

P-05-1199 Place Cardiff Children's Services into special measures and conduct an urgent independent review, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 27.09.21

Sir/Ma'am,

Petition :- : P-06-1199

Many thanks for your email and the opportunity to contribute further following the response from Julie Morgan MS.

Firstly, I am somewhat surprised that Ms Morgan has engaged, previously when this matter was brought to her attention, she passed it to one of her ministerial team, who duly sent a response with several links to the complaints procedure for Cardiff Social Services, Care Inspectorate Wales and the like. Really not helpful.

However, what does not surprise me in the response is the attempt to blame the failings on Covid, the issues I have raised date from April 2019, long before covid and continue to this day and have nothing to do with the pandemic.

In fact, the Children's Strategy 2019 – 2022 was introduced as a result of the alarming number of looked after children in Cardiff at that time a figure that has not decreased since, and this is due to the fact that, *"the default position for the Local Authority with regards to child protection is to pursue the legal route"* these are not my words but the words of a Social Worker currently allocated to my family. Once legal proceedings are instigated and a child becomes looked after, it is easier for the Social Worker and is less work than offering support and intervention. In essence the child is safeguarded and move on next case. This approach is totally contrary to the Children's Strategy and intentions and what Ms Morgan says in her response but is what is happening daily. There is support and intervention offered at an early stage, and the reunification process is not pursued by Social Services as again this involves further assessments and increased work.

Ms Morgan refers to the Care Inspectorate Wales reviews; it is a fact that any review is only as good as the information it receives and documents its ability to review. A source from within Social Services has told me that prior to the last review staff were told to *"Toe the Line"* and not give a true reflection of what was happening in the organisation. A Social Worker who had been allocated to my family in late October 2020, attended my home early December 2020 and informed us *"They were leaving the Local Authority, they were only ever temporary and they could not continue to work there as they were in turmoil"* They duly departed and left us once again with no allocated Social Worker, to date since April 2019 we have engaged with some 12 different Social Workers, this is due to the inability of the Authority to recruit and retain staff due to the working practices and volume of work, huge sickness levels and no succession planning and continuity within the Authority. For example, following a family court process we were not provided with a devolved responsibility document for 6 months, as the Social Worker that had vigorously pursued the matter

through the family courts, wrongly and using selective evidence, having secured the care order, told us quite openly and with some perverse pride, *“That looked after children weren’t their thing, they preferred court work and they would not be doing the devolved responsibility document”*

The above are facts and not in any way embellished for maximum impact, the comments and actions displayed and quoted within the above speak for themselves and demonstrate an organisation that is failing children and young people, with the Director with responsibility earning some close in the region of £200,000 last year the Local Authority are rewarding failure and an urgent, independent transparent review in which staff are given the opportunity to contribute without fear should be conducted at the earliest opportunity.