

Councillor Mary Jones
Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

Please ask for: Councillor Elliott King
Direct Line: 01792 63 7438
E-Mail: cllr.elliott.king@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: EK/HS
Your Ref:
Date: 15 January 2020

Dear Cllr Jones

Thank you for your letter dated 23 December 2019. Please find response below.

In relation to Flying Start, provide more information on the framework for parenting support;

Parenting Support in Swansea is co-funded from both Flying Start and Families First Programmes to ensure a Swansea wide offer of parenting provision regardless of age or geographical area. The outreach element of Flying Start provides parenting provision for families with children aged 0-4 living outside of Flying Start areas.

For Flying Start entitlement and any parenting outreach, the offer of support is determined by the needs identified in through referrals to ensure that the support is provided and a timely response matched to the individual needs of parents facing challenges in their parenting. As a service we offer families a pathway of support in line with the family support continuum of need. The three categories of support are as follows:

Family Advice and Support (Drop in)

These provide the families with an opportunity to explore any difficulties they are facing in one of the many settings across Swansea. As a service we promote the inclusion of both parents attending these sessions wherever possible, exploring the needs of the family and assessing motivation to change.

Group Support Programmes

The aim of group support through accredited programmes, is to achieve resilience and motivation as well as enhancing parenting skills, self-esteem and managing children's behaviour.

One to one support (Family Support)

The more intensive offer of one to one support enables the family to identify a plan that will help address issues impacting on their ability to parent positively. The emphasis continues to be on achieving and building resilience factors, whilst assessing motivation and developing problem solving skills using a solution focused approach.

In relation to NEETS Reduction, we were interested to know more about the plans for Looked After Children / Care Leavers and the type of specific support that is likely to be provided, as well as any other measures to reduce NEETS;

The Children's Commissioner's publication 'Hidden Ambitions '(February 2017) set out "*Wales' commitment to young people leaving care.*" The document highlights that care leavers need the same sort of opportunities, assistance and support that all parents try to give their children as they start to make their way in the world.

Hidden Ambitions calls for local authorities to place '*more focus*' on developing young people's skills for independence. "*Local Authorities should be like large Family Businesses in terms of their role as Corporate Parents of looked after young people. They should be prepared to offer all of the children under their care bespoke access to training and job opportunities in their many areas of employment.*"

It is our intention to realise this ambition through positive action and arrangements, making better use of available resources both within and outside of the local authority. This will be explored through a pilot for our Looked After Children/Care Leavers utilising a partnership between the following agencies:

- Social Workers (Swansea Council)
- Young Persons Advisors (Barnardo's)
- Cam Nesa Post16 Lead Workers (Swansea Council ESF)
- Working Wales Careers Advisors (WG)
- Welsh Government Work Based Learning Provider (Private Sector)
- Swansea Working & Beyond Bricks and Mortar (Swansea Council)
- All Local Authority Departments

Communities First Legacy funding will provide an eight week pilot programme, split into two blocks of four weeks (Phase One and Phase Two) of skills development for identified young people. The aim of the programme is to broaden aspirational goals through building confidence, and increasing motivation to work.

Phase one of this pilot programme will concentrate on the interests, abilities and needs of each learner. This phase will also consider independent living skills, and incorporate elements of work skills such as 'budgeting when working', and 'what employers want'. Throughout Phase One partners will work collaboratively to identify and overcome challenges/obstacles, whilst sharing and learning good practice.

In Phase Two, learners will consider requirements of the work place and prepare for work experience opportunities. Swansea Working and Beyond Bricks and Mortar colleagues will source opportunities within the local authority departments to provide real time workplace experiences for learners.

Working Wales staff and local Work Based Learning providers will help extend this experience through Welsh Government funded provision such as Traineeships* and Apprenticeships. (Traineeships are fully funded non-employed opportunities for under 18's, whilst Apprenticeships are employed opportunities that require departmental contribution).

This pilot is a great opportunity to support our leaving care population to take steps towards becoming economically active and stable, whilst also benefiting Local Authority departments by providing a workforce to meet their medium and long-term responsibilities.

