. It covers Complaints Annual Report, Youth Offending Service and Performance Monitoring. A formal written response is not required.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 12 March 2024 to discuss the Annual Social Services Complaints and Compliments Report 2022-23, to receive a briefing on the Youth Offending Service and to discuss the latest Performance Monitoring Report.

We would like to thank you, David Howes, Julie Davies, Sarah Lackenby, Helen Williams and Phillipa Elliott 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.

Complaints Annual Report

Members of the Adult Services Scrutiny Panel were also invited to attend for this item. You provided a briefing and stated that an internal audit of complaints in 2022-23 gave an overall assurance level of Substantial. We heard that for both Adult Services and Child and Family Services there was a rise in stage 1 complaints mainly due to increased demand and pressure on services leading to delays. We expressed some concern about this.

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We noted that in Adult Services, 27% of stage 1 complaints were from one person on the same case. We were concerned about this and asked if the complainant was happy at the end of the process. We were informed it is a very complex situation, that the Health Board is involved in highly contested legal proceedings in relation to this matter and the court has agreed a new set of arrangements around the whole care management. However most importantly, we heard that all reviews repeatedly find the individual is being well cared for in very difficult circumstances.

We were very pleased to hear there was a huge 128% rise in compliments for Adult Services and a significant 97% rise for Child and Family Services and we praised the Department for this.

We asked if from a child perspective, there is a child friendly version of a complaints policy. We heard whatever the service users' needs there are processes that can help, for example, the use of an advocate. You thought it was an excellent idea to produce literature that is child friendly and stated you will pursue this with the Directorate's Children's Rights and Participation Officers. We also suggested that an easy read version, which would be suitable for people with learning disabilities would be useful and you agreed.

Youth Offending Service

Helen Williams, Principal Officer Adolescent and Young People Services and Phillipa Elliott, Youth Justice Practice Manager attended to give an overview of the Service including an update on developments and progress.

We heard in terms of preventative work, funding for the Turnaround Project will cease in March 2025. The project has worked with 47 young people and is on track to meet the target of 97. It was emphasised that all the young people will have the full intervention before funding ceases. We asked if anything can be put in place to continue this work and heard the Service has tried to develop more group-based work and hopes it will be able to continue to use the interventions developed and equipment purchased as a result of this extra funding to benefit other young people.

We commented that recruiting peer groups would benefit some of these children because peer group pressure is great at certain ages and heard that through the Participation Forum, which is being developed, there will be opportunities for doing this in a safe and supported way.

In terms of accommodation, we queried where the Service is currently working from and what would be the ideal location to bring all services together. We heard there is currently an office space in the City Centre and a youth justice centre located in a warehouse on an industrial estate in Fforestfach. The hope is to have one building with office space but also space for direct work and creative work and with good travel access. A Panel Member stated he has some suggestions of locations and will discuss this with you outside of the meeting.

We queried what sorts of work/activities the Service undertakes with young people to encourage them to stay away from court services and heard there is a fully functional hair/nail salon, a mountain bike project including bike maintenance, workshops held for trade skills and cooking sessions and print making as well as lots of other activities.

We noted anti-social behaviour is an issue in Swansea and that the Service has a pilot project working with some local primary schools providing fun educative lessons to get the message out, and that the plan is to roll it out to other primary schools across Swansea. We asked if it will also be rolled out to comprehensive schools and what the Service is hoping to achieve. We heard a programme is being rolled out for comprehensive schools and through this work the hope is to support schools to keep children in school for more time, so it reduces the risks of them coming through the Service.

We heard one issue the Service continues to face with young people coming out of custody is availability of housing. This challenges the Service's plans for young people where they do not have the stability of an appropriate home or living arrangement when they are released. We asked what sort of accommodation is needed and heard it is dependent on the individual and that most of the Service's young people do not have the skills to live independently and ideally it would be supported provision to help them build their life skills so eventually they could move on to independent living. We were informed there are a number of supported living providers the Authority works closely with, but availability is an issue. The Panel agreed Supported Living for Young People Leaving Care is an issue it needs to revisit.

We noted a Knife Crime Awareness Questionnaire has been developed and asked about young people's awareness of this issue. We heard the purpose of the questionnaire is to gain an understanding of young people's different experiences to ensure the Service is delivering the right work in the right way. We were informed awareness varies from some young people thinking it is quite normal for young people to carry knives to some young people having no awareness of it at all.

We were pleased to see how the Service has recovered from the bad place it was in four or five years ago and hope this will continue going forward.

Performance Monitoring

We were briefed on the Performance Report for January 2024 and heard the trend was as expected in the month after Christmas and New Year. We noted how some trends are trending the wrong way and stated that we will need to keep an eye on this.

We queried how the upper and lower confidence limits on the trend graphs are calculated and it was confirmed that they are based on historical figures. We heard if figures stay within the bands, it is an indicator that within existing resources the Service can deliver a safe and effective service but there will be fluctuations and when figures get outside of these bands then there is a real problem.

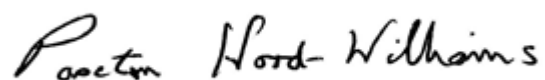
We were really pleased to hear how the Academy is doing and think it is very innovative.

Your Response

We hope you find the contents of this letter helpful and would welcome comments on any of the issues raised within. However, on this occasion, a formal written response is not required.

We will add an item on 'Supported Living for Young People Leaving Care' to the future work plan.

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
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