

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

14 November 2014

Councillor Julia Magill  
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW



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Dear Julia

Thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to help introduce the **Progress report on Recommendation 2 and 6 of the Estyn Inspection letter**,. I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar, Carol Jones, Angela Kent, Simon Morris, Phil Norton, Neil Hardee and Marie Rosenthal for their contribution to the various elements of the report. Members were particularly pleased to be able to hear from and question officers who were directly involved in implementing the actions to address these recommendations. Following consideration of the monitoring reports presented at the meeting and answers to Members' questions, the Committee has asked me to write to you with the following comments, concerns and requests for information.

### **Recommendation 2 - Exclusions**

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be updated on the progress being made in addressing this part of recommendation 2 and in particular the good progress being made in reducing exclusions across Cardiff's Schools.

Members did however note with concern that two performance indicators had deteriorated and following further analysis members noted that this had resulted from only small number of schools. During the way forward section of the meeting, the Committee agreed to request details of the department's actions to address the deterioration of these two performance indicators in the schools.

### **Recommendation 2 - NEETS**

The Committee welcomed the positive picture being portrayed, although members did note that precise data was not yet available. Members particularly appreciated the description of the work being undertaken with the 180 originally identified NEETs and that through intervention 121 now have a destination with 23 fully engaged.

### **Recommendation 6 - Scrutiny**

Members appreciated the summary given by Marie Rosenthal and noted the progress that had been made in supporting Members in addressing the actions for this Committee. The Members also noted that following a review of the Partnership



Scrutiny Panel it was now agreed that Partnership issues would be considered directly by each Scrutiny Committee, and Members further agreed to receive all children & young people partnership reports.

I hope that these comments, and advice, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff's pupils and I look forward to receiving the requested additional information and a positive response to this letter within the next month.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK**  
**Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Nick Batchelar  
CC Marie Rosenthal  
CC Carol Jones  
Cc Angela Kent  
CC Simon Morris  
CC Phil Norton  
CC Neil Hardee

**CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET**



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My Ref / Fy Ref: NB/HAE/JM/CC/CG

Your Ref / Eich Ref : Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

Date / Dyddiad: 22nd May 2015

Councillor Richard Cook  
Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Cook

Thank you for your comments in relation to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2014 in your letter of 14<sup>th</sup> November 2015 addressed to Cllr Julia Magill.

You requested details of the department's actions to address concerns in relation to two aspects of performance in exclusions from schools.

Progress in reducing the overall number of short fixed term exclusions in the primary phase has been slow due to the high rates in a small number of schools; they are Bryn Hafod, Glan Yr Afon, Coed Glas, Herbert Thompson, Llanedeyrn, St Cuthberts, St Patricks, Trelai, Springwood, Coed Y Gof and Windsor Clive.

Progress in reducing short fixed term exclusions has also been too slow in some secondary phase schools; Cantonian, Willows, Glyn Derw, Michaelston Community College, St Illtyd's.

The end of spring term data has highlighted schools that are still relatively high excluders and therefore require challenge/ support visits. These schools have either been contacted to set dates or these visits have already taken place. They are Bryn Hafod, Glan Yr Afon, Glyn Coed, Herbert Thompson, Llanedeyrn, St Cuthberts, St Patricks, Trelai, Springwood, Coed Y Gof and Windsor Clive.

The consultation period for the proposed strategy for reducing fixed term exclusions has been completed and once the all Wales data for 13-14 is released the strategy will be finalised.



Concerns were raised by the secondary head teachers' group around placement of pupils. The disproportionate admissions of hard to place pupils has been addressed by meeting with a representative group of heads and reaching agreement on a protocol for admissions in such cases.

A review of the step 3 and 4 provision and the role of the Team Around the School has been carried out at the Glyn Derw Michaelston Federation.

The in-year data shows reductions or maintenance of low exclusion levels in 13 High schools. Some schools have addressed the exclusion concerns having been challenged via the team around the school process and challenge/support visits.

All Wales data for 13/14 is due in May for national comparison.

The Behaviour Support Team has sound intelligence on the specific situations in each school and reports on a regular basis. If maintained at the current rate there would be a fall compared to last year.

Permanent exclusions and average days lost to exclusion continue to be low.

The LA Behaviour Support Team have a detailed understanding of the specific situation in each school, and reports that if current rates are maintained there will be an overall improvement on fixed term exclusions compared to last year.

I hope this provides you with the information you requested.

Yours sincerely  
Yn gwyir



**Cllr /Y Cyng Julia Magill**  
**Cabinet Member for Education and Skills/**  
**Yr Aelod Cabinet Dros Addysg a Sgiliau**  
**Member for Llanishen and Thornhill /**  
**Aelod Dros Llanisien a Thornhill**

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

16 March 2015

Councillor Julia Magill  
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills  
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Dear Julia

Thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to help introduce the **Education Performance update, School Performance Monitoring Report and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme – refresh**. I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar, Carol Jones, Angela Kent, and Janine Nightingale for their presentations and contribution to the various elements of the agenda. Following consideration of the monitoring reports presented at the meeting and answers to Members' questions, the Committee has asked me to write to you with the following comments, concerns, requests for information and recommendations.

### **Education Performance - update**

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be updated on the progress, as shown in the quarter three report, being made by the Directorate, however following an analysis and explanation of the various elements of the performance report, Members considered that it was important that performance should be reported to Committee, as soon as possible after the end of the quarter. Members therefore recommended that future corporate performance reports must be presented in a more timely manner, so that they can review and assess up to date information.

### **Estyn monitoring – recommendation 3,5 & 6**

*Recommendation 3 – Make sure that the arrangements for delivering school improvement services challenge and support all schools effectively, in order to improve standards for learners in all key stages.*

The Committee was pleased to hear that the improvement processes had been strengthened with the Consortium and that officers felt that there was now better challenge and support from the Consortium's Challenge Advisors. Members were however concerned that the operation of the consortium was still "a developing situation" and although some areas were performing well the consortium was still not operating satisfactorily. Members requested clear assurance from you and the officers as to when the Consortium will be operating to an acceptable standard.

Members were also pleased to be informed that the school performance process was working well and schools were holding regular school improvement meetings.