We currently in the process of identifying the cohort of 6 to 8 young people to start the pilot programme which will then be evaluated to inform further work.

In relation to Play Opportunities:

- please share / signpost us to the latest Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Under the Child & Families (Wales) Measure 2010, each Local Authority is required to undertake a Play Sufficiency Assessment every three years. The 2019 Assessment reports on a series of RAG graded measures as well as consultation and engagement with service users and partners. The Assessment details what is going well in Swansea and what areas will require work over the next 3 years. This was approved by Cabinet on the 18th July 2019. Details can be found at the following link:

<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=33429&LLL=0>

- confirm whether there has been any increase in Play Therapy provision over the last year.

We do not specifically capture the specific spend on play therapy. However the overall spend on therapy has increased year on year and an internal therapy team has been in place for two years, consisting of a Psychologist, and three therapists. One of the therapists has undertaken specialist play therapy training. In addition the post adoption support service is now in place, and again this can offer a wide range of therapeutic support to our most vulnerable children.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'EJ King', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Y Cynghorydd/Councillor Elliott J King
Aelod Y Cabinet dros Wasanaethau Plant/ Cabinet Member for Children's Services
(Early Years)**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Smp', written in a cursive style.

**Y Cynghorydd/Councillor Sam Pritchard
Aelod y Cabinet dros y Gwasanaethau Plant (Pobl Ifanc)/Cabinet Member for
Children's Services (Young People)**

Additional Written Paper Submitted by Cabinet Members for Children Services – Scrutiny Programme Committee Q & A Session 11 November

Is Flying Start in Swansea generally considered to be a successful programme?

There are elements of the Flying Start programme in Swansea are considered to be sector leading and a great deal of research evidence which points to the educational and social benefits for children and society, particularly for children from disadvantaged areas, of good quality provision in the early years.

In 2016 Swansea Flying Start participated in the University Wales Trinity St David's Pilot of the Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being tool (SSTEWE) within childcare. The tool has enabled us to ensure the quality of staff interaction and evaluate its impact on improving children's development. It has also enabled us to assess the impact of training in relation to its application within day to day practice. The SSTEWE tool is now used annually as a quality assurance tool for Swansea FS settings. The data allows identification of areas for development and also facilitates the creation of individual action plans for settings.

The framework for parenting and engagement of fathers nationally has been modelled on practice that was established in Swansea.

The model of delivery and services in Swansea are based on research and considered to be good practice and successful within the programme, however we must continue to look to the future and further refine/develop the programme based on local and National need.

Does the Cabinet Member feel that there is a shared understanding across the authority of what the programme is aiming to achieve, and with that in mind, that the right outcomes are being tracked through Flying Start to assess success?

Further work is required to understand the programme across the authority; to address this there are commissioning reviews planned regarding elements of the programme that are ongoing.

However there are many examples of collaboration with the Flying Start Programme across multiple council departments with the aim of giving children & families a "Flying Start" in life.

- Joint meetings are regularly held with all programme representatives across the overarching Flexible Funding agenda.
- Wherever possible, links are made across Council departments to integrate resources and plan together. The Families First programme works closely alongside the Flying Start programme joint commissioning services for families Swansea wide.
- Links are made with Education with joint training joint training facilitated between Flying Start settings and Nursery teachers in Foundation Phase to promote good practice in transition arrangements between the Flying Start settings and Foundation Phase nursery settings.
- Following the building of new Council Houses in Penderry, communication between the Housing Department & Flying Start enabled a proposal to be put forward to

Welsh Government to approve the new postcode attributed to the area as part of the Flying Start catchment area for Portmead. This proposal has since been approved by Welsh Government.

Following changes to the Health Visiting element of the programme, there is work ongoing nationally to change the outcome framework for Flying Start.

With regards to local tracking of outcomes to assess success within the programme we regularly review performance via multi-agency Quality Assurance meetings within settings and monitoring of KPI's.

