



To:
Councillor Elliott King, Cabinet Member for
Children Services (Early Years) / Councillor
Sam Pritchard, Cabinet Member for
Children Services (Young People)

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Date 10 July 2019
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Members for Children Services following the meeting of the Panel on 26 June 2019. It covers Cabinet Member presentation, Panel Review of the Year and draft Work Programme.

Dear Cllr King and Cllr Pritchard,

The Panel met on 26 June to receive a presentation from the Cabinet Member Children Services (Early Years) on what the main problems are facing the department and what is being done to address them. The Panel also reviewed its year on the Panel 2018/19 and discussed the draft Work Programme 2019/20.

We would like to thank Cllr King for giving the presentation and Cllr Pritchard and Julie Thomas for attending and answering 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:

Cabinet Member Presentation and Q&A

We were informed that the Corporate Parenting Board as well as the Panel will be looking at CAMHS this year.

We heard that the biggest group of looked after children (LAC) is the 10 – 15 age group, that the proportion is about 50/50 for children coming in at the age of 10 – 15

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and children that have come up from the lower age group 5 – 9 and that this information will be included in performance data going forward.

We discussed the issue that for LAC per 10,000 of population, the best performing Welsh council is way above the English average. We heard that there are a number of different reasons for this and we were pleased to hear that this is a priority for the Minister.

We heard that there is a Child and Family Improvement Programme for Swansea. The Panel is concerned about the lack of resources to carry out these plans. We will be adding 'Progress on Child and Family Improvement Programme' to the Work Programme 2019/20 as the Panel will want to monitor this.

You told us that you eventually hope to get to a point where the plan is co-produced with children.

We were informed that Swansea has the highest number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children after Cardiff and that this has increased our LAC numbers.

We heard that, on the Corporate Parenting Board, it will be important to build the confidence of members sitting on the Board to drive the strategy forward and meet with lead officers regularly to support identified actions to be completed and prepare the objective update reports for the Board.

We discussed the new Community Care Information System which is due in February 2020 and that you expect this date to be pushed back.

We raised the need to ensure the Council openly and honestly listens to the voice of the child, the family and the community. We feel that social workers need to listen to children and children need to be encouraged to speak up. We heard that in Swansea we have UNCRC that is encouraging children to speak out more. We also heard that the Department is talking to social workers all the time about how important the relationship is but there is tension to get paperwork done. Also, that it demands a cultural change and this is the direction the Council is moving in.

We heard that the Department has links with the university but would like to have more influence over its programme.

We informed you that organisations like 'Women's Aid' sometimes have placements for university students for 3 months. This gives them the opportunity to get some experience of what it is like in the real world.

We were pleased to hear that the Department is working hard to develop the work force and on the impact of secondary trauma.

Panel Review of the Year 2018/19 and draft Work Programme 2019/20

Panel members reviewed their year on the Child and Family Services Panel and discussed one question. Their thoughts are shown below for your information:

1. What has gone well?

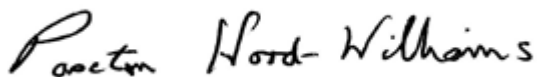
- Good to see detail in performance reports. Have to drill down through it but officers have been very informative
- Officer support great
- Debate has been good and response from officers
- Relationship with officers good and very open.

We agreed the Work Programme for 2019/20 and this is attached for your information. We also agreed to invite senior politicians from Welsh Government (and possibly the Children's Commissioner) to attend a Panel meeting to hear and respond to the Panel's issues and concerns.

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 please note that in this instance, a formal response is not required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paxton Hood-Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

PAXTON HOOD-WILLIAMS
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