

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Groves

22 September 2014

Councillor Susan Elsmore & Councillor Sue Lent
Cabinet Members
c/o Room 520
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



Dear Colleague

Joint Children and Young People and Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 10th September 2014

Thank you for attending the above Joint Committee for the scrutiny of the draft Director of Social Services Annual Report covering the period 2013-14. This letter captures the agreed comments, observations and recommendations of the Joint Committee with regard to the draft Report in order to assist preparation of the final Report, which Members note is planned to be taken to Cabinet in November 2014.

Members largely focused our scrutiny on testing the robustness and accessibility of the Report as well as on whether the picture presented in the Report reflected the position as evidenced to the separate Scrutiny Committees during 2013-14.

Members found the draft Report to be an improvement on previous Reports in certain aspects, namely in terms of the length of the report and in terms of the language used in the Report. However, inevitably, there is a challenge in balancing the production of a simpler and shorter report with providing sufficient information and evidence to support the statements made: Members found that sometimes the balance had tipped too far towards a shorter report. Our comments below direct attention to the areas Members believe need improvement and are followed by a number of recommendations.

Members feel that the opening sentence of the section 'Cardiff Social Services Overall', page 4, strikes the wrong tone given the significant challenges that faced these services in 2013-14. Members take the point that the sentence is carefully worded but believe that it gives the wrong impression to someone who is not forensically reading the Report.

With regard to the inclusion of service users' views, Members were pleased to hear from Tony Young, Director of Social Services, that work is underway in both

Children's Services and Adult Services to improve the collection, collation and use of service users views and his acknowledgment that more could have been included in the Report. Members understand the concern to avoid being trite but think that, currently, the inclusion of service user views appears tokenistic.

With regard to the performance information included in the report, Members understand the wish to provide an overview of relative performance via the use of the performance tables, pages 4 and 5, but feel that the performance tables are of limited value in that it is not clear which areas of Social Services have improved or declined and what the direction of travel is for these areas and it is not clear who is in the Benchmark Group.

Linked to the above, Members asked several questions regarding the use of outcome-based performance measures and were pleased that Tony Young and Siân Walker accepted the need to include more information on the delivery of outcomes and that work is underway to enable this, in response to changes required by the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. Members are also interested in understanding how changes to processes and structures impact on the delivery of outcomes. Members welcome the commitment to include outcome-based performance information on these in next year's Report.

Members felt that the graphs used in the Report, on pages 9, 13 and 16, were not easy to understand due to the size of the graphs and the fact that the difference in lines was hard to distinguish in a printed copy.

Members questioned the section on 'Corporate and Political Leadership and Support' (page 39 -40) and welcome Tony Young's answer at Committee that he commits to articulating more clearly the close working with Cabinet Members and the support he feels comes from the whole Council for Social Services.

Members raised the question of joint working and were pleased to hear several examples of joint working across the Council. Members believe that the Report would benefit from a section detailing this.

Members asked several questions with regard to the sections on Safeguarding, pages 9-10, and felt that there should be an acknowledgement that vulnerable Adult's are also at risk, as agreed by Siân Walker, from eg: misuse of their finances. Also an acknowledgement of the risks to adults and children from eg: Female Genital Mutilation, Honour-Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Trafficking and Radicalisation. These are all risks that it is acknowledged exist in Cardiff but which are often hidden, not reported and of unknown quantity.

With regards to the Future Challenges identified in the report, pages 6-7, Members recognise the challenges as set out. In addition, given the increasing demands and

reducing public sector budget, Members believe a key challenge that is facing Social Services is the provision of non-statutory services. This is not clearly articulated in the Future Challenges section.

In the Way Forward at the meeting, Members debated whether the 'areas for development' sections in the Report are the actions proposed to meet the Future Challenges identified. Members would appreciate clarification on this and would also expect to see feedback on progress in these areas contained in the Report covering 2014-15.

In order to make the Report more robust and accessible, Members therefore recommend the following:

- Expand the explanation of how evidence is gathered and provide references, as footnotes, to source documents.
- Amend the opening section of the 'Cardiff Social Services Overall', page 4, by including the word 'However' at the start of the second sentence.
- Insert a section detailing how Children's Services and Adult Services currently capture and use service users' views.
- Provide a footnote detailing membership of the Benchmark Group.
- In future years, provide trend data for national performance indicators so that it is clear what the direction of travel is for each performance indicator.
- Review the use of graphs and their layout.
- Amend the Corporate and Political Leadership and Support section as agreed at Committee.
- Amend the Safeguarding section re Keeping Vulnerable Adults Safe to acknowledge the risks.
- Amend the Safeguarding section to reference the needs flowing from Female Genital Mutilation, Honour-Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Trafficking and Radicalisation.
- Insert a section detailing that there is joint working across the Council with regards to social care services.
- Consider whether to include another Future Challenge that articulates the need to review non-statutory service provision.
- Provide clarity about how each of the Future Challenges will be addressed and the role of the 'Areas for Development' in this.
- Remove 'successful' from phrase 'live successful and independent lives' (page 3).
- Change all references in the Report from 'Mental Health Problems' to 'Mental Health Illness'.

Members wish to receive the following information, as discussed at the meeting:

- Details of the membership of the performance Benchmark Group
- Details of the reasoning to judge whether performance is 'very close'

- Accessible Homes Register – details of trends in numbers waiting for an accessible home.
- Details of the work underway or proposed to tackle social isolation and loneliness, whether undertaken by the Council or by partners.

Members plan to scrutinise several of the areas detailed in the Report as our work programmes for 2014-15 demonstrate. With regard to proposed changes to the Community Mental Health Teams, I formally ask that officers liaise with Scrutiny Services in a timely fashion to enable meaningful scrutiny; Members view the proposed changes as substantive change, rather than process change, and are conscious that there was significant change approximately eighteen months ago.

Finally, Members are pleased to note that Tony Young has revised the schedule for the production of the draft Report covering 2014-15 and will liaise with Scrutiny Services to ensure that this is timetabled for scrutiny in advance of submission to CSSIW and Cabinet.

This letter contains recommendations and requests for further information and so requires a response.

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 – Joint Children and Young People and Community & Adult Services
Scrutiny Committee

Cc: Tony Young Sian Walker
Kim Brown Stuart Young
Natalie Abbruzzese Michelle Davies Claire Deguara

Bernard McDonald – Area Manager Cardiff, CSSIW