



County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2000

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2000

CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2022, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk

Correspondence the following the meeting – Items 4, 5 6 and 7 (Pages 3 - 14)

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Date: 20 October 2022

My Ref: CYP/LASSAR_Q1_UC/Oct22



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Ash Lister
Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's)
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Ash,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 OCTOBER 2022 –
COMMITMENT TO UNPAID CARERS; LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL SERVICES
ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22; AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES Q1 PERFORMANCE
2022/23**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of Cabinet proposals relating to the RPB's Commitment to Unpaid Carers; the Local Authority Social Services Annual Report 2021/22; and Q1 Performance – the latter two Items will be commented on together in this letter. Please also pass on our thanks to Sarah McGill and Deborah Driffield.

The Committee commends the two reports to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting today. A further letter on the Youth Justice Service will follow in due course, as this was not a pre-decision item.

As Chair of this Committee, I would again wish to take the opportunity to welcome you to your role as Cabinet Member responsible for Children's Social Services, and I will strive to ensure that the positive relationship we have with Children's Services continues and that we remain impartial and non-political in our dealings with you. Whilst our role involves us being a "critical friend", we recognise the complex issues you face in your role and we are here to understand the challenges, support you and officers, and champion improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people.

The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

Commitments to Unpaid Carers

The Committee noted the Cabinet report and would wish to be kept informed of the development and implementation of the Carers Action Plan, once available.

Local Authority Social Services Annual Report 2021/22/Q1 Performance

Members welcomed the opportunity to consider the LASSAR and Q1 Performance and did so in conjunction with each other (as well as the supporting documents to the LASSAR Item, such as the Directorate Delivery Plan) as an opportunity to “look back” at how the Service performed in continuing unprecedented circumstances, as well as the current and future priorities for Children’s Services. Specific comments are as follows:

Intervention and Review Hubs

Members asked for an update regarding the Intervention and Review Hubs and if there was evidence available in terms of performance. Deborah responded that she would produce a performance report for the Committee on some of the early findings and performance, including some examples of how the Hubs have helped families and their journey through the Hub. The Committee would welcome this report and look forward to receiving it in due course.

Statutory Visits

Linked with the above, whilst discussing Q1 performance, Members shared your concerns regarding the delays in carrying out statutory visits and the performance rates for carrying these out in time. Officers responded that they are focussing on this issue, including the use of mobile phone tech to improve reporting of statutory visits.

As part of its priorities for 2022/23, the Committee agreed that it wished to review and evaluate at how effective innovations introduced by Children’s Services (including the above Hubs) have been at a future CYPSC meeting. Reviewing improvements to key areas such as this will be crucial part of that piece of work. I will link with you and officers to agree the most appropriate time for this information to be reported to CYPSC, though any initial thoughts via your response would be appreciated.

Recruitment of Social Workers

Members asked a number of questions around the recruitment of social workers and asked whether there had been discussions with Welsh Government on this issue. We enquired about the sustainability of the market supplement; the potential of other local authorities “competing” via this kind of incentive; pay and conditions; and losing social workers to border authorities in England. We also asked whether students in schools, colleges and universities were being approached to work for Cardiff and whether a university conversion course had been explored.

We appreciated that much is being done to try to mitigate the challenges on all these matters and the reality of the situation not just faced by Cardiff but across the country. We asked whether, as a Committee, there was anything we could do to lend our support to the Cabinet and Service Area to get behind you and even lobby Welsh Government on this issue if required. We wish to reiterate that support, and I will make arrangements (via the Scrutiny Officer) to meet with you and officers (in consultation with CYPSC Members) on how we could do this and what would be the most effective way to do this.

We would also **request** that the potential of a university conversion be explored and reported back to this committee at a later date.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

We asked questions relating to whether there were processes in place with internal partners to support those children and young people with ALN to ensure sufficient safeguards are in place for them. Officers responded comprehensively on the Service’s relationship with Education and were told about the “Virtual Head Teacher” initiative. We would be interested to hear more about this, so will make contact with Education colleagues to obtain this information.

Children Looked After (CLA)

Given the new legislation relating those young people who may have ALN, and how this is impacting on those who are also CLA, Members asked what evidence and assurances could be given in relation to the Service Area monitoring this, particularly attendance at school. Therefore, Members would request information relating to this, including any challenges the Service might be facing in this area.

Placements

We asked a number of questions around placements and the need to ultimately ensure better outcomes for children & young people, balanced against the shortage of placements and the complexities of registration of placements. We **request** that a verbal briefing be held with yourself, officers and CYPSC Members on the issue so that we can gain a better insight and understanding of placements, and the need to ensure that the language we use on this issue is carefully considered and communicated correctly. I will ask the scrutiny officer to link with you and Children's Services officers to arrange this.

