

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Sue Evans

Chief Executive, Social Care Wales

20 December 2023

Invitation to appear before Committee & data about children's services workforce

Dear Sue,

Thank you for your ongoing contributions to our work as it relates to care experienced children and young people, including [your February 2023 response](#) to our request for written information, and the [recent briefing note](#) you provided relating to local authorities' social care workforce.

Invitation to appear before Committee

Our inquiry into radical reform of services for care experienced children and young people illustrated the crucial role of Social Care Wales in relation to the children's social care workforce. In particular, it highlighted the importance of a stable and quality workforce was clear in terms of properly supporting children, young people and their families and being able to manage cases effectively working with the wide range of agencies that can be involved in their lives. In turn, it was also clear that a stable workforce is key to safely reducing the numbers of children in care.

Although our report was published in May 2023, our work in this area is ongoing. We remain concerned about the experiences of many children and young people of the care system, and the capacity of the Welsh Government and public bodies to deliver the truly radical reform that we believe the care system needs.

We therefore invite you to appear before Committee for a one-off scrutiny session about the work of Social Care Wales as it relates to care experienced children and young people and their families. We propose that this takes place during the morning of **Wednesday 20 March 2023**.

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It is unfortunate that Social Care Wales' error in clarifying the data to our clerks by e-mail was so substantive, and that it related to an issue that was so important to the children and young people we spoke to.

However, we welcome new data you provided to us in November 2023 about the numbers of children's services social workers who are employed by an agency. This new data disaggregates different groups of children's workforce, including children's services social workers (our main area of interest in this inquiry) and children's residential care staff. The November 2023 briefing appears to have clarified that 17.5% of children's services social workers were working for an agency:

*As of September 2023, the register shows the total number of Childrens Services Social Workers was 2,456. Of these, **429 (17.5%)** declared their primary employer as an agency.¹ [Our emphasis]*

In response to a written question from us about the 'extent of the use of agency staff for children's social care and its impact', you told us in February 2023 (as clarified by your November 2023 briefing note) that:

*"the use of agency workers in children's services has decreased slightly over the course of the year from **56 [individuals] in 2021 to 49 [individuals] in 2022. 85.6% of all agency staff utilised in children's services were for qualified social workers"**.² [Our emphasis]*

Its difficult to reconcile how in 2022 the number of individual agency workers for all children's social care staff was 49, but by 2023 the number of individual agency workers for children's services social workers alone was 429. This would appear to represent an increase of over 1,000% in just one year.³ This increase appears highly unlikely, so we assume that either this is not a like for like comparison, or that there is – still – a lack of clarity about certain workforce data.

This ongoing uncertainty about children's social care workforce data that is routinely verified and published in England only reinforces our concerns about the transparency, accuracy and reliability of data published in Wales.⁴ We will be seeking to clarify this data as part of our scrutiny session with you as proposed above.

¹ Social Care Wales, 'Re: The use of agency staff in children's services', 27/11/23, page 2

² Written evidence, Social Care Wales (additional information)

³ 85.6% of 49 individuals is 42 individuals. 429 is an increase of 1,021% compared to 42.

⁴ Welsh Parliament, 'If not now, then when? Radical reform for care experienced children and young people', May 2023, pages 49-54

Due to the mutual interest in the issues that we will discuss during the proposed scrutiny session, I will invite members of the Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee to attend. I have copied this correspondence to the Chair of that Committee for his information.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair

Cc. Russell George MS
Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.