

Date: 16 September 2020

My Ref SS/CYP/AEJ/LASSR19\_20



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Councillor Graham Hinchey  
Cabinet Member for Children and Families  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Graham,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020  
– LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT 2019/20**

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you for attending Committee on the 15 September 2020. I would also like to thank officers for attending and answering Members' questions in relation to the Local Authority Social Services Report 2019/20.

Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity again, on behalf of the Committee, to thank Claire Marchant for her open, transparent and honest relationship she had with myself and fellow Committee Members. We wish her all the very best in her new post.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity review the Report, and commend it to Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Members have requested that I feed back the following comments, observations and recommendations to you, structured by theme for ease of reference.

**Recruitment and Retention of Staff**

Members acknowledged the effective practice highlighted in the report and the recognition by yourself and officers of the need to continue to address the areas for improvement. You and officers outlined the measures that have been taken to recruit and retain Social Workers, and Members acknowledge the initiatives the Service has put in place to reduce staff vacancies. Members were pleased to hear that vacancies had reduced from the time of the report (34.4%) to around 28% at Quarter 2 in 2020/21. Members agreed that this issue needs to be kept under close review, and therefore **recommend** that this information is presented to the Committee quarterly, along with the wider quarterly performance report.

## **Engagement and Consultation with Children & Young People and their Families/Carers**

Whilst Members welcomed the update in relation to consultation and engagement with young people and their families/carers, they agreed that much work still needs to be done in relation to finding innovative ways of working to improve the numbers of people engaging with the council and its partners, thus enabling this to become part of the “every day” process in information gathering going forward. This echoed the concerns of the Committee at our July meeting whilst considering the Youth Justice Service. We therefore recommend that an update on consultation and engagement with children & young people and their families/carers across Social Services be considered by this Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time during the coming months. We would welcome an indicative date of when we are likely to receive this in your response to this letter, so we can include it in our work programme accordingly.

## **Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh**

Members were satisfied with the response received regarding the Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh, but would **recommend** that a timetable on the development and implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy refresh be submitted to the Committee setting out key milestones, so that this Scrutiny Committee can consider key stages of the refresh at the appropriate time.

## **Diversity of Foster Carers**

Members noted the response in relation to increasing the number of BAME foster carers, and welcomed the achievements made in relation to increasing the number of BAME people involved in adoption. It was stated at the meeting that the Covid-19 pandemic had had an impact in taking work forward in relation to BAME foster carers, so this Committee **recommends** that it receives an update on this issue at an appropriate time during the coming months. We would welcome an indicative date of when we are likely to receive this in your response to this letter, so we can include it in our work programme accordingly.

## **Child Protection Register**

Members welcomed information received in relation to the number of days children were placed on the child protection register and agree that this is a complex issue that requires further investigation and clarification. Members were particularly interested in the piece of work Deborah and her team are undertaking on this issue, which will include looking at the number of re-registrations on the register. It was suggested that the output from this study could be considered at a future meeting of this Committee, and therefore we **recommend** that the output report be submitted when available. We would welcome an indicative date of when we are likely to receive this in your response to this letter, so we can include it in our work programme accordingly.

## Vulnerable Groups

Members questioned you and officers on issues relating to young carers and care leavers. It was suggested that the recent presentation from the Into Work Team on these Groups could be considered by this Scrutiny Committee. I will arrange with the Scrutiny Officer to link with the Into Work Team to organise this.

## Transition Arrangements

Members noted that transition arrangements for particular groups of children and young people was highlighted as an area for improvement in the Report. We will consider this issue as part of our work programming discussions in the coming weeks. In addition, it was suggested that a visit to Ty Storrie could take place by Members of the Committee, and I will task the Scrutiny Officer to make arrangements with appropriate officers.

## Young People not in Education, Employment or Training/ Young Homeless

Members were concerned by the results of performance indicators contained within the LASSR, as follows:

- *The percentage of all care leavers who are in education, training or employment at 12 months after leaving care - 2019/20 = 54.1% (40 / 74)*
- *The percentage of all care leavers who are in education, training or employment at 24 months after leaving care  
2019/20 = 41.5% (39 / 94)*

Members noted the work that was being progressed in relation to this, but agreed that a better understanding of this issue is required. Therefore, the Committee **recommends** that a report on this issue be brought to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time during the coming months. We would welcome an indicative date of when we are likely to receive this in your response to this letter, so we can include it in our work programme accordingly.

I hope you find our comments and observations useful. In summary, the Committee requires a response on the following issues;

1. It is **recommended** that information in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff, and vacancy levels is presented to the Scrutiny Committee quarterly, along with the wider quarterly performance report;
2. It is **recommended** that an update on consultation and engagement with children & young people and their families/carers across Social Services be considered by this Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time during the coming months – please indicate an appropriate timeframe for this.
3. Provide a timetable on the development and implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy refresh setting out key milestones, so that this Scrutiny Committee can consider key stages of the refresh at the appropriate time.

4. It is **recommended** that this Scrutiny Committee receives an update on this issue at an appropriate time during the coming months on increasing the number of BAME foster carers - please indicate an appropriate timeframe for this.
5. It is **recommended** that the output from the study on the Child Protection Register be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee when available - please indicate an appropriate timeframe for this.
6. It is **recommended** that a report on support for NEETS and Young Homeless be brought to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time during the coming months - please indicate an appropriate timeframe for this.

I look forward to hearing from you, with a response to the above recommendations.

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. Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services  
Deborah Driffield, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Cabinet Support Office