



**CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA**  
**DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE**

Councillor Mary Jones  
Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

**BY EMAIL**

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Cyf:  
Date / Dyddiad: 25 September 2015

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Dear Councillor Jones

**Cabinet Member Question Session – 10 August 2015**

Thank you for your letter dated 16 September 2015 regarding my attendance at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 10 August 2015 and your reflections on the session. You raised a number of outstanding issues and actions for response.

**Special Guardianship Orders**

Please find below my answer to your question in relation to your concern about the use of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced Special Guardianship and Special Guardianship Orders. They came into force on 30 December 2005. Special Guardianship is a formal Court Order that usually lasts until a child is 18 years of age. Special Guardianship means that the child lives with carers who have parental responsibility for them until they are grown up. The child is no longer considered to be a looked after child, although the LA continues to hold responsibilities in terms of reviewing support packages.

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People who can apply for an SGO could be a grandparent, close relative a family friend, or even a foster carer. They would be people who have a bond and commitment to the child. SGO's offer stability and permanence for a child without separating them from their parents and extended family network. They provide an opportunity to build a firm foundation for a lifelong permanent relationship.

Special Guardianship may be more suitable because it does not distort family relationships like adoption can.

There is a requirement to provide an assessment report and proposed support package to the Court with the SGO application. This will include provision of financial and other more practical support. It is considered best practice, and this is enshrined in Legislation, that children, wherever possible and safe, remain in the care of or at least continue to maintain relationships with their families and communities of origin. This is why the proportion of SGO's has risen across Wales. Some SGO support packages have a significant financial contribution. Child and Family services whilst maintaining financial rigour in all planning and service provision, always put the best interests of the child first. In addition the Court provides the most rigorous scrutiny to ensure the best interests of the child are prioritised.

**Education for Gypsy and Traveller Children**

There have been no changes to the provision of services for Gypsy and Traveller Children and Young People in Swansea. The Young People's Service runs outreach and support work for Gypsy and traveller children, young people and their families. This involves liaison with Primary and secondary schools, ensuring their attendance and issues are dealt with.

The Gypsy and Traveller children are still receiving their education in school within Cefn Hengoed with funding from the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) from colleagues in Education.

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**Flying Start**

The criteria which determines how areas are eligible for Flying Start provision:

Flying Start is aimed at 0-3 year olds living in the identified most deprived areas in Wales. It is not a school based Programme however the preferred model adopted in Swansea is to, where possible, site the Flying Start childcare settings on primary school sites due to the benefits of transition and continuity into the Foundation Phase and in recognition of the fact that Swansea's nursery provision is provided through the maintained sector.

WG determines the targeting of the Programme for each Phase which is summarised below:

**Phase 1** of the Programme (2006-2011) was required by Welsh Government to be targeted at the most disadvantaged school catchments in Swansea. In line with WIMD data the target areas were Townhill, Seaview, Blaenymaes, Portmead, Clwyd, Hafod, Waun Wen and Pentrechwyth. Provision for welsh medium childcare and accessible childcare for children with disabilities are also provided for eligible 0-3 year olds living in the geographical target areas.

**Phase 2** of the Programme (2012-2014) involved a change in criteria (set by Welsh Government) for defining Flying Start areas. Local partnerships were provided with a list of all Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) ranked in order of deprivation according to the levels of income benefit households (IBHHs) with 0-3 year olds. Prior to receiving offer of capital grant from Welsh Government for Phase 2, the Authority had to satisfy Welsh Government on a number of occasions that the expansion of the Programme was fully in line with the ranking of LSOAs determined by IBHHs of 0-3 year olds.

**Phase 3** criteria prescribed by Welsh Government for new areas directly relate to LSOAs ranked in priority order, determined by Income Deprived Households (IDHHs) where 0-3 year olds live thus also taking into account low income families.

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The targeting for each Phase therefore has to take into account:

- the criteria set by WG (e.g school catchment / LSOA determined by IBHH, LSOA determined by IDHH).
- the cap ("maximum") of 0-3 year olds set by Welsh Government (starting with the total 0-3 year olds living in all existing Flying Start areas in order to calculate how much of an expansion can be achieved within the set cap.)
- the data provided to the Local Authority by WG (ranking order of LSOAs and estimate of numbers of 0-3 year olds in each area).

**Children's University**

Whilst the scheme has been very successful in the past, there is no longer national support or financial backing from Welsh Government for it to continue. This has made it extremely difficult to continue with the scheme from 2014/15 onwards. Only 15 of our schools used the scheme in 14/15 often concerned about the administrative burden of entering registers for after school clubs on to a data base for children to have a certificate with no formal qualification attached to it.

The post of the Children's University Development Worker was lost in August 2014 due to changes in terms and conditions to Grant funding criteria. Since then the Poverty & Prevention service's Partnerships team have continued to try to run the scheme with no support with the hope that it would become self-sufficient, however that has not been the case and since no dedicated worker has been in place the numbers of schools and organisations using the scheme has diminished considerably.

An analysis was undertaken of the database the Partnerships team hold for Children's University and at present there are less than 500 children and young people who are actively involved in the scheme. The majority of the activity registered comes from the Egypt Centre and Glyn Vivian Art Gallery.

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The partnerships team and the wider Poverty & Prevention service has no capacity to carry on running the scheme as it requires admin support and a worker to drive this forward to keep on top of registrations and encourage schools and organisations to use the scheme.

Across Wales there is limited use of the Children's University which was initially run through Glyndwr University; however there is no reason that the scheme cannot be run by another organisation.

The database held by the partnerships team is linked to the main Education database of all children and young people in Swansea, therefore this cannot be shared in this form with a third party due to data protection, however a new way of recording activity could be established if the scheme was run by another organisation.

The Partnerships team could support an organisation to take on the scheme and ensure activity recorded against active children and young people was transferred to a new database to ensure that credits already achieved were not lost and added to that child's record.

Another organisation could develop and run it as they wish, there is no national steer on this scheme at present so they would have the opportunity to shape and revive the scheme as they see fit.

It is important to note that the scheme just recognises activity conducted by other organisations, and by not continuing with it, there will be no detrimental impact on the number of activities run or opportunities provided for children and young people in Swansea. There are many other ways that the achievement of young people is recognised in Swansea.

**Children's and Young People's Partnership**

A review of the CYP Board was undertaken in May 2015, with the revised members of the group meeting to undertake a planning workshop on the CYP plan in June 2015, and then subsequently meeting fully as a board in July 2015 to follow up on this work.

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Work is being undertaken to re-establish the CYP Board to ensure we obtain a clear picture around all the ongoing work which sits under this agenda, however it is important we ensure the right people are engaged with this process to maximise buy in and ensure we achieve the correct set of shared outcomes for children & young people across the partnership which will form a basis for a new CYP Plan and feed into the LSB.

I am looking at the involvement of the Education & Children and Young People Cabinet Advisory Committee Chaired by Cllr Des Thomas in the co-ordination of information and services for children and young people.

I hope that my response has answered any outstanding queries and updated you on the actions being undertaken in my area.

Yours sincerely

*Christine Richards*

**COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE RICHARDS**  
**DEPUTY LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR**  
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