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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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Arwyll Helen Mary,

Children and Young People Committee Inquiry into Arrangements for the Placement of Children into Care

In my letter of 2 July in relation to the above I undertook to keep the Children and Young People Committee updated with developments in children social services.

At this weeks Social Service Summit I announced my intention to published in the new year a White Paper on the future of social services in Wales.

I attach a copy of the speech for your information.

Yours sincerely

*/ yn ddifffuant,
Gwenda*

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Conference

Thank you Bruce

I am pleased to be able to speak to you today. I am pleased to do so because I value what social work and social services does for our society, and I value what you do to deliver that.

Good social services interventions protect people from harm and support people to achieve their potential.

That is why it jars so much for me when social workers are blamed for the harm that is done

through abuse perpetrated by individuals and from wider social problems, rather than credited with the support and protection they offer individuals and our communities.

Yes, the gravity of the work that you are charged with, demands that we strive for the highest standards and challenge failures. But we are remiss if we fail to recognise the child who is protected from neglect, the disabled person who is enabled to enjoy a fulfilled life or the older person who is enabled to maintain their independence in the face of frailty.

I remain ambitious for Social Services, for what they can achieve for those individuals, but also for the role they can play in an integrated, efficient and

high quality system of public service that assures the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales.

Importantly I remain ambitious in the face of the greatest public sector funding threat that probably any of us has ever faced.

Following the so called emergency budget of last month we now know a little more about the scale of our challenge but until we know the outcome of the UK coalition's comprehensive spending review in the autumn we do not know precisely what this will mean for us. The Assembly Government is already extremely concerned that the budget will hit the poorest and most vulnerable in our society the hardest.

Social care therefore faces an unprecedented challenge. In facing it we will have to convince more people that our position is unique. Social services do not have the advantage of health and education that flow from them being universal services.

However, without a proper priority being given to social care, not only the most disadvantaged in our society, but also each and every one of us when we face our own difficulties will not get the support we need. Right from the Beveridge settlement we have shared a belief that unpredictable social risks should be borne by society not left to the random responsibility of individuals. I for one continue to believe in that. It of course goes without saying that without us neither education nor health can deliver their responsibilities.

We now face a choice, we can face the challenge as individual institutions and organisations, or we can address our problem as a whole system. As an Assembly Government Minister I can direct the change or we can do this together. We can work in silos or we can surrender a little of our own interests to the greater good.

I know where I stand. Doing less of the same is not an option. Services will not be sustainable.

The history of social services under devolution is one in which you can take great pride. Much has been done to grip challenges; to improve the citizen focus and quality of our services.

At this conference a year ago the First Minister, the Minister for Education, and I, made it clear that a step change in the direction of social services and social care was going to be necessary, to meet changing expectations, financial pressures and demography.

This is why I commissioned a series of strategic reviews to update our policy. Delivering services based on the values that we hold dear in Wales within the finances that we are likely to be given will be an immense challenge, but it is one that we owe it to the people of Wales to rise to. These reviews give us the way forward to meet that challenge

Foremost of these reviews is the **Independent Commission on the future of social services.**

I know many of you have already engaged with the Commission in a variety of ways. I certainly look forward to receiving the Commission's report in November.

You will recall that I asked the Commission to consider how to;

- support the further development of professional practice
- build inclusive social services based on the contribution of all partners who work in social care
- effect a step change in collaboration

- ensure the achievement of integrated social services capable of meeting the needs of children, young people and adults and older people in the most effective way.

Of these the third aim is particularly pertinent in our agenda to achieve better outcomes in tougher times.

Citizens expect that we achieve more integrated services at the frontline. The second Public Services Summit is convening tomorrow and will be looking at ways in which together we drive through more integrated services. I believe that we need to focus our attention on areas where integration can make a real difference, frail older people and families with complex needs are clearly two areas that we must make more urgent progress. I am

pleased to hear of the progress being made across Wales and indeed tomorrow I am visiting the Frailty project in Wrexham. In children's services we have of course the roll out of our IFST pioneer areas.

What we have to do now is move on to a situation where such examples are more than pilot schemes, at risk of failing as budgets get tight; to one in which integration is the way we deliver.