The Committee noted the officers' confirmation that there was a high degree of confidence that some schools would be improving. The Committee will therefore be looking forward to seeing clear improvements, across all schools, when the next banding of Cardiff's Schools is published.

When Members reviewed the challenge process, officers stated that schools had to undertake a self assessment exercise, which identifies any changes in potential categorisation. As the Committee felt frustrated that improvements were not moving fast enough, Members requested copies of the latest school self assessments for the "red" schools so that they could see what potential progress was being made by each of the schools.

*Recommendation 5 – Improve Performance management process to ensure consistent approach to delivering objective*

The Committee welcomed the improvements made in the Corporate Performance Management Process and that there was now a consistent focus on the performance of schools. However Members considered it important that the Council should not lose sight of the progress being made by individual pupils.

In addition Members wish to highlight to Education officers that although Chairs of Governors were involved in school improvement meetings and plans, officers must ensure that all Governors are aware of the issues of concern and plans in place to improve the educational outcomes of pupils in their School.

*Recommendation 6 – Improve the scrutiny of local authority education service and partnership working.*

The Committee also reflected on actions relating to this recommendation as it was directed at this Committee together. Members considered the training they received was very good and should be repeated every two years as well as provided to all new committee Members. Members also stated that the analysis and presentation of education performance information had improved considerably over the years, however they were not always able to be presented with the full picture. As a result the Committee had agreed to undertake detailed investigations into selected schools, over the next few months, so that they can understand the challenges faced by schools.

### **School Performance Monitoring report**

The Committee welcomed the explanation of the National Categorisation and in particular the analysis of the categorisation of Cardiff's Schools against those of the Consortium and All Wales. Members also noted the Schools Causing Concern process which had been sharpened since September 2014, and now included holding Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors to account for the progress of improvement. However Members still expressed concern that some schools were not showing signs of improvement. The Committee expect to see significant improvements over the next year.

Members expressed some concern, that following their analysis of the performance of schools, it was apparent that there is a disproportionately high number of Faith and Welsh schools in the "red" and "amber" categories. Members requested that officers investigate the reasons for the high number of Faith and Welsh schools causing concern, and report back to Committee, on the actions that are being put in place to address this imbalance.

Members also noted that some High Schools categorised as "red", had feeder Primary Schools that were categorised "green or yellow". Members felt that this highlighted problems around the transition from Primary to Secondary as well as a possible change in the educational culture in some high schools. Members requested that Education Directorate and the Consortium should investigate these situations and report back to Committee with actions they had identified to address this situation.

Finally Members noted that officers stated that they expected year on year improvements in school's categorisation and as such the Committee will be looking, in future reports, for the evidence of this improvement.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme - Refresh**

Members welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the plans before they are presented to Cabinet, and identified a number of comments which could be taken into consideration by Cabinet when it considers this report on 19 March 2015. The Committee wished to reiterate to Cabinet that any refresh of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Plans must have as its primary aim "better outcomes for pupils".

Members noted that one of the aims of the refresh was to establish schools "to facilitate the development of community focussed schools for the benefit of the wider community across Cardiff". Members wish to emphasis to Cabinet that the development of any community facilities must be undertaken following discussions with neighbourhood partners, charities, youth service, and play providers, to ensure that the schools are truly community focussed.

Members expressed some concern that there seemed to be an over emphasis of Faith Schools projects being moved to the deferred list, as many were for the establishment of Nursery Units. Members noted that additional nursery places were being provided within other projects, however they considered that there would still be an in balance of places across the City, and this needed to be addressed as part of the refresh. The Committee requested details of the provision of nursery places across the City together with an explanation of the rational behind the prioritisation of projects and in particular the reasoning behind the deferral of the Nursery Unit projects.

Finally the Committee noted the refresh proposals included a New High School in the West of the City, which replaces Michaelston Collage and Glyn Derw High. Members wish to have assurance that you and officers have learnt from the issues identified at the New Eastern High and ensure that they are not replicated in the new school in the west.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff's pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK**  
**Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Nick Batchelar  
CC: Carol Jones  
CC: Angela Kent  
CC: Janine Nightingale  
CC: Cheryl Cornelius





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Date 10 April 2015

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH  
Your Ref:

Councillor Sue Lent  
Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years and Deputy Leader  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Sue

Thank you for attending Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 7 April 2015 to help introduce and respond to the **Integrated Family Support Team Annual Report, Quarter 3 Children's Services Performance report, Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers update, three Cabinet Responses to Task and Finish enquires and Audit Committee correspondence**. I would also like to thank the officers who attended for their full and honest answers that were provided at the meeting. Following consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee has asked me to write to you with the following comments, concerns and recommendations.

### **Integrated Family Support Team – Annual Report**

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the Team's third annual report, prior to its presentation to the Welsh Government. Members were pleased with the work of the team and the positive outcomes the various initiatives had achieved. However during the way forward section of the meeting Members did express some concern around some aspects of the report.

Members discussed in depth, with officers, the impact of the change in funding for the team. Originally funding was received directly and resources were allocated across Cardiff and the Vale on the basis of need. This resulted in 2/3 of resources being applied to Cardiff and 1/3 to the Vale. However Members were concerned to learn that funding was now included in the RSG settlement on a 50/50 basis. Members recommended that the Integrated Family Support Service Board ensure that resources are allocated on the basis of need.

Members also suggested that future annual reports should included information and data to help support the outcome measures and impact of the team's work, this could include:

- A termly assessment, from schools, of the changes in the children's education, during the course of the teams' intervention. This will compliment the happiness index; and
- Details of the cost benefit analysis of the teams work

Finally Members requested clarification of the outcome for the 89 children that had been worked with during last year as the presentation only gave details for 55 of the children.



## **Children's Services Quarter 3 Performance 2014/15**

The Committee was pleased to be informed that there have been general improvements in the overall performance of the service. In particular Members welcomed the percentage increase in the timeliness of core assessments and initial child protection conferences despite an overall increase in the number of referrals, as well as the number of core assessments and initial child protection conferences. Members were also pleased to see that the Managed Team had reduced the overall number of cases from 2,953 to 2,504, thereby bringing the social worker case load down to 18.4 cases.

