



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard, Cabinet
Member for Supporting Communities

BY EMAIL

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Date 15 April 2021
Dyddiad:

CC Cabinet Members

Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities following the meeting of the Panel on 24 March 2021. It covers Wales Audit Office Report.

Dear Cllr Gibbard,

We would like to thank you, Jane Whitmore, Kelli Richards and Megan Stevens for attending the Panel meeting on 24 March to present an update on the WAO Report on Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and for answering the Panel's 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.

We noted that this is a matter of concern for Adult Services and Child and Family Services, that there is a range of work going on in this area despite the pandemic, and that there is a cross-council approach involving Social Services, Housing, Tackling Poverty and Third Sector organisations.

We heard that five generic recommendations came out of the WAO Report and that the Council has made good progress and has met all five of them. We also heard that Swansea's work around the Domestic Abuse Hub had a mention in the Report and was found to be an innovative way of working. We were very pleased to hear this.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU
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We noted that all teams sit under one portfolio in Child and Family Services, which makes moving of families in between different teams, as needs escalate and de-escalate, a much smoother process and families do not have to keep repeating their story as their plan goes with them. We were very pleased to hear this.

We were also pleased to hear that there is an emphasis on developing work with perpetrators of these crimes.

We noted that the report mentions a funding gap for prevention work and queried if there is currently enough funding for the work that needs to be done. We heard that there has been additional funding but there is still a gap. We discussed how funding is positive but comes with a risk as the work is funded by grants that are uncertain going forward. This is not helpful for sustainability and the long term. We heard how this issue is brought up with Welsh Government continually, as it needs to be mainstreamed. We asked if there is anything the Panel can do to help with this situation. Officers confirmed they will come back to us with any suggestions of how scrutiny can help.

You informed us that there is a lot of support available for everyone affected by domestic abuse and that people can go online to the Council's website www.swansea.gov.uk/youarenotalone if they need help or are worried about anyone else. We expressed our confidence in the support that was outlined.

We asked you to provide more information on prevention and work being carried out with children in particular, in respect of educating them as well as making them aware of support. We heard that the domestic abuse hub is preventative but is secondary and that the new approach is primary prevention. Welsh Government is encouraging a 'whole school' approach and it has been incorporated into school's new curriculum. You told us you felt it would be useful if schools could have a domestic abuse governor looking out for staff too and that it is all about awareness raising. We agreed that our role as governor in schools is very important and asked if it is possible to arrange training for all councillors. You supported this suggestion and agreed, along with officers, to put this in place.

We raised the issue of men suffering from domestic abuse, and queried if it is just as easy for them to get support. We heard that men have access to services too but that data shows the majority of victims are women, although numbers have been increasing for men recently.

We discussed our belief that male victims are under reported due to ego and stigma. Officers agreed and suggested that the numbers we know are probably far less for men and for women.

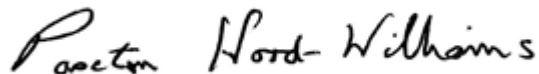
We were very surprised and dismayed to hear that 4,300 children are affected by domestic violence in Swansea.

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 provide a formal written response by 06 May 2021 to the following:

- Information on how the Panel can assist with lobbying Welsh Government regarding mainstreaming of grant funding.
- Training to be put in place for all councillors as governors to raise awareness.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paxton Hood-Williams". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Paxton" and last name "Hood-Williams" clearly distinguishable.

PAXTON HOOD-WILLIAMS
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