Collaboration however is broader than locally integrated services. I am convinced that we have to ask ourselves what services are best organised at a local, at a regional and at a national level. I think we also have to ask whether it is in citizens interests to have their needs reassessed simply because they have moved from one part of Wales to another or

indeed whether basic criteria for services should vary across Wales.

I made it clear in setting up the Commission that there were some aspects of policy where we had a settled view in Wales, on the importance of quality being driven by a strong voice for the citizen rather than a supermarket model of choice, on the importance of unified and integrated social services and on the central role of local government.

The remit of the Commission remains bound by our policy on public service improvement. I have therefore not asked the Commission to consider the merits of local government reorganisation. I have however previously stated my view that Wales is

too small to do everything in social services twenty two times.

I believe that Social Services belong within a democratically accountable system of local government under the leadership of the statutorily defined responsibilities of a Director of Social Services. This enables not only a corporate voice for the most disadvantaged, but helps us develop supportive communities through the wider responsibilities of local government.

The second major review is the **Social Work and Social Care Workforce Task Group**. They are considering;

- How to create career pathways for social work which help us recruit and retain the best and to

support a social work profession that is self confident.

- How to do the same for the wider social care workforce.
- How to create a workforce fit for a multi-disciplinary working environment, and
- How to develop the role of the personal assistant to deliver safety and quality.

We rely on a social services workforce that is adequately sized, skilled and valued, as well as safe to practise if we are to deliver our ambition.

The task group will report by November.

The Review of Regulation and Improvement Framework for Social Services and Social Care is a crucial piece of this review work.

It should not be confused with the Review of Regulation being conducted by CSSIW. That

important operational review focuses on efficiency and effectiveness in the current system.

The regulatory system in Wales is very much a child of the late 1990's and I think that it is now right that we ask some fundamental questions.

These include what do we want regulation of the service and individuals to achieve, what is the right balance between regulation, inspection and improvement and how do we ensure that we have a sustainable system for the future. I regard my wider review as central in ensuring we have the right infrastructure in Wales to assure safety and quality in service delivery. I have asked for an initial report by the end of this calendar year.

My officials are also undertaking a review of two key grant programmes in my portfolio.

- The Social Care Workforce Development Programme Grant; and

- The Performance Management Development Fund grant.

The reviews will consider the impact that has been achieved by existing grant schemes, the relevance of the schemes to our current priorities and how to ensure best use of a valuable public investment.

Grants are important tools in my toolkit, and represent key levers through which I can facilitate change and improvement. I am clear however that it is through the £1.4 billion spent through the local government revenue settlement that services are delivered.

I have always made it clear that I see the **safeguarding** of children and adults as key priorities for us all. Safeguarding is not just a social services responsibility it is everybody's business

Inspection and review has shown the need to update our approach and ensure it is fit for purpose.

In order to do this I have commissioned the Adult Protection Policy Group and the Safeguarding Children Forum to give me independent advice on the matter.

Each of these major reviews of policy has significant involvement of stakeholders including through some of you sat in this room now.

To me this is essential because I do see us as a social services family. We have a very considerable consensus about the challenge we face and what we want to achieve. More than ever the trust and openness we have built up between us is essential. Earlier this week I met with Local Authority portfolio holders to discuss these challenges and explore solutions together.

You will have noticed that each of the policy reviews I have talked about are timed in parallel, and complement one another. These reviews create a

rhythm for the year which dictates the workplan for us a social services family.

What I want to do today is to go one stage further. I believe we have the opportunity to bring these major policy reviews together into a statement about how we are going together to deliver social services over the next decade. I am therefore announcing my intention to publish a White Paper on the future of Social Services in Wales in the New Year.

I believe that the success of ten years of devolution, and the challenge of our time, make it right to create a new consensus on the future of social services. A consensus that builds on our successes and gives us a framework to deliver the values that, despite our particular political differences, I am convinced are shared by the vast majority of us in this room.

I also believe that the challenge we face make it right that I should equip a new administration, which will follow elections in May 2011, with proposals on

these issues. This will be a head start, allowing the administration to hit the ground running, in creating the social services of the next decade.

I remain committed to good social services for the people of Wales. Your actions show that you believe it. I know that we will continue to work together as a social services family in shaping a distinctly Welsh future for social services in the next decade

Thank you

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