In respect of the Managed Team, Members questioned the exit strategy, as the team were still dealing with 220 cases. Members were aware that these cases would now have to be allocated across the social workers. The Committee also expressed its concern that even though the Managed Team was always a temporary measure, it appeared that a robust exit strategy had not been developed.

Members recommended that urgent action is taken to develop a robust exit strategy, prior to the ending of the Managed Team's contract, as it became apparent that the transition would be challenging and involved a number of risks. Children's Services needs to ensure that social worker's workload is not adversely affected and a backlog does not build up again.

### **Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers**

The Committee was pleased to hear about the ongoing initiatives, which had been implemented to improve social worker recruitment and retention, including the re-branding of the service, reorganisation of the teams and the review of the processes.

Members focussed their questions on the timeliness of the recruitment process. Officers indicated that the process can take an average of four months to fill a vacant social worker post. The Committee considered this delay to be overly excessive, particularly from a safeguarding point of view, and could put children and young people at risk. Members stated that a maximum of 2 months should be the Council's target.

The Committee, during the way forward section of the agenda, recommended that the Council's Human Resources and Children's Services departments must urgently investigate the social worker recruitment process, identifying the areas of delay or blockage, and thereby develop an action plan to reduce the recruitment process for social workers to a target of two months.

### **Cabinet Responses**

The Committee was pleased to receive the positive responses to the Committee's three reports and noted that all recommendations had been accepted. Members did highlight that in respect of the Child Health and Disability response report, the attached action plan was dated June 2014. Members requested that a more up to date action plan be provided to Members as soon as possible.

## **Audit Committee Correspondence**

The Committee noted the Correspondence received from the Chairman of the Council's Audit Committee and endorsed my response to you. The Committee agreed that in accordance with the commitment made in the Joint Chairs letter to you, the Committee will include the issue in its future work programme.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to ask you and the officers, if the Committee's scrutiny of your items on the agenda had resulted or will result in any impact, change or review of the service provision covered by the reports.

In conclusion, thank you again for participating in this scrutiny, and we look forward to your response to the questions raised, requests for information and recommendations detailed above, within the next month.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK**  
**Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services  
Angela Bourge, Operational Manager, Strategy, Commissioning and Resources  
Sarah Woelk, Operational Manager, Child in Need Teams  
Debbie Martin-Jones, Operational Manager, Looked After Children Teams  
Cheryl Chapman, Service Manager for Integrated Family Support Service  
Kim Brown, Service Manager, Policy and Performance



## DEPUTY LEADER'S OFFICE

My Ref: CM30687

Your Ref:

Date: 12th May 2015

Councillor Richard Cook  
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Dear Richard

### Scrutiny CYP 7 April

Thank you for your letter of 10<sup>th</sup> April following my attendance with officers, at the C&YP Scrutiny Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

Further to the observations and questions of the committee as set out in letter I would respond as follows:-

#### 1. IFST Annual Report

I very much share your concerns, as does the service, regarding the change in the division of the funding formula which is inherently inequitable. Please be assured that the change has been introduced by the Welsh Government and not by the IFST Board. The Director has made representations and sought reassurance from Welsh Government officials as a result of which he has been advised that a straight 2, 3, 4 or 5 way split is being applied to all IFST across Wales irrespective of the size or needs of the respective authorities in each IFST area but that all authorities are required to fully contribute that sum back into a pooled budget to meet the needs of the regional footprint. In effect this changes little but begs the question of the reason for the distribution formula. WG has also advised that they are in the process of introducing new statutory guidance concerning regional governance, to support the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being Act and that IFST's among a range of other social services and integration strategies will be incorporated within that governance.

The committee's other comments concerning the shape and content of new year's Annual Report will be taken into consideration at the appropriate point in the cycle. Further information will also be provided regarding the outcome for all 89 of the children cited.

#### 2. The Managed Team Exit Strategy

I am unable to accept or agree with the comments of the committee that "a robust exit strategy had not been developed". On the contrary a



detailed options appraisal, incorporating the managed exit of the service, was taken fully into consideration in early 2015 and it was as a result of that appraisal that it was agreed to extend the contract of the team for a further 3 months to enable a safe and managed exit. This does not and could never mean that the exit of the managed team would be without risk or that it would not have the effect of increasing caseloads. Very little of the work of Children's Services is low risk and indeed the bulk is relatively high risk and complex work. The managed team enabled the service to manage down backlogs, prepare cases for closure which could be supported in other ways and reduce the caseload average from over 25 to a little over 18. This places the service in a much stronger position to manage existing work and new cases more effectively and ensure timely closure of work that is concluded and it is the intention to maintain the lower level of caseloads that have been secured. It is imperative to emphasise however that this is not guaranteed, since not all of the variables, not least of which is demand, are in the control of the service.

Please be assured that the Directorate is acutely conscious of the need to closely monitor caseloads in what is always a fast changing and volatile service and that in the event of the position deteriorating outside of safe limits, senior managers fully understand the need to act and to mitigate such a risk. Members will also be aware that the Directorate is leading the development of a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, and I am pleased to be able to advise you that this is now gaining real momentum with partners and elsewhere. One of the significant advantages of this development will be its clear capacity to mitigate the kind of demand pressures that feed through into caseload numbers. You may wish to receive a presentation of the MASH developments at a committee meeting in the near future.

**3. Recruitment**

I understand that Councillor Hinchey will be responding directly to the committee concerning the effectiveness of the process, following a recent review by HR, in response to your queries and rather than confusing matters with a separate reply, I would refer you to that.

**4. Child Health and Disability**

I understand your concerns regarding the timeliness of the cabinet response to the original Scrutiny Committee and agree that an update is now appropriate. This will be scheduled for the July committee.

