



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

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Date 24 October 2022
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BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

Summary: This is a letter from the Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Care Services following the meeting of the Panel on 27 September 2022. It covers Public Question Time and Overview of Adult Services in Swansea.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 27 September 2022 to discuss the Role of the Adult Services Panel, receive an Overview of Adult Services in Swansea and agree the draft Work Programme 2022-23.

We would like to thank you, Dave Howes, Amy Hawkins and Helen St John for attending to present the Overview 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.

Public Question Time

The following question was received from a member of the public. I put the question to you on their behalf.

QUESTION:

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU
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I would like to ask what is being done to provide supported living accommodation for adults with learning disabilities within the Uplands ward? My son has waited 11 years - he is hard working, polite, well mannered and very quiet, conquering a range of disabilities eg Down's syndrome, autism, communication difficulties, speech and language difficulties and has medication for anxiety and depression. The red tape we have come across is making it impossible to find accommodation in the whole of the huge Uplands ward, the area in which he has lived all his life and in which he is known and well liked, where he attends local surgeries (local GPs, dentist, opticians, podiatrist). His grandparents-were respected and prominent in the area, his parents - 1 a local lecturer and 1 a local comprehensive school teacher, his brothers and nieces all have lived/live in the area. I am now 75 and also care for my husband so the situation will soon be critical as my own health is suffering. Is there hope for something to be considered eg with the old Sancta Maria which has been bought by Coastal? However, my question, again 'what is being done to provide supported living accommodation for people with learning disabilities within the whole of the Uplands Ward?'

RESPONSE:

“In an ideal world we'd love people to have accommodation in their locality where they've got lots of links. Supported living across the County is provided through accommodation with floating support, accommodation with on-site support, shared accommodation with or without on-site support and shared living arrangements. There are currently over 280 supported living arrangements across the County and in Uplands there are 9 self-contained units and 4 properties. We are continuing to look for suitable accommodation for supported living in Uplands. We have identified accommodation that was leading to acquisition but unfortunately the vendor pulled out. Uplands is a tricky one, it doesn't have a wide availability of land to build or suitable properties but the Council and partners are continuing to look at options in this area. We work with registered social landlords like Coastal to develop existing properties and build new supported living accommodation. Specifications for properties to be developed and land is based on the needs of individuals. Where possible it will be in areas of choice but priority is on suitability of the accommodation and the support available for that individual. There are currently 8 units being built in the County and others planned pending land acquisition. In terms of Sancta Maria, obviously Coastal are independent from the Authority, I think their plans for Sancta Maria are at a very early design stage and haven't gone to planning yet, so I can't comment on what they are looking to do there.”

Members of the Panel raised some queries in relation to this, which yourself and officers responded too.

We queried if the person mentioned in the public question could end up at Sancta Maria, and asked which partners the Council works with. We heard that Sancta Maria is owned by Coastal and that the plans for Sancta Maria are not known yet. Also, that the Council works with a number of registered social landlords including Coastal, Pobl and others, and that it depends on what is in their portfolio of developments.

We queried if the Council has any input into their portfolios ie when plans are drawn up, do they ask the Council if there is any need for certain accommodation to be allocated. We were informed that yes, they do, and that Housing would be able to give a full answer but that in terms of the Population Needs Assessments, you look at

market stability reports and what is needed in the market. The Council also knows from social worker's caseloads, specifically on supported living, the needs of the population across Swansea.

Overview of Adult Services in Swansea

You presented to the Panel an overview including challenges and priorities.

We queried the current situation with retainment of staff. We also queried if existing contracts would need to be renegotiated as the cost of living is getting worse, and if there is enough flexibility in the budget to renegotiate contracts with the private sector and to increase staff pay to retain staff. We heard that in terms of commissioned partners, the Council is working with them currently in terms of fee setting for the next year, and that there is a commissioning programme across many areas of the Service which is cyclical and both fees and charges will be looked at. We also heard that there is work being undertaken around the real living wage and the Council's aspiration to support this. Officers stated that performance data for July is stark but confirmed that there are some improvements, you have managed to attract social work registrants from outside Swansea, which has increased numbers, and are currently seeing additional therapist registrants returning and increasing numbers.

We stated that 4 or 5 years ago the Council went through a major recommissioning process and queried if it is going to go through another one. We also queried if there has been any analysis of those contracts to see if they were effective before going out to recommission again, and if any users were involved in the reviews. Officers confirmed that the Service reviews, on a cyclical basis, the projects and initiatives it funds in terms of performance and quality and confirmed there are a host of services the Service is looking at recommissioning at different timescales. You confirmed that users are involved in the reviews and that co-production is a very important part of the Service.

We queried actions being taken to tackle sickness absence in Social Services and were informed there is a lot of work going on to support this, there is a work stream in terms of supporting the workforce, with a lot of work going on regarding recruitment, retention and wellbeing of teams. We heard that there is work going on with HR colleagues to support staff if they are off sick and measures in place to support staff back into the workplace, with a dedicated member of staff in HR for Social Services. We also heard that there are a lot of staff off with sickness linked to the backlog in the Health Service and that managers are being supported to ensure they are managing sickness properly and appropriately. Also, many staff are working in the front line so are exposed to respiratory conditions that are around currently and staff are being encouraged to get their flu and covid booster vaccination to protect themselves. You offered to circulate a list to the Panel of what is being done by the Service regarding wellbeing and supporting staff.

We thanked the staff for all they have done over the last few years and paid tribute to Local Area Coordinators (LACs) who have supported people in the communities.

We felt that there is an active volunteer service in Swansea that could possibly be utilised to relieve stress of staff who have extra workload due to covering absence. You agreed that with respect to community-based approaches and LACs, they are

fantastic at putting people in touch with local community services which are often run by volunteers, and that with staff shortages everyone's workload is going to increase but a lot of work is going on to make sure staff wellbeing is of paramount importance.

We heard that the Service had been successful in recruiting more social workers but queried if this was at the detriment of other authorities, or if new potentially qualified people were coming into the industry at this time. We were informed it is a bit of both, we have lost some social workers to neighbouring authorities and gained some, but the Council is also actively pursuing the number of students it supports through the social work qualification, so trying to nurture and grow its own. You stated that it is a national challenge, and something needs to be done at a Welsh Government level to attract people into the profession across the country.

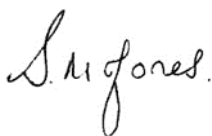
The Director stated that the CDC is doing work on workforce policy, there will then be a role for scrutiny to review the effectiveness of this. He suggested that in the meantime, each time the performance report is an agenda item the Panel should ask for an update on staffing pressures and how effective any of the Service's mitigation is working in the meantime.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, however in this instance, a formal written response is not required but please provide the following:

- Circulate a list to the Panel of what is being done by the Service regarding wellbeing and supporting staff.

Yours sincerely



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