



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Date 28 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 1 November 2022. It covers Residential Care Services and Corporate Parenting Board.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 1 November 2022 to discuss Residential Care Services including Ty Nant and to receive an update on the Corporate Parenting Board.

We would like to thank you, Julie Davies and Chris Griffiths for attending to present the items 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.

Residential Care Services

You informed the Panel that the Service is in a very challenging position with a lack of suitable placements for children, but that the Service is working very hard to develop its own provision and reports show good progress being made. We were pleased to hear this.

We noted the Statement of Purpose was for 12 weeks and queried what this meant as far as CIW is concerned and more importantly for the young people involved and their feelings of surety and further abandonment at being moved on again. We were

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informed that this is an arbitrary figure and depends on if there is a more appropriate transition for the young person to move on to more stable provision within the 12 weeks. If there is not, you will use the evidence you have to delay it until it is the right time. We also heard the Service is working closely with the CIW regulations and inspections team on this, and they are fully aware of the challenges. We noted that the main point of having a timeline stipulated is not for it to drift if it is best for the young person to move on.

We stated that we understood why children are not happy for a profit to be made out of them and that we agreed with going forward with non-profit. We queried if there is any negativity with foster placements because they are paid. We were informed that it is never a cause for a placement to breakdown and heard that through Foster Wales the Service has spoken to young people about the best way to put across that foster carers are not in it for the money, as there are costs for people who foster children, and it can become an issue if talked about in the wrong way.

We noted that there is currently residential care capacity for three children in Swansea and that the Service is looking to increase this to seven, but we felt that this still seems very low for an area the size of Swansea. We queried if the Authority is in a situation where it is having to place children in residential care outside of Swansea and what the numbers are for this. We heard that some are placed in Swansea and neighbouring authorities and the majority are in Wales, and this includes private residential care. We were informed that the exact figures will be in the next performance monitoring report presented to the Panel in December.

We expressed concern that Home Three, where children are coming from secure units, and Home Four which is for emergency provision, will be situated next to each other. We were informed it will be two separate homes and one will be semi-secure.

We asked if it was economically beneficial for the Authority to have its own facilities or for them to be provided by external providers. We heard that a recent report by the Competition Markets Authority showed a greater differential between private fostering and local authority fostering in terms of their price saving. We also heard there are still benefits to a local authority having its own in-house services in terms of cost savings and the Authority has a better training offer for staff, but also value for children and young people to stay local and keep their identity which is of equal value to the cost saving to the local authority. You stated that the stability of the market adds an extra level of complexity. We agreed that it is a very difficult balance.

We queried if a child living outside the Authority area has the same standard of care as the Council's services. We heard the Authority has a contract and monitoring officer who quality assures all the children and young people placed outside the Authority's provisions, which is done by quarterly visits and reports on each of the placements as well as recommendations on what they need to improve going forward. CIW regulators also inspect the provision and share this information with the local authority whose children are based there. We were informed that all children and young people currently requiring care and support are with registered providers and we were very pleased to hear this.

We asked if there was any local opposition to the new residential homes planned and were informed it is currently in the early stages but the Service does not anticipate any

concerns. We heard that the plan is to make contact with the local community, in partnership with local councillors, to explain what it is all about before planning signs go up, so hopefully then there will be community resilience. We felt the Service needs to be careful about the communication process.

In the briefing on Ty Nant we were pleased to hear what children and young people have said about it. We queried and officers confirmed that life skills are included in the timetable at Ty Nant and that you want to try and make young people as self-sufficient as possible.

We wanted to know why staff keep getting admissions paperwork wrong at Ty Nant, as there are so few people it must be completed for. We were informed that it seems simple, but the guidance is quite complicated and there is a lot of information that needs to be on the admissions paperwork that has to be correct. We heard that the Service is working with CIW to identify the best models to use so paperwork is not as complicated to complete and that it is a work in progress and you hope to see improvement when the further inspection of Ty Nant is carried out in December 2022. We are very interested to see the outcome following this further focused inspection and will add it to the future work programme.

Corporate Parenting Board Update

We mentioned that we previously had concerns about the difference in performance of looked after children between year 6 and year 11 and heard that the Virtual School will allow the Service to interrogate this in a more joined up way which is good for attainment and progression. We also heard that the Welsh Government has offered to pilot the Virtual School and Swansea is part of the pilot. Effectiveness of the virtual school will be judged using data on attendance, progress, exclusions, progression and feedback from children and young people about meeting their aspirations. We are interested to see how these outcomes are reported.

We were informed the development of software for the Virtual School is on track with the implementation plan and heard that the Head of Service will confirm if it has been completed and update us.

We noted from the report that the care leavers team had been brought back in-house and queried how successful this has been particularly in terms of covid and staff shortages which must have been difficult. We were informed that the transfer of staff happened with no difficulties and recruitment of staff was successful, as moving over to the Authority improved people's pay and conditions. We heard it was very challenging during covid, young people struggled as they were not able to have face-to-face contact with people but this has improved now there are more face-to-face interactions. Also heard it is aligned to Infonation in Swansea where young people have access to a lot more services.

We queried how many children are currently living in bed and breakfasts and were informed that currently there are none but over a period of three months there have been between two and five. We heard the children have regular contact from a personal advisor and are supported by other agencies. The Service tries to keep their stay there as short as possible, but the challenge is move on options as there is a lack

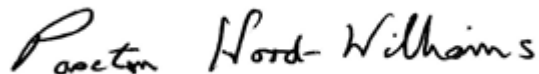
of availability in Swansea of independent accommodation. We also heard they are mainly people aged 18+ so the Authority does not have as many rights to intrude on their lives, so it is their choice if they want to see officers from the Authority or not.

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:

- Confirmation if development of software for the Virtual School has been completed.

Yours sincerely



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