Yours sincerely

*Sue J Lent*

**Councillor Sue Lent  
DEPUTY LEADER  
CABINET MEMBER FOR EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



# Is Anyone Better off?



- 23% of children's names have been removed from the CPR (30 children)
  - 26% of families have been closed to Children's Services (18 families)
  - 4% of children have been placed with family during the intervention (5 children)
  - 2% of children have been registered on the CPR (2 children)
- (to date the IFST has worked with a total of 89 children)**
- Almost all families worked with have engaged in support services to ensure sustainability of goals set.
  - Support workers continue to work alongside families to ensure families receive robust support in phase 2 of the intervention.
  - The IFST also measures family happiness and cohesion using the WEMWBS. To date all families report an improvement in happiness and family wellbeing in line with goal attainment.
  - Cost Benefit Analysis – to date we are measuring substantial savings to the public purse as a result of the IFST intervention.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

VALE of GLAMORGAN







My Ref: T: Scrutiny/CYP/MJH

Date: 10 April 2015

Councillor Graham Hinchey  
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance  
City of Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW



Dear Graham

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers – 7 April 2015.**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee, following its consideration of an update report on the Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers at its meeting on 7 April 2015. The Committee considers that the safeguarding of Children & Young People is a vital part of its work and Members feel that the timeliness of the recruitment of social workers is a key factor in safeguarding and our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

The Committee was informed during the meeting that there was a 25.3% social worker vacancy rate in Quarter 3 of 2014/15 and following detailed discussions with officers, Members were extremely concerned to be informed that the recruitment process takes up to four months. Members commented that a two month timescale should be the Council's maximum target.

The Committee, during the way forward section of the agenda, asked me to write to you to request that you and your Human Resources officers urgently undertake a detailed investigation, along with staff from Children's Services, into the Social Worker recruitment process. This investigation should identify any delays or barriers within the process, as well as develop an action plan to speed up the process to a target of two months.

I look forward to receiving a positive response to this letter, within the next 6 weeks.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a horizontal line underneath it.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK**  
**Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

Cc Philip Lenz, Corporate Chief Officer, Human Resources  
Cheryl Cornelius, Cabinet Support Manager



**CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET**

My Ref / Fy Ref: CM30735  
Your Ref / Eich Ref: T: Scrutiny/  
CYP/MJH



Date / Dyddiad: 15 May 2015

Councillor Richard Cook  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Cook

**Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee, Recruitment and Retention  
of Social Workers, 07 April 2015**

I refer to your letter of 10 April 2015 on behalf of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee which met on 07 April 2015.

The committee was concerned that the social worker vacancy factor in Children's Services was 25.3% in Quarter 3 and that the recruitment process could take up to four months to complete. The Committee stated that the recommended timescale for recruitment should be two months.

In response to your letter, an analysis has been undertaken of recruitment to social worker posts in Children's Services from April 2014 to March 2015.

Firstly, I would like to assure you that the recruitment team in HR People Services and Operational Managers in Children's Services have been working closely to ensure that recruitment of social workers is a priority and that social worker vacancies are filled in a timely manner. All social worker posts are advertised externally and also appear now on the Guardian newspaper website. There is a continuous advertisement for social workers on the Council's job pages.

The current vacancy rate in Children's Services for case management social workers is 22% (April 2015). This equates to a total of 26 vacancies across the service.

The Directorate has not recruited to a significant number of vacancies in Intake and Assessment whilst a review of the appropriate skill set for that service was undertaken. This is now complete and the posts will shortly be advertised. Two grade 8 posts in I&A have been advertised recently and one appointment was made.

In reviewing a sample of cases from the 62 social worker appointments, the average period from the closing date to the start date of the candidate was, in fact, 10 weeks. It should be noted that the recruitment process, from the date the post closes to the confirmation of appointment letter being sent to the candidate,

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could be achieved in a two month period provided that the recruitment policy is followed and the people involved in that process (manager, HR people Services, candidate, occupational health, referees and the Disclosure and Barring Service) deliver what they need to in a timely manner. Obviously, candidates have to work notice periods which can range from 1 to 3 months and this cannot be factored in to the time it takes to conclude the recruitment process as the Council has no control over notice periods.

An further analysis has been undertaken of 11 live recruitment cases (Appendix 1). These are cases where candidates have been offered posts but have not yet started.

The analysis has identified that there have been delays in the process for various reasons, for example:

- Delays in returning paperwork to HR by managers in the service
- candidates not returning the paperwork necessary to complete the pre-employment checks
- references not being received in a timely manner
- Disclosure and Barring Service certificates not being received in a timely manner (mostly due to candidates not producing the correct paperwork)
- Medical clearance being delayed (mainly due to candidates not returning the pre-employment questionnaire to Occupational Health, one candidate took 100 days)

There are a number of actions that are being taken in HRPS to address perceived delays in the recruitment process, and these are shown at Appendix 2.

In February 2015, the HRPS Recruitment Team was thanked by the Operational Managers in the service for the support that has been provided and continues to be provided in the recruitment of social workers.

I hope that this response assures the Committee that HR People Services is working very closely with the Directorate to try and ensure that these critical posts are recruited to in a timely manner and that everything possible is done to expedite the recruitment process.

HRPS will continue to monitor the situation in respect of recruitment of this group of staff and we will continue to identify improvements to the recruitment process whilst maintaining the requirement to recruit to national standards to ensure the appropriate safeguarding of children in the City of Cardiff.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,  
Yn gwyir,



**Councillor / Y Cyngorydd Graham Hincley**  
**Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance**  
**Aelod Cabinet dros Wasanaethau Corfforaethol a Perfformiad**

## Analysis of Live Cases of Recruitment to Social Workers in Children's Services

### Breakdown of Vacancies at 13 April 2015

Team	Number of Vacancies	Percentage
Children in Need	10	17.86
Looked After Children	3	10.00
Intake and Assessment (I&A)	13	43.33

Three years ago, a fortnightly appointment tracker was introduced which is sent to the Directorate to update managers on social worker vacancies that have been advertised and their status in terms of pre-employment checks.

In the 12 months from April 2014 to March 2015, we have processed the recruitment and appointment of 13 Principal Social Workers and 62 Social Workers across Children's Services case management teams.

The analysis of the data for 8 of the 11 candidates who are awaiting appointment indicate that the actual recruitment of the candidates, from the closing date of the advertisement to the conditional offer being sent to the candidate, ranges from 33 to 80 days (6.3 weeks to 16 weeks). The start dates for these candidates are still yet to be agreed due to outstanding DBS / reference checks.

