



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Tuesday, 24 October 2023 at 4.00 pm

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

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine
E T Kirchner

Councillor(s)

K M Griffiths
S M Jones
W G Lewis

Councillor(s)

V A Holland
S Joy
M S Tribe

Other Attendees

Louise Gibbard Cabinet Member for Care Services

Officer(s)

Julie Davies	Head of Child & Family Services
Claire Edwards	Principal Officer - Commissioning and Care Services
Mark Gosney	Commissioning Team Leader
David Howes	Director of Social Services
Liz Jordan	Scrutiny Officer
Linzi Margetson	Principal Officer – Safeguarding and Performance
Alison Mathias	Team Manager, Service Quality Unit
David Rossiter	Commissioning Team Leader
Jane Whitmore	Strategic Lead Commissioner

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A M Day

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

No disclosures of interest were received.

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 13 September as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

5 Update from Regional Safeguarding Board

David Howes, Director of Social Services and Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services attended to brief the Panel on the West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board's annual report 2022-23 and answer questions.

Discussion Points:

- The Board has four sub-groups. Director feels three out of four have good evidence of progress against objectives. The fourth is a work in progress as to how to bring together performance reporting across the partnership. Panel concerned that the Regional Board is not as effective as it should be. Director stated he is just flagging up an opportunity for improvement in one area.
- Objective going forward is to increase the contribution from children and families in the region and for them to drive the agenda around safeguarding. Starting to see some progress on this with some initiatives.
- Panel discussed article in the media about the increase in safeguarding issues coming through to councils and queried if there is a big problem with numbers of safeguarding issues in Swansea. Informed Child and Family Services are not seeing significant increase in referrals and contacts as quoted in the media as being seen in other areas.
- Panel feels there are areas in terms of safeguarding, particularly in terms of drugs, where the Safeguarding Board should be putting their efforts into ensuring coordination between agencies is working. Informed there are other boards closely involved in the actual work taking place, what the Safeguarding Board does is seek assurance that all of these arrangements are in place and over time making a difference in terms of safeguarding.

6 Service Quality Unit Annual Report

Alison Mathias, Team Manager Service Quality Unit highlighted the main points from the Annual Report 2022-23 and answered the Panel's questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel stated how difficult it must be for children going into care for the first time and suggested that as well as writing letters, more is done orally with these children, such as a recording. Officers felt the suggestion was a very good one and will explore the option further.
- Panel queried why the rate of advocacy take up is so low. Informed there are lots of reasons. The Service is working with its commission provider NIAS to help understand how this can be communicated better to its looked after children.

7 Commissioning Reviews Progress Update

Jane Whitmore, Strategic Lead Commissioner and other relevant officers attended to brief the Panel, emphasizing that it is different to procurement, it is not just contract and grant management, it is about identifying the gaps and who is best to deliver the best outcomes for children and families across Swansea.

Discussion points:

- Panel asked how effective the Service is at keeping costs of services under control while making sure it is delivering the service people want. Heard there are some services that must be provided and the spend is out of the Authority's control. Where there is a choice in terms of getting best value, the teams work hard negotiating prices with suppliers/providers to make sure they get best value.
- In terms of providing services via commissioning, Panel queried if every opportunity is taken to talk to clients in terms of their requirements. Heard feedback is received from beneficiaries and they are involved as part of forward planning.
- Panel is aware the not-for-profit element is causing certain problems in the market and asked if there is any feedback on this from Welsh Government. Cabinet Member confirmed she attended a network meeting with the Minister and this issue was on the agenda. There is currently a working group looking at the definition of not-for-profit, hopefully will have more clarity soon.

8 Work Plan 2023-24

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

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm