



To:
Councillor Mark Child
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and
Community Health Services

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Date 20 December 2021
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BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

Summary: This is a letter from the Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Community Health Services following the meeting of the Panel on 30 November 2021. It covers Matters Arising, Update on Management of Covid and Performance Monitoring.

Dear Cllr Child

The Panel met on 30 November to receive an update on Management of Covid and the Performance Monitoring Report.

We would like to thank you and Dave Howes 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.

The main issues discussed are summarised below:

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Under matters arising we raised a query about an article published on Wales Online on 20 November 2021, as it appeared that the media did not report a response from the City and County of Swansea. We heard that there was a response from City and County of Swansea, but it was hidden on the online link. The Director of Social

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Services agreed to circulate a copy of the response to Panel Members for information and stated that the Authority was working with this individual and the family prior to the article and that the intervention the family was looking for is now in place and the family is happy.

The response was circulated to the Panel following the meeting.

Update on Management of Covid and Performance Monitoring

We heard that Covid infection rates are still at a high level locally but are much lower than the Welsh average and that you are not seeing an indication of other respiratory illnesses at the moment but it is still early in the winter period. We also heard that not enough is known about the new Omicron variant yet.

We heard that the overall impact of Covid, with a combination of community spread and a direct impact on workforce across Health and Social Care, is that you are often having to operate with 40% of the workforce missing on any one day, particularly in domiciliary care. We also heard that there is some residential care market fragility and an impact on acute clinical teams and health teams in the community. We were informed that demands for community services are currently very high as the backlog of need has flowed back into the system.

We heard that providers do not have enough staff to fulfil their runs and that the Authority is having to pick up packages for maintenance care but is having to use the reablement team to do this. We also heard that there is real pressure in the system and the Authority is having to use more bridging and temporary placement packages. On a regional basis, we were informed that together with the Health Board, the Directorate has moved to commissioning far more additional placements from the external market to bridge the gap for individuals who are stuck in hospital, unable to access domiciliary care and unable to access community reablement. We heard that you are currently using residential care capacity to cover all demands and that there is concern you will run out of places for individuals that would usually need residential care.

We heard that it was always the intention, during the Pandemic, to prioritise urgent work – safeguarding, risk of breakdown, pressure on hospitals etc – and for some of the more routine work to go on the back burner, with the intention to get back to it in early 2021. However, you have never had the opportunity to catch up on the backlog which has got bigger and bigger. We also heard that the Authority plans to commission out some of this backlog to catch up with work before Spring 2022 and that you have started to commission some of this work to an external provider.

We heard that you have started to see some pressures in mental health services due to limited capacity linked to staff absences in Health and Social Care but that you are able to give assurances around the most urgent interventions. We also heard that, alongside Health, you are trying to strengthen lower-level mental health support using regional grants and money recycled from core budgets into strengthening the Third Sector offer, however the community element is also under severe pressure.

We were informed that there has been national press around Care Inspectorate Wales review of the effectiveness of Local Authorities and Health Boards support to carers.

We heard that it presented an honest picture, that it is not as good as it needs to be and that it is far below the expectations we should all have but that it is not a surprise. We were informed that it is not good enough across Wales, locally or regionally. We also heard that in the current climate you are not able to tackle fundamental structural weaknesses but have, with input from the Carers Forum, been able to come up with a range of alternative ways to support carers. We understand that a lot more needs to be done and that there is a focus on this particular area locally and regionally.

You stated that the Directorate has some level of difficulty in every area, that the Welsh Government is aware of the situation and is trying to do what it can. You also informed us discussions are being had on the Social Services budget going forward and how this might be reflective of what we are going through and what we are learning now.

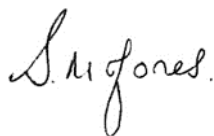
You told us that, at the moment, you do not have enough people and the Directorate is prioritising safeguarding and reducing within limits what the Authority provides to try and get over this. You stated that you have admiration for staff who are continuing to maintain a level of service which is phenomenal in these circumstances.

We commented in relation to carers, thanking the workforce, who are very much frontline, for all the work they are doing. We also paid tribute to all families and friends who have stepped up and shown total commitment in such difficult times. We believe the true picture of the impact on carers will be seen in the next six months to a year as we recover from the pandemic. We are thankful for all the work that has been done but there is a need to keep going and continue to provide this service.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, but in this instance, a formal written response is not required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'S. Jones'.

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