



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Date 25 July 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 24 June 2024. It covers Inspection Report, Delivery of Corporate Priorities and Panel Review and Work Plan. A formal written response is not required.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 24 June 2024 to discuss the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection Reports on Ty Nant and Heol Tir Du, to receive an update on Delivery of Corporate Priorities/Policy Commitments in relation to Child and Family Services and to discuss the Panel's Review of the Year 2023-24 and draft Work Plan 2024-25.

We would like to thank you, David Howes, Julie Davies and Chris Griffiths for attending to present 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.

Inspection Reports on Ty Nant and Heol Tir Du

You attended together with Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services and Chris Griffiths, Principal Officer Residential Services to feedback on the CIW inspection reports.

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We were informed that both reports are very positive with no priority notices, only a few areas for improvement over the next 12 months and action plans are in place in both Homes to address these.

We heard staffing and recruitment is an ongoing challenge across Child and Family Services, however you have had an aggressive recruitment drive and managed to increase staffing significantly in these Homes to improve staff consistency. We were very pleased to hear this.

We also heard Ty Nant's model of care is changing to a Trauma Informed Home and is in transition at the moment. We noted that trauma informed is about having a full understanding and full timeline of exactly what traumas the young person has been through and then adapting approaches to individual needs.

We queried if in terms of residential care, the department is satisfied there are sufficient places available in Swansea. We heard that in terms of residential children's places, there are not enough places at the moment, in Swansea or neighbouring Authorities, so you are still having to use residential children's homes further afield. Also, you are still having to use residential homes as there are not enough fostering placements, but you hope this will change soon. We noted that all local authorities in Wales have the same problems.

Delivery of Corporate Priorities / Policy Commitments in relation to Child and Family Services

You stated that the Panel has been kept updated on progress throughout the year and that this is a summary report.

We heard that in terms of safeguarding, the Early Help model is working really well, that a lot of work is going on to recruit more foster carers and that accommodation continues to be a challenge especially for young people with complex needs but there is work going on regionally to address this and expansion of provision for 16+ care leavers. We also heard in terms of workforce, recruitment has been a challenge, but the Department is working hard to tap into different sources through links with employability services, and the Academy is helping to nurture and develop your own staff.

We feel that in terms of Prevention and Early Intervention, the people best placed to identify potential problems are health visitors, and we asked how positive health visitors are in providing this information to Social Services. We were pleased to hear the department has a strong working relationship with the Health Visiting Service throughout the Early Help Hub model.

We queried if the Single Point of Entry is working well and heard it is, and that the Department works hard to find ways of working with families through the different in-house services that are available, to find a way to help families without the need for statutory intervention or for escalation.

We mentioned that in a media article that day, Neath Port Talbot Council had been praised, claiming to have reduced looked after children by 50%. The article did not say over what period this had happened. We feel that if the number of looked after

children is reduced too quickly it can cause problems, and believe Swansea has a sensible approach of doing it over a number of years. We asked if there is anything Swansea Council can learn from Neath Port Talbot. We heard that partnership working works well and the two Local Authorities use every opportunity to learn from each other, but that given the context and environment of both Local Authorities is different you have to be cautious how far that learning can go.

Panel Review of the Year 2023-24

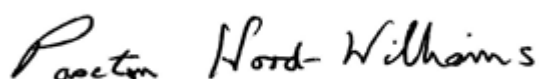
For your information, we reviewed the year 2023-24 and discussed the draft Work Plan 2024-25.

We feel one area the Panel must continue to monitor is mental health. We discussed transition from Child and Family Services to Adult Services mental health, the link to education and schools and the length of time taking for referrals, and the best way to look at this issue across scrutiny. Following discussion with officers outside of the meeting we have added **Update on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (including Transition to Adult Mental Health Services)** to the CFS Panel work plan (25 February 2025 meeting). We have also included the Regional Partnership Board's Mental Health Strategy on the AS Panel work plan for 2024-25.

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.

Yours sincerely



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