With regard to tracking outcomes to assess success, from a National perspective Swansea has played an active role in the Welsh Government pilot data linking project. The emerging findings suggest in Swansea:

- A possible positive impact of Flying Start on low birth weight and births to teenaged mothers.
- No impact on overall A&E attendances. However further analyses will be carried out in future releases looking at types of A&E attendances.
- A possible 'protective effect' of Flying Start on hospital admissions.
- A possible positive impact of Flying Start on primary school absences.
- A possible positive impact of Flying Start on unauthorised primary school absences.

How does local performance compare to Wales-wide?

Although there is an annual publication by Welsh Government to provide a statistical overview of how the programme is working, it only reflects certain datasets.

It doesn't show the breakdown of differences to services in each Local Authority to meet local need/demand. As an example, the parenting service in Swansea is jointly commissioned by both Flying Start & Families First to make the offer a Swansea wide service. The parenting programme operates a drop in service, group and 121 intervention, offering support to families based on the continuum of need; however the statistical bulletin only reflects the group work aspect of the programme and not the bespoke one-to-one sessions or informal drop-in sessions.

Childcare attendance data is collated nationally; however the Welsh Government will not benchmark performance due to the variances in approaches across Wales.

Compared to previous years Health Visitor numbers were a challenge during 18/19, with sickness & vacancies affecting performance. The Health Services Commissioning review will be tasked with looking at this in further detail.

Do the Cabinet Members feel that our position as a council, having adopted the UNCRC and declared a climate emergency, is adequately reflected in the work undertaken in Swansea schools to become more "rights respecting" or "eco" aware?

Schools ECO committees and the contributions to improving school environments, both natural and learning, are incorporated into Right Respecting Schools assessments, and children are clearly able to link their ECO work to their rights.

There is a link through the focus that Rights Respecting Schools Award places on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) and global rights, and on that of pupil voice, where the topic of the climate emergency may have been discussed.

In primary School Big Conversations, the number one topic is plastic reduction, and we saw, during the climate strikes in Swansea, children take command of the Council Chamber in an attempt to claim their rights to a clean, healthy and just environment for them to grow up in.

Given the predicted increases in child poverty, which we are already seeing in evidence as Universal Credit rolls out, do the Cabinet Members feel satisfied with the council's benefit take-up/money advice/benefits advice offer to families with young children?

Significant efforts are being made with limited resource to target families with young children to maximise their income, for example, through the targeting of the Welsh Government's Child Care Offer, employability support, benefit take-up information and targeted financial inclusion support.

The Early Intervention Services through Families First, support parents and carers and 81% have reported that their financial situation has stabilised and improved. The Welfare Rights team train support workers who work with families with young children. In the last 18 months they have trained support staff from; BAWSO, Domestic Abuse Hub, Health Visitors, Barnardos, TAF, Young People Services, Jigso, Action for Children, Family Housing and SYSHP. They continue to provide the Welfare Rights Advice Line and have dealt with 375 enquiries from support workers in the last six months (April – Sept). Through the Legacy Fund we employ a Financial Inclusion officer who is providing budgeting, benefits and financial inclusion support to citizens in targeted areas (old C1st).

The Council commission Citizens Advice to provide advice and information and they are supporting families with take-up, money and benefit advice.

The Council also facilitates partnership groups including the Financial Inclusion Steering Group and Swansea Poverty Partnership Forum, both of which bring partners together to identify key local issues and opportunities to collaborate and maximise the wider resource availability in Swansea.

Council services specifically focussed on supporting financial inclusion are limited. The Financial Inclusion Commissioning Review is seeking to ensure that available resources are having the maximum positive impact on low income households and those experiencing poverty, and for staff across the county to be proactive in identifying need

and ability to provide guidance, signpost and refer people to the most appropriate support available. The approach requires services across the council to be able to play their part in promoting financial inclusion at every opportunity.

The Council have also secured a Coordinated Crisis Support project, a national pilot of four Local Authorities to ensure coordinated support for citizens in financial crisis. This will support the work of the commissioning review and strengthen a coordinated approach of financial inclusion support.