Average HRPS Working Days to send applications to recruiting manager	Average Working Days Recruiting Manager takes to return shortlist	Average HRPS Working Days to send interview invites to candidates	Average Working Days Recruiting Manager takes to return notification of appointment form	Average HRPS Working Days to send conditional offer letter to successful candidate
1.8	7.9	0	6.7	2.7
Range of Days per Activity				
1 to 3	2 to 18	0	0 to 25	1 to 4

The Recruitment Team continually chases candidates to ensure that they provide information that is required and also chase reference, medical and DBS checks.

In reviewing 11 other cases of the 62 social worker appointments, the average period from the closing date to the start date of the candidate was, in fact, 10 weeks.

This includes 2 appointments where the DBS clearance was significantly delayed and resulted in 1 appointment taking 18 weeks and the other taking 16 weeks as a result. If we remove these 2 cases from the analysis, the recruitment was completed in just over 7 weeks.

It must be remembered that external candidates have to work notice and it is recommended that they do not tender their resignation from their current employer until all pre-employment checks have been completed.

## Appendix 2

### Recruitment Action Plan

Issue Identified	Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Incorrect / incomplete paperwork being received from Recruiting Managers leading to delays in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranged attendance at Children's Services Case Manager Team meetings to outline why it is important to submit clear, concise and accurate paperwork in the recruitment process</li> <li>• Briefing note prepared for presentation to managers</li> </ul>	Dawn Thomas / Pauline Sheehan	31 May 2015
Time taken to recruit to posts	Recruitment process has been reviewed from end to end and we are working to eliminate waste for the process and to reduce the time it takes to recruit	Dawn Thomas / Recruitment Team	Process reviewed; changes to be implemented by end of July 2015 as technological changes have to be developed and made
Delays in Obtaining References	Recruiting managers to obtain a verbal reference following the interview (eliminating double handling and delays)	Dawn Thomas / Recruiting Managers	June 2015
Delays in obtaining DBS checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Council is considering moving to on line DBS checking – most on line applications are turned around by the DBS within 24 hours of them being received (75%+)</li> <li>•A full business case will</li> </ul>	Anita Batten / Pauline Sheehan	October 2015

	need to be developed		
Managers Not Having Visibility of Recruitment Status	Providing Manager self-service on DigiGov which means that managers can review the status of appointments in real time	Jason Carlson / Dawn Thomas	October 2015 as technological changes will need to take place
Different Contacts in Recruit Team managing the recruitment process	There will be one caseworker responsible for the end to end recruitment process so that recruiting managers will only have one point of contact for the entire recruitment process	Recruitment Team	August 2015
Two week delay in advertising positions	<p>Advertisements will be published to the website within 3 working days of approval for advert.</p> <p>This will give flexibility on closing dates which will mean that managers can flex recruitment to suit their diaries.</p> <p>There will still be a minimum of a two week window for candidates to apply</p>	Recruitment Team	June 2015





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Date 18 May 2015

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH

Councillor Sue Lent  
Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years and Deputy Leader  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Sue

Thank you for attending Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 12 May 2015 to help introduce and respond to the **Safeguarding of Children Report, Quarter 4 Performance Report, and the draft Early Help Strategy**. I would also like to thank the officers who attended for their full and honest answers that were provided at the meeting. Following consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee has asked me to write to you with the following comments, concerns and recommendations.

### **Safeguarding of Children**

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Cabinet report responding to the findings and recommendations of a Welsh Audit Office (WAO) report concerning the effectiveness of the City of Cardiff Council's corporate safeguarding governance arrangements as well as strengthening the arrangements for corporate governance in relation to safeguarding requirements. However during the way forward section of the meeting Members did express concern around some aspects of the report.

Members initially discussed the membership of the proposed Corporate Safeguarding Board. Members noted that in the Terms of Reference of the Board, it stated that for some attendees a "Nominated Officer" could attend. Of course the senior officer in any service area may not always be able to attend, but to include 'or nominated officer' in the terms of reference implied an undermining of the importance of the Board. Therefore the Committee recommend that the Board's Terms of Reference remove 'or nominated officer'.

Members also reflected on the proposed action plan and in the section "raising awareness" two training actions were identified as a high priority "RED", and would be completed by June 2015. The Committee considered these actions to be crucial and as such recommends that these actions are a priority and the Corporate Safeguarding Training and Development Programme for staff and Members must be completed by the end of June 2015. Members also suggested that the Directorate should make every effort to ensure that training organisations should include safeguarding in the relevant courses.

Finally I would like to inform you that the Committee agreed in its response to the WAO recommendations "Improve the work of the Council's scrutiny committees to ensure it is providing assurance on the effectiveness of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements" to include the scrutiny of the Board in its future work programme and undertake specific training in the scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements.

#### **Children's Services Quarter 4 Performance 2014/15**

The Committee was pleased to hear that there have been continued improvements in the overall performance of the service, and welcomed the progress being made in the development of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) together with the partnership work being undertaken to ensure the effective operation of the MASH. Members looked forward to the MASH being operational by April 2016.

Members did express concern that the timely completion of initial assessments had declined to 57% in this quarter. The Committee recommended that management action be prioritised to address this decline and looked forward to an improved picture during 2015/16.

Finally Members wish to remind you that during the discussions on the sickness data, you wished to provide further information on the level of sickness, as Members were unclear as to the exact level of sickness for Quarter 4.

#### **Draft Early Help Strategy**

The Committee welcomed the development of the Strategy and its implementation plan, as well as the opportunity to review the document prior to its consideration at Cabinet.

The Members noted that the Strategy stated that "wider partner agencies will be asked to pledge their support", for the strategy, however the Committee considered that this was not explicit enough and the Committee recommended that the Strategy should specify the key partners that must be involved to ensure the success of the strategy. Members' particular felt that the Play service and Youth Service must be involved.

Members also considered that the communication and awareness raising of the strategy was also fundamental to its success. The Committee therefore wished to seek assurance that every effort will be made to enable all professionals to be made fully aware of the Early Help Strategy and its aim to co-ordinate delivery of early intervention and prevention family support services between Flying Start, Families First, Children's Services (including IFSS) and the wider provision of support to families in Cardiff.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you again for participating in this scrutiny, and we look forward to your response to the questions raised, requests for information and recommendations detailed above, within the next month.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cook', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK**  
**Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services  
Angela Bourge, Operational Manager, Strategy, Commissioning and Resources  
Alison Davies, Operational Manager for Safeguarding and Independent Review  
Kim Brown, Service Manager, Policy and Performance  
Melanie Jackson - Personal Assistant to Deputy Leader



**SWYDDFA'R DIRPRWY ARWEINYDD  
DEPUTY LEADER'S OFFICE**

My Ref: CM31020

Your Ref:

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Cllr Richard Cook  
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Atlantic Wharf  
Cardiff



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Annwyl / Dear Richard

Thank you for your letter of 18th May following my attendance at the meeting of the C&YPSC on 12th May and for your welcome comments concerning officers.

In relation to the specific issues you have identified in your letter I would respond as follows:-

1. Safeguarding Children - I am happy to accept the recommendations made by members concerning the reference to a 'nominated officer' and the committee's expressed commitment to ongoing future scrutiny of the 'effectiveness of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements'.

I also share your concern that the awareness raising programme is expedited by the end of June as indicated in the Action Plan. The action plan will remain an item for review in my weekly discussions with the Director accordingly.

2. Quarterly 4 Performance - again I share your concern regarding performance in relation to the timeliness of initial assessments, an issue that I know the Director has been at pains to draw your attention to during the last 12 months. I am pleased to be able to reassure you that this is being treated with the utmost priority and that the Assistant Director is now focusing on ensuring that performance in the first quarter shows marked improvement and provides a basis for greater confidence that this can be sustained for the remainder of the year; a clear action plan is in place to support this goal.

In relation to the queries concerning the true position in respect of sickness absence it is clear that the reporting of 3 different figures confuses matters and makes it more difficult to scrutinise. I am able to clarify as follows:-

a) that page 81 of the Scrutiny papers reported that Children's Services year-to-date days lost per person stood at 13.87. On its own this doesn't enable members to compare progress or otherwise over time; in fact this figure represented a significant improvement against the annual target of 15.3 days lost

**ATEBWCH I / PLEASE REPLY TO:**

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b) that page 82 of the Scrutiny Papers cited sickness absence in the fourth quarter as being 7.2% against an annual target of 7% and therefore rated as red but

c) that page 90 indicated that overall sickness absence for whole of 2014/15 in fact stood at 6.5% against the 7% target for the year, in effect evidencing performance improvement in excess of target .

3. Early Help Strategy - I am happy to accept the committee's suggestions concerning the need to be explicit about key partners and can advise that all relevant directorates are engaged in the Vulnerable Children and Families Board partnership; this is the forum that will sign off and 'own' the new strategy. I would wish to clarify however that the Youth Service and Play are not separately represented on the partnership. In addition, I can confirm that as part of launching the new strategy every agency will share responsibility for ensuring that all relevant professionals are made fully aware of their role and their part in ensuring its success.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely

*Susan J. Lent*

**Councillor / Cynghorydd Sue Lent**  
**Deputy Leader / Swyddfa'r Dirprwy Arweinydd**  
**Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Families**  
**Aelod Cabinet Dros Y Blynyddoedd Cynnar, Plant a Theuluoedd**

**ATEBWCH I / PLEASE REPLY TO:**

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My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

18 May 2015

Councillor Julia Magill  
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills  
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Dear Julia

At the meeting on 12 May 2015 the Committee had a presentation by Clive Phillips, Assistant Director Estyn, on the Estyn Visit Monitoring Letter. I have detailed in this letter to you the issues that Members raised with Estyn and would welcome any comments you may have.

The inspector indicated that there was not a clear enough shared understanding of the long term strategy for school improvement. He explained that while the focus on challenging schools was becoming more apparent, more clarity will be required when Estyn return, in order to explain the support being provided to schools to help them to move forward in the future. Members sought an explanation of this judgement and asked what Estyn were expecting. Members were informed by the Inspector that there is evidence of intervention late in the day to help Year 11 pupils get through their exams but emphasised that there shouldn't be a dependency on this approach; there needs to be a long term strategy for improvement earlier in the year groups.

Members were further advised that Estyn will be placing much greater importance on the performance of vulnerable groups in future visits. Members were reminded that Cardiff is ranked bottom in Wales in relation to the number of pupils leaving school with no qualification and still has a high proportion of young people not in education, employment or training post 16. The Inspector recommended that Members should work with a broader range of performance indicators to seek assurance regarding outcomes for all learners in order to be in a stronger position to convince Estyn that Cardiff has robust longer term strategy for school improvement.

Members were informed by the Inspector that there were concerns that some Challenge Advisors were requiring additional support, particularly to ensure quality and consistency of reporting, and that this should be addressed as soon as possible. Members stated that support for Challenge Advisors could be seen as part of staff development. The Inspector emphasised that whilst quality assurance and additional support for Challenge Advisors is important, Estyn would not expect excessive time being committed to this when resources are limited. The focus needs to be on supporting schools to improve.

The Inspector further explained that Estyn had recently undertaken a survey of the four consortia and that the report would be published on 3 June 2015. In addition the Wales Audit Office had also undertaken a review. The Inspector recommended that the Council should take note of the findings of their survey.

A Member also confirmed a finding of the inspectors, that School Governors did not understand the new strategies for school improvement and that greater training and awareness raising need to be put in place. The Committee considered this to be crucial to enable the school governors to actively support and monitor their schools improvement plans.

It also became clear, from the comments made by both Estyn Inspectors, that during the Estyn monitoring visit in spring 2016 they will be particularly looking for the clear impact on outcomes of the various actions that the Council has implemented to address the recommendations listed in the Monitoring Visit in February 2014.

I would be pleased if you could confirm that all the above comments and advice are reflected in the Estyn action plan, and thereby ensure that the Inspectors will be provided with this information when they make their final monitoring visit.

#### **Education Quarter 4 Corporate Performance report**

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015 to help introduce the Education Quarter 4 Corporate Performance report. I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar, for his presentations and contribution to the agenda item. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be updated on the progress being made by the Directorate, as shown in the quarter four report.

Following consideration of the performance report presented at the meeting and answers to Members' questions, the Committee has asked me to write to you with the following comments, concerns, requests for information and recommendations.

