



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Child & Family Services**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Wednesday, 2 August 2023 at 4.30 pm

Present: Councillor P R Hood-Williams (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

M S Tribe
S M Jones

Councillor(s)

K M Griffiths
W G Lewis

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine
C L Philpott

Other Attendees

Louise Gibbard

Cabinet Member for Care Services

Officer(s)

Julie Davies
Chris Griffiths
Liz Jordan

Head of Child and Family Services
Principal Officer Residential Services
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): S Joy

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Cheryl Philpott declared a personal interest.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

No declarations were made.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

Panel agreed the Minutes of the meeting on 20 June 2023 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

5 Annual Wellbeing/Performance Report

Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services and Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services attended to brief the Panel on this item and answer questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel heard it had been another challenging year but a lot of positives including new ways of working embedded and a lot of learning taking place.
- Cabinet Member thanked Head of Service and officers for their incredible hard work.
- Panel felt report was very easy to read, laid out well and showed officers strength of conviction.
- Panel noted 24 children were re-referred to child protection register within the year, and asked if there was a breakdown of the reasons for re-referral. Informed it varies depending on a child's circumstances.
- Panel queried the situation with staff shortages. Heard there are as low as four agency staff currently and there has been huge interest in the Academy.
- Panel was not aware of the phrase 'Voice, Choice and Control'. Heard it is a phrase in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Care Inspectorate Wales lead inspector will ask how it is being evidenced every time they meet.
- Panel asked for an explanation of qualitative auditing. Informed that every month the report includes some themes on the findings that have been specifically audited and this has been brought together to give a whole picture. Panel agreed to have a session on this to understand it better and that it would be helpful to include it in reports on a quarterly basis.
- Panel noted number of carer reviews completed within timescales was very low between June 2022 and March 2023, which implies they were done late. Informed there was a backlog of reviews but this has been caught up and the picture is much improved.
- Panel felt it was a very comprehensive and positive report which is a credit to the Head of Service and the Department.

Actions:

- Panel to receive a session on qualitative auditing when Performance Monitoring is next on the agenda (December 2023).

6 Residential Care Services (including update on Ty Nant)

Chris Griffiths, Principal Officer Residential Services attended to give an overview of Children's Residential Care Services including plans to develop in-house residential care services, challenges and proposed next steps and progress with Ty Nant.

Discussion Points:

- Biggest challenge currently is staffing and Welsh Government drive to limit profit in care of looked after children from April 2026, leading to a reduction in external providers.
- Panel pleased to hear Home 2 is now fully registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) since 27 July 2023.
- Officers asked to explain the difference between 'regulated' and 'unregulated'. From a statutory perspective, regulated homes have been approved and risk assessed by CIW and have given the Authority the go ahead to place young

people there. With unregulated CIW have not approved the provision but because of this, risk assessments are carried out more robustly as the regulatory body is not overseeing it.

- Panel queried what problems/challenges the Authority faces when consulting with residents in areas where children's homes are being considered. Heard under CIW guidance location and premises assessments are undertaken before liaising with communities. Informed some of the challenges with new properties have been purely about location. With Homes 3 and 4 there are some concerns from the community around safety.
- Panel feels the Service is in a state of flux currently due to the requirements in terms of eliminating profit. Officers stated the Service would like to reduce use of external providers but will still be dependent on them. They feel it would be useful if Welsh Government gave a proper definition of what 'not for profit' means.
- Panel pleased to hear there has been significant improvement at Ty Nant. At the last visit all priority action notices were removed and there was one area for improvement related to provider assessments, which was being revised at the time.

7 Work Plan 2023-24

Panel considered the work plan and noted items for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.45 pm.