



**To/
Councillor Mark Child
Cabinet Member for Health &
Wellbeing**

BY EMAIL

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Scrutiny

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing following the meeting of the Committee on 13 November 2017. It is about the Integration of Health & Social Care, Domiciliary Care, Local Area Coordinators, Adult Services Budget, Winter Preparation, and Flying Start.

Dear Councillor Child,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 13 November

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 13 November 2017 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing.

As you know the scrutiny work programme already has a clear focus on both Adult Services and Child & Family Services. We have set up two Performance Panels to ensure regular in-depth monitoring and challenge to service delivery and performance of these areas. However, the Q & A session gave us an opportunity to talk about the headlines, and explore the priorities and achievements in relation to your areas of responsibility.

Thank you for providing a written paper, giving the headlines from the cabinet portfolio, in support of your appearance. We also thank the assistance of Dave Howes, Chief Social Services Officer, in our discussion.

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We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the committee, and, where necessary, raise any outstanding issues / actions for your response. The main issues discussed are summarised below:

Integration of Health and Social Care

You were asked to comment on the current relationship between health and social services, and how well health care and social care services were integrated. We understood this was an issue across Wales, not just Swansea, and that there have been particular issues around managing those discharged from hospital who have continuing support needs. Committee members were aware of patients waiting for discharge without any social care packages in place, causing bed blocking.

You painted a mixed picture in relation to effective partnership working however gave example where closer working has developed locally. You also felt that that the Public Services Board has helped to provide an impetus for greater coordination and collaboration over the delivery of services, given pressures facing both the council and health board.

We acknowledged that integration was still a challenging area and noted that there has been an independent review of health and social care commissioned by Welsh Government, which will report at the end of 2017. This will help drive hospital, primary care, community health and social care providers to work more effectively together.

We agreed that there is a pressing need to improve and develop a health and social care system that will support the aspirations of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

We also asked about the impact of two recent pieces of significant Welsh Government legislation on your areas of responsibility, namely the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We wanted to know the influence both were having on your work, positive or negative, and sustainability for the future.

You talked about the relevant objectives and duties which this legislation is focused on, and benefits of working in a sustainable way which involves people, and thinking long-term, with focus on prevention e.g. co-production with service users to develop solutions, and design better care services that meet the needs of our communities.

Domiciliary Care

We discussed the growth in domiciliary care and significant pressures and challenges this has placed on the Council. You explained that there have been difficulties recruiting domiciliary care workers, causing delays in patients being discharged from hospital. However you added that the position has begun to improve, following a review of care arrangements in October.

We asked about the reasons behind recruitment issues. You felt this was partly about money, but partly about status and value given to carers in society. You told us that Social Care Wales recognised the issues and were looking into introducing various levels of qualification and ways that could lead to greater recognition of those involved in this work.

We asked about agreed standards between the council and the health board, and escalation process e.g. that would follow councillor intervention in a particular case, where patients are not being discharged in a timely manner.

Local Area Coordinators

Following our previous discussion we asked about progress in developing the Local Area Coordination approach across Swansea.

We asked about the relationship between Local Area Coordinators and local councillors. The perspective shared by newly elected councillors was particularly interesting, and the questions which were raised about the added value and benefits from having Local Area Coordinators.

You helpfully highlighted the main purpose of Local Area Coordination to help vulnerable people build relationships within communities, and support people to meet their needs, and hopefully prevent the need for social services intervention. You also told us about the evaluations that have been carried out which have praised this approach, suggesting a return on investment of £3 saved for every £1 spent, which was anticipated to increase over time.

Committee members generally reflected on positive relationships developed with Local Area Coordinators and some regret at the loss of some who have moved on to other jobs. Members raised examples of loneliness in communities which can affect both the old and young, as something which Local Area Coordinators could help with, particularly in helping to develop social contact.

We were pleased to hear that the expansion of Local Area Coordinators has been achieved in part thanks to contributions from other public service partners who can see the benefits of this approach in strengthening people's lives. Given the involvement of others to expanding Local Area Coordination we were concerned about the long-term commitment in order to sustain this work in communities, which would help retain these officers. You assured the

committee that you would be doing everything to persuade partners, such as the Fire Authority, to continue supporting this initiative, but realistically will probably need to keep reviewing every two years.

Whilst it was of course beneficial for councillors to make personal contact with Local Area Coordinators, Committee Members felt that it would be helpful if a method of regular feedback to councillors by Local Area Coordinators can be established, to ensure their awareness and engagement with this work. You stated that you would be happy to arrange for feedback to be given to any interested councillor. We asked you to provide us with a list of those Local Area Coordinators currently in post.

Adult Services Budget

We asked about the management of the Adult Services budget given reported overspend, and plans to improve the situation. You were open about the challenge to deliver sustainable Adult Services, and confirmed that of the overall projected overspend in Social Services of £5.7m, £4.7m related to Adult Services. The Committee was clearly concerned about the situation and sought assurance about the strength of recovery / savings plans. The Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel will request sight of these plans. Of course this needs to be balanced with the need to provide quality care and not put service users at risk, but we need to ensure that the budget is sustainable and assess the impact overspend will have on overall council finances.

Winter Preparation

In view of reports that the UK is about to face one of its worst flu epidemics we asked about preparations for services to deal with this issue. You explained that the health board were responsible for annual winter plans, addressing not just flu, which involve partner consultation. We understood this plan has been submitted to the Welsh Government. You confirmed that relevant social care staff members have received the flu jab.

Flying Start

Unfortunately time did not allow for us to ask you about progress with the Flying Start early year's programme. Could you provide comment about how our efforts in Swansea regarding the Flying Start programme have been affected by austerity and financial cuts?

Your Response

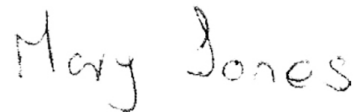
In your response we would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter. We would be grateful, however, if you could specifically refer to our request for:

- circulation of copy of the agreed set of standards with ABMU Health Board around discharge from hospital / care plans, and case escalation process;
- a list of the Local Area Co-ordinators;
- you to consider a method of regular feedback to councillors about the work of Local Area Co-ordinators.
- comment about how Flying Start has been affected by financial cuts.

Please provide your response by 22 December. We will then include both letters in the agenda of the next available committee meeting.

We will arrange to follow up on portfolio developments and hearing about achievements and impact in due course.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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