

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/JointScrutinyJuly18

6 July 2018

Councillor Susan Elsmore

Cabinet Member Social Care, Health & Wellbeing

Councillor Graham Hinchey

Cabinet Member Children & Families

County Hall

Cardiff

CF10 4UW



Dear Susan and Graham,

JOINT CYPSC/CASSC MEETING – 4 JULY 2018 – LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

As Chair of the joint meeting of the Children & Young People and Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committees, I wish to thank you and officers for attending Committee and providing Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the Local Authority Social Services Annual Report 2017/18, prior to its consideration by Cabinet on the 12th July. Members of both Committees have requested that I feed back the following comments and observations to you.

Members were pleased with the progress outlined in the Annual Report and commend it to Cabinet. As you will be aware, many Members echoed your gratitude to the work done by yourselves, Tony Young, Amanda Phillips and other senior officers in greatly improving Social Services in Cardiff, and agree that the Annual Report sets a benchmark for work going forward and the appointment of the new Director of Social Services.

Members considered and noted responses in relation to the monitoring and review of budgets; the ongoing work in relation to joining up services with partners, particularly health; the proposed review of the Integrated Children's Centre model; the increase of homes for children in Cardiff; and the issues relating to the sustainability of the domiciliary care market.

Further discussion areas were:

Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers

The recruitment and retention of social workers was a recurring line of questioning throughout the meeting, with Members pressing the Panel for responses in relation to what ideas/plans were in place to incentivise the recruitment of social workers. Members fully acknowledged the wider issues regarding recruiting and retaining social workers, which not only affected Cardiff but many other cities throughout the UK.

However, Members concluded that further work needed to be done to widen the scope in relation to **recruitment**. This included:

- Further incentives to develop support staff from within Social Services - provide them with the opportunities to progress to the Social Work degree.
- Explore the possibility of extending opportunities wider across the Council, including those currently in redeployment, or those who may wish to embark on a change of career/direction.
- Working with organisations such as Social Care Wales, HE and FE providers and the Open University to further open up opportunities for recruiting social workers. This could include the potential for flexible learning options.
- Explore what is happening in other core cities in tackling this issue to learn from examples of good practice.

Whilst Members appreciated that a new social media campaign had been launched which highlighted issues such as the Signs of Safety framework; stable management structure; policies in terms of provision; and strong and frequent supervision and support, more needed to be done to promote this further, as well as offer real incentives to show that the Council supports potential new recruits and their well-being.

Members also discussed issues in relation to the **retention** of staff in certain areas of social work – particularly child protection. Members felt that further work was needed to explore how the Council can retain social workers in this critical area for the longer term. Members felt that child protection, by its very nature, was a particularly stressful area of work, which led to staff moving out of these posts as quickly as they could. Members stated that there

was a need to try and address this issue and develop further incentives and initiatives to attract people to the posts and be able to retain them for a longer term.

To this end, both Committees recommend that a collaborative task group be established with Cabinet Members, senior officers and Scrutiny Members to look at this issue in detail. It is recommended that the Social Services Directorate be responsible for taking forward this work, and for Scrutiny Members from both Committees be invited to take part. The aim of the Task Group should be to develop a recruitment and retention Strategy, to work alongside the wider Workforce Plan.

Care Leavers/ Homelessness Performance Indicator

On considering the performance indicator *“the percentage of all care leavers who have experienced homelessness during the year”* and its result of 21.0% in 2017/18, Members were informed that the rigid definition of the Indicator was the reason for this result. Ifran Alam suggested that he could provide Members with a further breakdown of results and Members of both Committees would therefore wish to receive this information, to include details of those young people in flats, gateway accommodation etc. as well as further information on those exiting prison or young offenders institutions.

Consultation

The Director's Summary of Performance outlined some of the problems faced by the Directorate in relation to “qualitative surveys” that are a requirement under the SSWB Act. These aim to measure service users' perceptions and experiences to inform service improvements and good practice. Members were disappointed to read that, despite more surveys being issued during 2017/18, return rates were lower than expected. Members believe that robust qualitative data and information to drive forward improvement is critical, and therefore request that further work be undertaken to address this issue and explore ways in which take-up of completing the qualitative surveys can be increased and sustained in future years.

Future Collaborative Working

During the Way Forward discussion, Members considered ways in which Scrutiny could collaborate further with Cabinet Members and the Directorate to address a range of issues that the Service faces, and be part of developing and implementing ideas and solutions to these issues.

Members felt that developing a more open relationship with the Directorate could provide an extended pool of knowledge in identifying improvements in relation to service delivery, policy development etc. This could potentially follow a similar suggestion set out under the recruitment and retention part of this letter. Members therefore recommend that the Directorate explore the potential of developing a mechanism to include Scrutiny Members in service and policy development at a more informal level. It is recommended that this be done in consultation with the Chairs of both Scrutiny Committees in the first instance.

To summarise, this letter requests:

- A response in relation to the recommendation to establish a Task Group to look at recruitment and retention of social workers;
- Further data and information on the PI relating care leavers and homelessness;
- A response in relation to how the Council will address increasing return rates as part of the statutory qualitative survey; and
- The Directorate link with the Chairs of both Scrutiny Committees to explore ways in which Cabinet and Scrutiny Members and officers can work closer together to explore ideas and solutions across the Directorate.

Thank you again to you and officers for attending. I hope you find our comments and recommendations useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Joint Meeting of CYPSC and CASSC

CC: Councillor Mary McGarry, Chairperson Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Sarah McGill – Corporate Director, People & Communities

Irfan Alam – Assistant Director for Children's Services

Jo Watkins – Cabinet Business Manger