



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Date 08 November 2022
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Summary: This is a letter from the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Care Services following the meeting of the Panel on 11 October 2022. It covers Overview of Child and Family Services in Swansea and draft Work Programme.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 11 October 2022 to discuss the Role of the Child and Family Services Panel, receive an Overview of Child and Family Services in Swansea and agree the draft Work Programme 2022-23.

We would like to thank you, Dave Howes and Julie Davies 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.

Overview of Child and Family Services in Swansea

We were informed that there are lots of pressures on the Service particularly recruitment of social workers and placements. However key statutory requirements are all being carried out and there are some positives in the August performance report. Key priorities continue to be around prevention and early intervention.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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We were very pleased to hear that at the six-monthly catch up with the local lead inspector two weeks prior to the Panel meeting, he was very pleased with the progress of the performance report and pleased to see the Department had taken on board findings from the last inspection a couple of years ago.

We heard that the performance report continues to evolve and I stated I was pleased with this report, and thought it is a big improvement. The Director agreed.

We queried if the additional detail provided any further guidance for the Department in terms of planning for the future and allocation of resources and were informed that data is used to inform and influence how the Department targets resources. For example, Early Help where they identified a high number of referrals coming in around points of conflict and parents contacting the Council looking for support around neuro diversity. The Department was able to put in a bid for grant funding to get some additional posts in that Service.

We asked about Alternatively Qualified Staff – how they are likely to be recruited; appropriate salary levels; how much flexibility the Council has in the package offered to make it attractive. We heard that the Council is a living wage employer and that a real strength in Swansea is it offers a chance for career progression. We were informed the Workforce Development Lead for Social Services is helping to develop a progression pathway for all parts of the Service, and that the Council is a fantastic employer to work for and offers flexible and agile working conditions and supports wellbeing very positively. We also heard that of the small number of agency staff the Department has, over half want to work for Swansea, and this is very positive.

We mentioned referrals and that we would expect the Health Service and Police to be fully aware of what needs to happen if they come across any cases of concern. We queried if there was any scope for doing something with foodbank volunteers, many of whom do not have a background in health or social care and would appreciate guidance in terms of what to do if they come across a family where they have concern. You stated that SCVS offer safeguarding training to volunteers and that there may be value in enhancing this offer through SCVS by offering a conversation to help them understand the Service's continuum of need, which may help them to understand what to refer into Social Services. Officers offered to take this away and have a follow up with SCVS colleagues. We added that whilst volunteers may be aware of training on safeguarding, what do they do if they have a question or concern or may be fearful of raising something which turns out to be nothing, it's giving them the assurance that it's more important to raise the issue. We heard the Service can also connect them to its Early Help Hubs and that it has Early Help Hub locality meetings, which would be a good place to have this sort of conversation, not about individual families but helping with understanding and assurance.

We stated we were not sure about WCCIS system initially but are now seeing the results coming out of it and are glad it happened. We stated that we were pleased that the WCCIS system is continuing to develop, and that the new performance data presented was quite impressive at this stage. We added that we were looking forward to the continued development of the system.

We queried if 'Foster Care with Family Contact' extended to grandparents or just immediate family and were informed it can but depends on the individual circumstances of the child concerned.

We asked how many children's homes the Authority is running in addition to Ty Nant and were informed the Council could potentially have four children's homes across Swansea in the next 12 months.

We queried if privately run homes in Swansea are causing any concern and heard it does create a level of demand within the Service and with Police and Health. We also heard the Service in Swansea would not choose to place some of its children in these homes for various reasons.

Draft Work Programme 2022-23

We agreed the work programme for 2022-23 and confirmed the following:

The Child Disability item at January's meeting will encompass the whole range of children with disabilities.

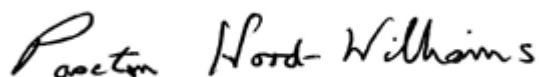
The Performance Monitoring Report is to include the key data from a more detailed workforce report. We are particularly interested in supervision, percentage of agency staff, sickness levels and wellbeing of staff.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, but on this occasion please provide a formal written response by 29 November 2022 to the following:

- Officers to follow up with SCVS regarding helping to enhance safeguarding training for volunteers, and report back to the Panel.
- Officers to arrange for volunteers to be connected to Early Help Hubs.

Yours sincerely



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