



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Date 29 March 2023
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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 7 March 2023. It covers Support for Carers, Performance Monitoring and Youth Offending Service.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 7 March 2023 to receive an update on Support for Carers including Assessments, the Performance Monitoring Report for December 2022 and a briefing on the Youth Offending Service.

We would like to thank you and relevant officers 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.

Update on Support for Carers

Amy Hawkins, Head of Adult Services and Tackling Poverty, Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services and Kelli Richards, Principal Officer Early Help and Single Point of Contact attended to present this item and answer the Panel's questions. Members of the Adult Services Panel were also invited to attend for this joint item.

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We noted officer's suggestion to receive a presentation by young carers in the future and will add this to the future work programme.

We queried the geographic spread across Swansea of caring need. We were interested in how it links to facilities and accessibility of services, and queried if the age profile is linked to schools. We heard, in terms of young people, this geographical data is not currently available but would be beneficial to collect. However there is a young carers ID scheme, which started a couple of years ago with funding from Welsh Government. If young carers agree to be identified, it gives information of young carer by school. We noted you are also looking to create some sort of list or register within each school which will help the service understand geographically if there is any difference between one part of Swansea and another. In terms of adults, we heard that geographical spread of caring need is not currently mapped.

We noted 96 assessments are currently open in Child and Family Services (CFS), and queried what stage these assessments are at and if the same assessments are available for adults. We heard the timescale for a carers assessment in CFS is the same as a single assessment, that is, 42 days from point of referral. From there a plan is developed and is reviewed every 8 weeks as a minimum. From Adult Services perspective, it is very similar to CFS in terms of questions in the carers assessment, but it does not have the same timescale as it is not a requirement, but you try and do them in a timely manner.

We asked if you are satisfied that the majority of carers are being picked up. We heard that in Adult Services a high number of carers are being identified, but a high number of those identified do not take up the offer of a carers assessment. In terms of CFS, you do not think you have identified the majority, but it is something you are continuing to progress. For parent carers of children, because an active offer is now being made at the front door the reach is greater. However, same as for Adult Services, sometimes parent carers decline the offer for varying reasons. We feel it is very important to reach as many as possible.

In terms of respite, we wanted to know if the Service is able to provide as much as it would like, and how it is provided. We heard that for adults there are numerous different offers, you are providing residential respite and since the pandemic have been able to provide more and more weeks of availability in internal care homes. You also commission some services, with some grants available for this, and a day service is provided by the Carers Centre. For CFS, we heard there are also a range of different options available for carers and parents, but more could be done if more funding was available and there are also things communities can do for themselves.

We queried if there is a definition of a carer and were informed that young carers have come up with a definition for themselves as part of the work with YMCA. For adults the West Glamorgan Partnership has a definition which has been co-produced and there is one under the Social Care and Wellbeing Act. Officers agreed to share these with the Panel.

Performance Monitoring

Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services briefed us on the Performance Monitoring Report for December 2022 and answered questions.

We heard numbers of looked after children are likely to rise due to concerns with some children being able to remain safely at home and that it is becoming harder to recruit foster carers due to the cost of living crisis and Welsh Government's Eliminate Programme causing disruption.

Regarding staff vacancies, we were informed that two areas continue to present concerns – Early Help and Care and Support Services. We heard that area teams have a high number of social work vacancies, some of which are covered by alternatively qualified staff. We were pleased to hear the Service currently has a low number of agency workers and there is a growing interest in the social work academy. We had expressed concern at a previous meeting about numbers of agency staff and were pleased to see a big improvement since then.

We queried if you had concerns about an increase in the Numbers Registered Previously on the Child Protection Register and heard it is normally due to circumstances having changed, there may have been another child or one of the parents got into another relationship etc.

We noted the number of adoptees is increasing and heard there has been an increase in the number of children getting placement and care orders and being adopted, and an increase in the number of unborns who have then been placed for adoption. We were pleased to hear you are seeing more interest in people becoming adopters.

Youth Offending Service

Helen Williams, Principal Officer Adolescent and Young People Services attended to update the Panel on progress since the inspection in October 2021, when the service required improvement. We heard that the recommendations have been actioned and the Service now has a full complement of staff. Phillipa Elliott, Youth Justice Practice Manager also attended for this item.

We queried if a young person's journey might be seen as the transition to adulthood problem and the many signs that tell us there is a need for certain actions and support to turn them into reasonably good citizens. We heard a huge focus of the Service's work is thinking about the future and what it will look like for an individual post-18. In order to understand this, any young person who comes through the Service has a holistic assessment undertaken.

We asked when the transition to adulthood begins and heard that as a Service you are trying to map a young person's case from the day they were born or known to a service to develop a chronology over time, and from that pick out opportunities where you could have intervened better. We heard the beginning of the transition to adulthood is different for every child, but lessons can be learnt from what you know and can maybe avoid for lots of young people.

We asked about youngsters and the risk of offending as currently some wards have problems with off road bikers. We wanted to know what can be done about children out there on the road at risk and causing problems. We heard that if the young people cannot be identified it is difficult to work directly with them. However, if the police are

aware of who they are, there are avenues to refer them to the Youth Justice Service on a prevention basis and you also receive referrals through Child and Family Services.

We noted there is funding for more training for staff to work with youngsters who are committing sexually harmful behaviours and heard that over the last few months there has been an increase in offences related to this and that this is not typical. We were informed the funding mentioned is not specifically to deliver training around this issue but if a young person who has come to the service is presenting behaviours you are concerned about, you would support that young person in the best way possible. We heard you are looking to develop confidence within the staff group so you can work with these young people effectively and that you do outreach work in schools and deliver programmes about the work you do to try and raise awareness.

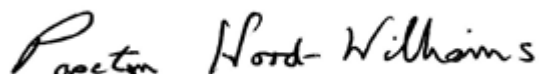
We feel that overall things are moving forward and will look at performance figures more closely next time we receive an update so the Service can demonstrate this.

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, please provide a formal written response by 19 April 2023 to the following:

- Definitions of carer to be shared with the Panel.

Yours sincerely



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