



To:
Councillor Mark Child
Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

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Date 21 November 2017
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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 30 October 2017. It covers Western Bay Regional Adoption Service, the Leaving Care System, the Performance Report for September 2017 and second quarter 2017.

Dear Cllr Child

The Panel met on 30 October and looked at the performance and progress of Western Bay Regional Adoption Service, the performance and progress on the Leaving Care System, the Performance Report for September 2017 and the second quarter performance 2017.

We would like to thank Julie Thomas, Owen Davies, Val Jones, Helen Davies, Kelly Ahern and Donna Houlston for attending. We appreciate their engagement and input.

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

Monitoring Performance and progress of Western Bay Regional Adoption Service

Val Jones, Western Bay Adoption Manager presented the report and gave an overview of the performance and progress of the Service during the last financial year answering our questions.

We were informed that CSSIW will be carrying out an inspection of the service and that I will be interviewed as part of this process. I am pleased to be involved in the inspection and to have the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Panel.

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We heard that it is increasingly difficult to find adopters and that this is a national problem. We also heard that numbers significantly dropped in 2017/18 and the service is not sure why. We heard that the numbers of children waiting to be placed for adoption is increasing and that some of the children needing to be placed are more complex.

The Panel felt that there needs to be a drive to increase adopters especially for sibling groups and older children, nationally as well as regionally. We suggest that the service uses similar mechanisms to what Foster Swansea used, as this has been successful.

We felt that the figure for average time taken to approve adopters does not reflect how successful the service is, as it is taken from inquiry stage rather than take up. We heard that the intention is to change how the figure is calculated this year, so it will start from when the application is taken up. We support this move.

We heard that performance in providing Life Journey Material is a big issue for the service and that they have not performed as well as they would like. We were pleased to hear that an action plan is going to be put in place to address this and that the Transition Moving On Programme being rolled out in the region, could also help make improvements.

We were informed that regionalisation of the service continues to be challenging but that it is a statutory requirement. We also heard that discussions are taking place about what will happen going forward with changes to the makeup of the region. We would like you to keep us updated about this.

We were concerned to hear about staffing issues with high levels of staff off with serious sickness. The Panel was content that measures have been put in place to support the service and address this.

We requested information about projects that are in place to help vulnerable families, and were pleased to hear that there are a number of projects including the 'Turn Around' project and 'Reflect'. The Panel would like to see the outcomes of the survey on the 'Turnaround' project once they are available.

Performance and Progress on Leaving Care System

Helen Davies, Partnership Manager for BAYS Plus gave a presentation to the Panel. Kelly Ahern of Barnardo's and Donna Houlston also attended for this item.

We heard that a review of the Single Accommodation Strategy has been undertaken internally to identify if young people's needs are being met.

We were told that there is a move towards providing more qualitative rather than quantitative outcomes to monitor the difference BAYS Plus is making to young people. The partnership is working towards implementing a Swansea wide outcomes framework in order to provide this information. We felt that BAYS Plus appears to be working effectively and that they are to be congratulated on how much they have developed in the last few years in terms of confidentiality. However the Panel need to see more information on outcomes in this area.

We heard that a partnership group has been established to try and develop the vision of where next for BAYS Plus. We felt that this was a good idea.

Performance Report September 2017 and Second Quarter Performance 2017

Julie Thomas and Owen Davies went through the reports, highlighting the main issues and answering questions. We are grateful to the department for incorporating all of our requests into the Performance Report.

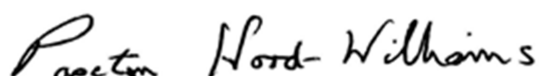
We are concerned that more looked after children in residential care are being placed out of county than in. We understand that this is usually 50/50 but that a sexual exploitation case meant some children had to be placed out of county. We were assured that only children who need to be placed out of county are, however, we will want to monitor this.

We continue to be concerned about the timeliness of assessments and that this is still an issue. We heard that there are a number of issues causing this and that there is an imminent structure change to try and alleviate some of the issues. We plan to keep a close eye on this to monitor improvement.

We were pleased to hear that the department is improving communications with its staff and that a wellbeing strategy is going to be developed. Also, that there has been a reduction in costs for management and senior staff of approximately £200,000 within the department.

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 11 December 2017.

Yours sincerely



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