Data and Information

On considering both the LASSAR and Q1 performance, Members agreed that some of the data collected and presented as required by Welsh Government was not always a useful way of measuring "performance". We agree that data and information needs to be outcome based, and there is an opportunity for any reader of data and information to "look behind the figures" and not simply base judgements on quantitative figures. As a committee, we again offer our support in approaching Welsh Government on this issue, and I will make arrangements (via the Scrutiny Officer) to meet with you and officers (in consultation with CYPSC Members) on how we could do this and what would be the most effective way to do this.

During the consideration of Q1 performance, Members discussed the target rates shown in the report in relation to social worker recruitment and gaining a better understanding of this. In response, Deborah offered to undertake a session on this issue, to include receiving some anonymised examples in relation to Child Protection Referrals and those coming in via the Front Door. I will ask the scrutiny officer to link with you and Children's Services officers to arrange this, to be potentially held at the same time as the "placements" briefing.

Complaints

During Sarah's statement, she acknowledged that complaints remain an issue across the Service and that she would be looking at this as a priority. Members would welcome a report back on this issue, once available.

To recap, this Scrutiny Committee will commit to the following:

1. Link with yourself and officers to explore how this scrutiny committee can help and support you in ongoing discussions regarding the recruitment of social workers; and improved data and information required by Welsh Government.

2. Link with you and officers to arrange a verbal briefing/session with us to consider placements; and for us to gain a better understanding of the role of Social Workers, including receiving some anonymised examples in relation to Child Protection Referrals and those coming in via the Front Door.
3. Link with officers in Education & Lifelong Learning to gain some further information on the “Virtual Head Teacher” and other developments of work with Children’s Services.

We request the following information from you:

4. A performance report on some of the early findings and performance from the Interventions and Reviewing Hubs, including some examples of how the Hubs have helped families and their journey through the Hubs.
5. Report back on evidence and assurances in relation to the Service Area monitoring new legislation relating those young people who may have ALN who are also CLA, particularly attendance at school, including any challenges the Service might be facing in this area.
6. Some initial thoughts on when the most appropriate time for CYPSC would be to receive a report to Committee on Innovations in Children’s Services.
7. That the potential of a university conversion be explored and reported back to this committee at a later date.
8. A report back on addressing complaints be submitted to this Committee, once available.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light grey rectangular background.

COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: CYPSC Members

Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People and Communities

Deborah Driffield, Director of Children's Services

Liz Williams/Debra Willis, PA to the Corporate Director

Jennifer Goss, Cabinet Support Office

Kim Thorpe, PA to the Director of Children's Services

Jo Watkins, Cabinet Support Manager

Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms

Cllr Adrian Robson – Group Leader

Cllr Rhys Taylor – Group Leader

Andrea Gibson – Group Leader

David Hugh Thomas – Chair Governance & Audit Committee

Date: 28 October 2022

My Ref: CYP/YJS/Oct22



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

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Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Ash Lister
Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's)
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Ash,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 OCTOBER 2022 –
YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE UPDATE**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of the latest developments in relation to the Youth Justice Service. Please also pass on our thanks to Graham Robb, Sarah McGill and Deborah Driffield.

The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward. As many of the issues we have raised in this letter make reference to Education and schools, Cllr Merry, Mel Godfrey and Mike Tate will be cc'd into this letter for information.

The Committee welcomed the update arising from the HMIP inspection and subsequent report, and the new YJS Strategy "Building Safer Futures Together". Members noted Graham's update on the new Quality Assurance Framework being considered by the Youth Justice Board in the near future; the need to look at the sub-committee; health pathways; Court processes; and implications for education engagement and links into YJS. Deborah followed this up with additional information on partnerships being an ongoing focus; and the need to engage better with girls and young women. The Committee would wish to be kept updated on all these issues going forward.

Specific issues arose as follows:

Demand on the Service and Capacity/Support for staff

Members asked a number of questions regarding capacity and demand on staff and welcomed the news of a 4th Operational Manager; and that the OM for YJS being solely focussed on this area. We remain committed to monitoring the capacity and support arrangements for management and staff via the YJS quarterly performance reports.

Court Disposals

Members raised the issue of court disposals remaining “inadequate”. Officers responded that there is a need for better data and baseline information, and this will be a focus in the next 6 months. Therefore, the Committee **requests** a detailed progress update on this at its next scheduled update in January 2023 and a further update in April 2023.

Data

A number of questions were asked around the data presented to Committee, namely:

1. The significant increase in offending in Q1, and why the action that has been taken to date may not be working.
2. The spikes into referrals into the MASH between March and May of this year and some further commentary on this, including getting behind the figures to explain whether there were any incidents that could explain this.

Due to connectivity issues, these questions were unable to be answered in detail at the meeting, so we would therefore **request** this information in the response to this letter.

Partnerships

Members asked a number of questions around partnerships, including the following:

Internal Partnerships/Joint Working across the Council

We asked questions around the partnership with education and the impact of reduced timetables for those in the YJS, the Bryn y Deryn PRU and the support in place to reintroduce young people back into mainstream education. We were pleased to hear that baseline data had now been established and that the service is on a journey with Education. However, we heard that this is an area of work that

needs improvement and that a very significant piece of work around wraparound support is required, and a corporate approach needed. We would **request** that we are kept updated on this issue and it be reported back to us at the next YJS Update in January 2023.

