



To:
**Councillor Elliott King, Cabinet Member for
Children Services**

BY EMAIL

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Date 25 August 2021
Dyddiad:

CC Cabinet Members

Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Children Services following the meeting of the Panel on 11 August 2021. It covers Performance Monitoring, CIW Assurance Visit and Ty Nant Inspection.

Dear Cllr King,

The Panel met on 11 August 2021 to receive an update on the Performance Monitoring Report for June 2021, feedback on the CIW Assurance Visit Full Report and feedback on the Outcomes from the Ty Nant CIW Inspection.

We would like to thank you, Dave Howes, Damian Rees and Chris Francis for attending to present these items and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

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

Performance Monitoring

Damian Rees, Principal Officer Safeguarding and Performance attended to update the Panel on the Performance Monitoring Report for June 2021.

We heard that Social Services has changed over to a new information system and data is not currently up to date. Only two months figures are currently showing in the report.

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We raised the issue of consistency of social workers to cases and queried if there is a lot of change over. We were informed they are as consistent as they can be given staff pressures. Officers stated they would look into the individual case raised outside of this meeting.

We felt that the number of re-registrations currently appears high. It is concerning if cases are being closed and then children are being re-registered again in a short period of time. Officers stated they are currently looking at this in more detail and hope to pull some common themes together.

We queried why figures show 31% of statutory visits are overdue. Officers confirmed this is a recording issue. We heard that staff are currently manually recording and tracking data and officers have been assured by managers all visits are being done.

We queried how the change over to a new information system has impacted the Authority's ability to run the Service as they want to. We heard that the Service is doing more manual reporting and using more manpower currently. The Director informed us that it has had an enormous impact and it operates completely differently to the old PARIS system but you were expecting this. He believes the Service will quickly pick up the new approach. He stated that you did not appreciate the national issues around performance of the system but these are being picked up. Also you did not appreciate the time involved in recording information but have enough assurance from manually tracking that you are doing what needs to be done and no one is being put at risk. We also heard it is putting an added burden on social workers.

We were encouraged as a Panel to keep the pressure on. We heard that if we want further information, where there are gaps in the report, we should ask officers for feedback from their audit activity.

We heard that there is some good stuff in the report and heard some examples. With the Looked After Children population, there is a sustained reduction over a number of months. You are also starting to see the number of children subject to child protection plans coming down. We heard that this is a real endorsement of the hard work of the workforce and leadership from the senior managers team to get the Service to this place. We asked officers to pass on our compliments to the Department for the way the overall figures are improving.

Update - CIW Assurance Visit Full Report

David Howes, Director of Social Services provided feedback to the Panel.

We heard that the draft letter has been received by the Authority and that we will receive the final version in due course. This will be shared with the Panel together with the full thematic report in the next few months.

We heard that the written feedback from the inspectors is consistent with the verbal feedback from them following the inspection and that the feedback is entirely consistent with the Authority's own self-assessment. This is really positive.

We heard that the Inspectors reflected positively on the following:

- Staff are committed, loyal and positive and good visibility of managers at all level
- Front door - easy to access, work around signposting, good at providing timely responses
- Recognise demand and complexity increasing at front door.
- Early Help Hubs – really liked, and good feedback from partners and others about effectiveness of that work despite impact of Covid
- Signs of safety and signs of wellbeing work – really good shared vocabulary across workforce and for children and families
- Liked innovation around communication and engagement
- Acknowledged improved partnership working with education colleagues and schools, really crucial during pandemic
- Reflected positively on co-production focus in Corporate Parenting Board.

We heard about the Issues from the inspection:

- Staff feeling under significant pressure
- Quality Assurance (QA) – overall arrangements – inspectors see evidence of improvement but still work in progress.

Director felt there may be issues the Panel will want to pick up re QA on the work plan going forward ie some specific examples on how QA is being improved. He stated it is not just about the numbers, it is about a range of audit activities and checking case files and interviews with children and families etc.

We heard that the inspectors had issues accessing information on the new system themselves. However, the Department found alternative ways to provide the information so they could undertake the checks properly.

We felt the feedback was very positive and asked the Director to take back to staff our appreciation for the work and effort they put in.

Outcome from Ty Nant CIW Inspection

Christopher Francis, Principal Officer Commissioning and Care Services updated the Panel on the inspection.

We informed you that we felt it was a concerning document with a number of actions for the Service. However, details of the action plan showed the Department knows what needs to be done.

We heard that the report identified a number of issues and challenges but they were issues the Department anticipated. We heard there were some positives identified and one of the areas for improvement is Quality Assurance.

We were informed that it had been a particularly challenging period for care homes but that you have got to do better for the children.

We queried why training was not provided online and how often supervision is undertaken. We heard that supervision should be monthly for full/part timers and six weekly for flexi staff, as staff have to deal with challenging circumstances on a regular basis. We heard that training is provided online but not the breadth of subjects required for these staff.

We raised concern that it had taken CIW to highlight the problems and not management. We heard that you were already aware of a lot of things highlighted in the report but the last year had been a very difficult year to implement changes as dealing with the pandemic and there was an issue with the manager of the home. We heard that it was planned to take forward these actions anyway but it had not been done before the CIW visit.

We thanked officers for the report which was not easy to present. We felt it was obvious officers are systematically working through the action plan and that there will now be a spotlight on Ty Nant.

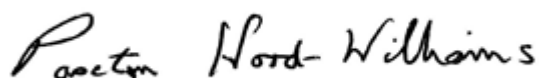
We heard CIW will be undertaking another visit shortly. We also heard that the actions in the Action Plan are to be completed by the end of September and officers are confident this target will be met.

We agreed that a report 'Ty Nant – Update on progress with action plan' will be scheduled in the work programme for October/November 2021 to ensure things are going in the right direction.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your views and comments on any of the issues raised, but in this instance, we do not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely



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