The Members welcomed the opportunity to review the Quarter 4 Corporate Performance report, which had been provided in a much timelier manner. The Committee noted the details contained in the report and that although it identified a number of challenges and emerging risks the Directorate had already identified actions to mitigate the issues.



The Committee during the way forward part of the agenda asked me to write to you to highlight a number of concerns that Members had with the performance of the following areas:

Members expressed concern at the relatively high level of young people in Year 11 who had been identified through the Vulnerability Assessment Profile as “Red”, and that some schools were not following the framework. Members also highlight the risks associated with the reconfiguration of the Youth Service and its impact on Young People not in education, employment or training (NEETS) Concerns around the level of NEETS and vulnerable pupils was also highlighted by Estyn in their recent letter and therefore the Committee considered the reduction in the number of NEETS to be a key challenge and recommended that the Directorate maximise its efforts to address this matter.

Members also expressed concern about the introduction of the new curriculum in September 2015, particularly its impact on Secondary Schools. Members wished to seek assurance from you that schools would be provided with the necessary advice and support to ensure that the introduction of the new curriculum does not have an adverse effect on pupils performance.

Members discussed the performance information around School Standards and in particular they expressed their concern in respect of key stage two results. Members noted short term measures being implemented to maximise progress towards the targets, but the Committee considered that a more long term strategy should be put in place to enable continuous improvements. The Committee also suggested that to ensure the effectiveness of the long term strategy all Governors must have a clear understanding of the strategy as well as the Head Teacher and staff.

Finally the Committee considered the School Organisation Planning item on the report and discussed the consultation process for new schools. Members understood that there was a statutory process to be followed but it was very protracted. Members recommended that you and Officers investigate alternative ways to undertake the consultation; particularly through the “Power to Innovate” to enable the development of new schools to be undertaken in a more timely manner.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff’s pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires a response:

- Members seek assurance that the comments and advice detailed above are reflected in the Council's Estyn Action Plan;
- Recommends that the Directorate maximises its efforts to reduce the level of NEETS and vulnerable pupils;
- Seeks assurance that schools will be provided with the necessary advice and support to aid in the introduction of the new curriculum;
- Develop a long term strategy to improve attainment at Key stage 2;
- Investigate alternative ways to undertake SOP consultation, through the "Power to Innovate" to aid in the more timely development of new schools.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a horizontal line underneath it.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK**  
**Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Nick Batchelar – Director of Education and Lifelong learning  
CC: Carol Jones – Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong learning  
CC: Suzanne Scarlett – Performance Manager  
CC: Cheryl Cornelius – Cabinet Support Manger

**SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET  
CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE**

Fy Nghyf / My Ref : CM31041

Eich Cyf / Your Ref : SCRUTINY/CORRESPONDENCE/MJH

Dyddiad / Date: 30th June 2015



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Councillor Richard Cook  
Scrutiny Chairperson

Annwyl / Dear Richard

**Scrutiny Letter - Estyn Visit Monitoring Letter**

Thank you for your letter of the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015 addressed to Cllr Julia Magill following the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

In response to your request for further information, please see individual details outlined below:

**Council's Estyn Action Plan**

You requested assurance that the Council's Estyn Action plan reflected the comments and advice provided by the Estyn Inspectors following the March 2015 monitoring visit. The current Estyn Action Plan comprises 7 sections which cover all of the outstanding recommendations for improvement, specifically:

- Recommendation 1 includes actions to 'close the gap in attainment for under-achieving groups'. These actions will continue to focus upon vulnerable groups, in particular eFSM pupils and Looked After Children.
- Recommendations 1 and 5 include actions to strengthen performance management arrangements, in particular to enhance the quality of pupil tracking to ensure that achievement, progress, attendance and exclusion rates are available for vulnerable groups. Recommendation 5 also directs improvements in the range and quality of performance information available to the Council to monitor educational performance.
- Recommendation 2b is entirely focused upon action to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training post 16. This action plan is being strengthened and updated to respond to the increasing demands of co-ordinating support for this vulnerable group.
- Recommendation 3 includes a range of actions to ensure that the arrangements for delivering improvement services via the Central South Consortium are effective. An explicit focus for the Consortium is to develop Challenge Advisers in response to Estyn's comments that some reporting needs to be improved, in particular clarifying recommendations about school leadership, school improvement priorities and next steps.

**PLEASE REPLY TO / ATEBWCH I :** Cabinet Support Office / Swyddfa Cymorth Y Cabinet,  
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- Recommendation 1 includes action to review and revise the school governors training programme. This is being extended to ensure a focus upon governor engagement and training in school to school improvement strategies.

### **Reducing the level of NEETs and improving the performance of vulnerable pupils**

You recommended that the Directorate maximises its efforts to reduce the level of NEETS and improve the performance of vulnerable pupils. As indicated above, the Council's Estyn action plans include a significant focus upon these two significant areas of work. A further update upon the progress in delivering improvements in relation to the NEETS action plan will be reported to CYP Scrutiny Committee at its July meeting, in preparation for the Estyn monitoring visit this October.

### **Introduction of the new curriculum in September 2015**

The Central South Consortium's 'Qualified for Life' team is providing a comprehensive mix of opportunities for schools to prepare for changes to Mathematics, English, Welsh and Science qualifications this September. Engagement in the support provided is being carefully tracked and monitored across all schools.

### **Improving attainment at Key Stage 2**

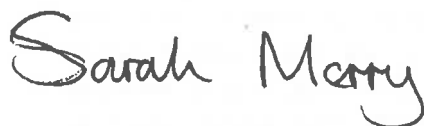
The longer term strategy to improve attainment at Key Stage 2 is inherent within the Directorate and Consortium's strategy to develop the capacity of schools to lead and support their own improvement, to support school leadership development and to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The Central South Wales Challenge is providing a framework for these developments, including for example the ongoing work of School Improvement Groups (SIGs), teaching and learning hubs, pathfinder school pairings and emerging peer enquiry models.

### **School Organisation Programme**

With regard to your comments on the statutory timescales for consultation processes, consideration is being given to the newly introduced 'Power to Innovate' and it will be determined in due course if there is any potential in its use within current or future SOP proposals.