In addition to this, we would also **request** (in the response to this letter) a list of internal partners/ directorates that are engaged with the YJS and what support they provide and role they play – for example, housing; community safety etc.

Local Partnership Boards

Members enquired about support and commitments from senior leadership Boards such as the PSB and RPB. Whilst we were assured that the commitments were there, we agreed that ensuring there should be more focus on connections and alignments, and that support and interventions at the right time should be a focus for the Boards. We would **request** further information and feedback from the Boards on how this will work in practice at your next update in January 2023.

At a future meeting, we would wish to invite senior partners to address the Committee to give their views, and will factor in inviting them to a future session. We are particularly interested in hearing from Health. We acknowledge that engagement, pathways and input from health (particularly around mental health) had improved, but were concerned to hear that access to therapy is limited and capacity was a significant issue, and better data around speech and language, trauma, and bereavement was required.

UK Government

We asked a question around the relationship and liaison with UK Government, particularly the Ministry of Justice and Home Office. Due to connectivity issues, these questions were unable to be answered in detail at the meeting, so we would therefore **request** this information in the response to this letter.

3rd Sector and other potential partnership opportunities

We asked whether the YJS had engaged with 1 Million Mentors. Officers responded they had not but would explore this and report back at a later date. We therefore **request** that an update be provided at our January 2023 meeting.

Members also discussed the role of third sector organisations and if any arrangements with Barnados, NSPCC and Action for Children were in place (particularly around serious organised crime and early intervention), or if there were any practices the YJS could learn from such organisations. We **request** that this information be provided in response to this letter.

Diversity and Proportionality

Members enquired as to the proportionality of black young people in the YJS; and how engaged the YJS was with SW Police on this issue. We welcomed the news of targeted work in communities by community groups was taking place and would **request** more detail on this at the next Update in January 2023. We recognise the need to use 2021 census data to ensure that a clear picture of the population base (and the emerging picture on young people differs from overall population) and the need to identify the geographical makeup of the City, so that further targeted work could be undertaken. We would **request** that a briefing on this issue be presented to Committee once available. Please provide an indicative date for this, so we can timetable this into our work programme accordingly.

We asked a question regarding 10–14-year-olds and whether the numbers that were presented represent a trend in Cardiff and whether this was a worry for the Service. Officers responded that there was a need to focus, engage and provide prevention services with schools at an early stage, and we would **request** to receive further information on this at your next update to Committee in January 2023.

To recap, we request the following information from you:

In response to this letter:

1. Reasons for the significant increase in offending in Q1, and why the action that has been taken to date may not be working.
2. Reasons for the spikes into referrals into the MASH between March and May of this year and some further commentary on this, including getting behind the figures to explain whether there were any incidents that could explain this.
3. A list of internal partners/ directorates that are engaged with the YJS and what support they provide and role they play – for example, housing; community safety etc.
4. A response relating to the relationship and liaison with UK Government, particularly the Ministry of Justice and Home Office.
5. Further information on the role of third sector organisations and if any arrangements with Barnardo's, NSPCC and Action for Children were in place (particularly around serious organised crime and early intervention), or if there were any practices the YJS could learn from such organisations.

6. A briefing on diversity and proportionality be presented to Committee once available (using 2021 census data). Please provide an indicative date for this, so we can timetable this into our work programme accordingly.

To be reported back to CYPSC in January 2023 as part of the next YJS Update.

In addition to the performance data and update document usually provided, the following also be included:

7. Court Disposals - a detailed update on progress in improving court disposals be provided, with a further update in April 2023.
8. Partnership with Education – response regarding the impact of reduced timetables for those in the YJS; the Bryn y Deryn PRU; the support in place to reintroduce young people back into mainstream education; and developments around providing wraparound support.
9. Further information from senior leadership Boards on their support and commitment to ensure more focus on connections and alignments are made, at the right time, with the right interventions.
10. Outcome from any discussions with 1 Million Mentors.
11. Further information on 10–14-year-olds in the YJS in Cardiff and what was being done to address this, including the need to focus, engage and provide prevention services with schools at an early stage.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light grey rectangular background.

COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: CYPSC Members

Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People and Communities
Deborah Driffield, Director of Children's Services
Graham Robb, Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Board
Angharad Thomas, Operational Manager, YJS
Liz Williams/Debra Willis, PA to the Corporate Director
Jennifer Goss, Cabinet Support Office
Kim Thorpe, PA to the Director of Children's Services
Cllr Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Education
Mel Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Mike Tate, Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Mel Jackson, Cabinet Support Office
Helen Eager, PA to the Director of Education & LL
Louise Spain, PA to the Assistant Director of Education & LL
Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms
Cllr Adrian Robson – Group Leader
Cllr Rhys Taylor – Group Leader
Andrea Gibson – Group Leader
David Hugh Thomas – Chair Governance & Audit Committee