I trust the above is of assistance.

Yn gwyir  
Yours sincerely



**Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Sarah Merry**  
**Aelod Cabinet Dros Addysg / Cabinet Member for Education**



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Date 12 June 2015

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH  
Your Ref:

Councillor Sue Lent  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Sue

Thank you for attending Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2015 to help introduce the **Children's Services Delivery Plan 2015/17** and **Briefing on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Managed Team**. I would also like to thank Tony Young and Irfan Alam for their full and honest answers that were provided at the meeting. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments concerns and recommendations which they asked me to write to you.

### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES DELIVERY PLAN 2015 - 17**

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be briefed on the Department's Delivery Plan for the next two years. Members did however question why the plans actions were always split over four quarters. Members noted that some major changes in service provision did take up to a year to develop, consult and implement. However the Members still considered that the actions should be prioritised so that those that could be implemented quickly were identified as such.

Members discussed the future sustainability of the caseload averages they understood that demand can be unpredictable; however the Committee recommended that the Department makes every effort to sustain the current caseload average.

Members discussed at some length the impact of the forthcoming budget settlements and the resourcing decisions to be made. The Committee requested that it is kept informed, as early as possible, as to the identification and development of any alternative service provision for Children's Services.

### **MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH) and MANAGED TEAM**

#### **MASH**

The Committee appreciated the update and details of the progress being made in developing the MASH, Members noted that a project manager would be appointed soon. As a result the Members requested a further report prior to the Mash becoming operational.

## Managed Team

Members wished to thank the officers for the detailed briefing on the operation of the Managed Team. Members were pleased to hear that only 45 cases out of the original 313 cases were being handed back to the mainstream teams. Officers reassured the Committee that the transfer of these cases would not have a major impact on the Social Workers caseloads, but this did not leave much flexibility for future changes in demand. Members agreed that they would continue to monitor average case loads to assess the impact of any changes in demand.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Children in need. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires a response:

- Reprioritise the actions, in future delivery plans, so that those that can be completed quickly are shown as such;
- To make every effort to sustain the current caseload average;
- To involve the Committee in the identification and development of any alternative service provision for children's service as early as possible.
- Provide a further progress report on the MASH prior to it becoming operational.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a horizontal line underneath it.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK**  
**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services  
Irfan Alam, Interim Assistant Director of Children's Service  
Kim Brown, Service Manager, Policy and Performance  
Melanie Jackson - Personal Assistant to Deputy Leader

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

11 June 2015

Councillor Sarah Merry  
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills  
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Dear Sarah

Thank you for attending your first meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to help introduce the **Education Delivery Plan 2015-17 and Consortium Business plan 2015-16**, as well as the **Progress Report on Needs**. I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar, and his officers for their presentations and contribution to the two agenda items. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments concerns and recommendations detailed below.

#### **Education Delivery Plan 2015-17 and Consortium Business plan 2015-16**

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be presented with the Departments Delivery Plan 2015-17 and its linkage with the Consortiums Business Plan 2015-16, Members were reassured by the officers that both plans provided the necessary actions to deliver the improvements in outcomes for Cardiff's pupils that the Council and Estyn requires. The Committee also welcomed the robust challenge and dialogue that Education and the Consortium are having, to ensure that the appropriate level of support is provided by the Consortium to Cardiff's Schools.

Members did however highlight that many of the actions in the delivery plan were programmed to be delivered over 4 quarters. Members felt that it would be more effective if actions were prioritised so that the most important and achievable actions were implemented in a much shorter timescale, and that future delivery plans should reflect this approach.

In reviewing the details in the Plan the Members highlighted their concern about the categorisation of pupils. Members felt that ethnicity was not the issue for educational attainment but pupil's first language. Members therefore suggested that the pupil's first language should be used for pupil categorisation. Members noted the Officers agreement and requested that this be looked at for future data analysis.

Members inquired about the implementation of the School Organisation Plan, suggesting that a standardised approach to building new schools could be developed. Members were please to be informed that a standardised approach was to be used in future, enabling schools to built quicker and cheaper.

Members expressed concern that the Education Delivery Plan did not clearly detail the development of a long term strategy for school improvement. The need for this strategy had been highlighted by the Estyn inspector at the Committee's May meeting and was needed to enable Education to be ultimately assessed as excellent. Members noted the Director's comments that schools were taking on more responsibility for the improvement agenda, but Members felt that the delivery plan needed to clearly evidence the development of a long term strategy to ensure that education moved to a judgment of excellent by Estyn. Members recommended that this must be included in the delivery plan as soon as possible.

The Committee commented on the level of training for Governors, and suggested that bespoke training to individual, or groups of schools, would be more useful in addressing real issues in particular schools. Head teachers should also be reminded to share all relevant performance documentation with their governing body to ensure that Governors are fully aware of all necessary information. The Committee therefore suggested that future Education Delivery plans should say something about training of school governing bodies.

### **Neets**

Members welcomed the work that was being done to reduce the numbers of Neets in the City. The Committee suggested that the Council's Traineeship Scheme for looked after children and care leavers could also be used to help Neets gain work experience. Members would like a future report on Neets to investigate how this can be done.

The Committee noted that schools were expected to address the level of Neets from their schools, in partnership with the Council and Consortium. Members therefore requested a progress report on the Cardiff Partnership Board's work stream - Engagement and Progression - 'Reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training', be presented to Committee after the summer break.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff's pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires a response:

- To amend the Delivery plan to :
  - Clearly identify the development of a long term strategy for school improvement, both as an aspiration for 2015-17 as well as specific actions;
  - Reprioritise the actions so that those that can be completed quickly are show as such;
- To investigate the possibility of reviewing the categorisation of pupils to reflect their first language and not ethnicity;
- In future to include an action on training of school governing bodies;



- Provide reports to a future meeting on the Committee on:
  - the development of the Council's traineeship to help Neets and
  - a progress report on the Cardiff Partnership work stream – Engagement and Progression;

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Cook', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK**  
**Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Nick Batchelar – Director of Education and Lifelong learning  
CC: Carol Jones – Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong learning  
CC: Suzanne Scarlett – Performance Manager  
CC: Cheryl Cornelius – Cabinet Support Manger

