



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 9 March 2022 at 4.00 pm

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

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
C A Holley
W G Lewis

Councillor(s)

A M Day
Y V Jardine
D W W Thomas

Councillor(s)

M Durke
E T Kirchner

Other Attendees

Eve Davis
Elliott King

Superintendent, South Wales Police
Cabinet Member – Children’s Services

Officer(s)

Julie Davies
David Howes
Liz Jordan
Jay McCabe
Kate Phillips
Helen Williams

Head of Child & Family Services
Director of Social Services
Scrutiny Officer
Principal Officer - Adolescent and Young People Services
Head of Vulnerable Learners
Youth Justice Practice Manager

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): K M Griffiths

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

No disclosures were received.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

No declarations were received.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

Panel agreed the minutes of the meeting on 25 January 2022 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

5 Presentation - Briefing on Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) Report: Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks

Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services attended to present this item and answer the Panel's questions. Eve Davies, Superintendent of South Wales Police and Kate Phillips, Head of Service for Vulnerable Learners in the Education Department also attended for this item.

Discussion Points:

- Department fully supports the recommendations of the Report.
- Superintendent stated that from a policing perspective, they acknowledge the Report and its findings and are making some headway in terms of the learning identified and action planning to respond to it.
- Annual Report is being produced for Exploitation and Safeguarding. Officers suggest this is added to next year's work programme.
- Panel concerned about outcomes and asked if the Department was confident that as much as possible is in place to identify and deal with these cases, and if cases are coming forward that may not have been expected in the past. Informed the Department is confident they focus on outcomes once they have addressed the risks. Also informed things are being referred in and the Department is very busy.
- Panel queried if Covid has caused further problems i.e., with lockdown children have not been in school and whether this has exacerbated the problem in this area. Informed some of the risks around criminal exploitation were removed as people were not allowed out but there was more online exploitation. Head of Vulnerable Learners added that the pandemic was a really difficult time. It was hardest when had partial opening of schools and had period of time when certain year groups were out of school.
- Panel stated that for familial exploitation some families are not going to want to report this, and the child will do what the family wants. Panel felt there is a need to take into account what the child thinks, but ultimately do what is best for the child. Officers responded that abuse within the home is not a feature of the Report but in relation to this, children may be afraid to come forward. It is when children feel safe, often in school, that they start to tell people.
- Panel stated that the Authority has a working partnership with EYST (Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team) but this is only one organisation so think this is not a true representation. Panel queried who will sit on the new BAME group mentioned in the presentation. Officers agreed that in terms of the BAME group, it is important to look at who sits on it and there needs to be multiple voices and no one organisation can represent everyone.
- Panel added that there is a need to just deal with the person in front of you irrespective of race etc. Officers agreed that we should look at the person and not their colour, gender etc but also felt the Department's workers in the Front Door help them to understand different cultures which is really important.
- Panel felt that in terms of solutions, some of the most successful interventions are about multi-agency working and when communities understand the mind of the abuser and stated that for years Social Services promoted training which was about understanding the mind of the offender and what they can

do about it. Panel queried if the Department is looking to continue this type of training and to cascade it. Officers agreed to provide details of training for staff in particular, and multi-agency training following the meeting.

- Panel queried a figure in the presentation of 6 cases of exploitation in the last 18 months and asked if this was correct and was informed that it was 6 cases of a particular type and was an attempt to provide the Panel with some reassurance. Officers suggested a broader report around performance data is brought to a future Panel meeting, so the Panel has an understanding of the picture across Swansea and what this is saying about the risks across Swansea.
- Panel was assured by the measures that have and are being put in place now.

Actions:

- Panel to consider adding Annual Report on Exploitation and Safeguarding to next year's work programme.
- Details of any training, for staff and multi-agency, on understanding the mind of the abuser and what to do about it and information on if it will be cascaded to be provided to the Panel.

6 Presentation - Youth Justice Inspection Report

Jay McCabe, Principal Officer Adolescent and Young People Services attended to present this item and answer the Panel's questions. Helen Williams, Youth Justice Practice Manager also attended for this item. Panel heard the regional arrangement was inspected in October 2018 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) and received an 'Inadequate' rating. Significant improvement has been made over the three years since and the Swansea arrangement has moved to a 'Requires further improvement' rating.

Discussion Points:

- Improvement Plan fully endorsed by HMIP. Officers requested it come back to Scrutiny in six months-time for Panel to receive an update. Panel felt the Service has come a very long way over three years and will continue to monitor the improvement going forward.
- Systems review of the whole of the Service will be taking place from March 2022. Children and young people will be involved in helping to shape and redesign the Service.
- Officers emphasised an important point about HMIP comments on the Bureau. They had no concerns with the outcomes of the cases they looked at.
- Youth Justice Board Members being invited to visit the Service and speak to staff and young people. Offer extended to Scrutiny Panel Members to visit the Service.
- Youth Justice Service (YJS) is investing in purchasing a new building in Swansea to help support delivery of co-located services and increase capacity.
- Press statement was put out when HMIP published their inspection report. Director of Social Services to share this press statement with the Panel.

Actions:

- Panel to consider adding YJS Improvement Plan to work programme for next municipal year.
- Panel Members to inform Scrutiny Officer if interested in visiting the Service.
- Press statement to be circulated to the Panel for information.

7 Verbal Update on Emergency Staffing

Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services updated the Panel on the current position.

Little change with position on employing social workers apart from a slight positive trend. Decision taken to recruit more support workers which has had a positive benefit of social workers being less pressured. In longer term, if issue with social workers continues will need to decide what to do strategically at Swansea and Welsh Government level.

Panel informed that full performance reporting to Scrutiny will recommence in new municipal year.

8 Panel Review of the Year 2021-22

Panel Members reviewed the year 2021-22 and discussed the following questions.

What went well?

- Most important aspect of public service is supporting the work of CFS. Panel has never been complacent. Very proactive and robust focus with all Panel Members and supported by officers. Difficult to think how can improve this.
- Panel hasn't shirked from dealing with difficult issues and being challenging.
- Direct engagement with client groups worked well – videos with young mums and talking to children and young people directly. It was very powerful and helped Panel see what the Department is actually doing in the most challenging circumstances. Would like this to continue in future.
- Department is working better now than it would otherwise because of this Scrutiny Panel. The fact the Panel has been here going over different aspects of CFS and having the Service at the top of its mind has made a difference to the efficiency of the Department. If this has made a difference to a child out there, the Panel has been successful.
- It has been a very strong scrutiny panel. Credit to the Chair who doesn't criticise and tries to ask good questions. Panel's strength has been looking at difficult things and seeing the reality because it wants to make a difference to children and families.
- What the Panel does is useful. It has seen the situation where the Department has gone from dire straits to where it is now. This is and has always been down to the management and staff. The Panel's role has been as a critical friend.
- Thanks and appreciation to everyone who has contributed on the Panel and thanks to Scrutiny Officer and all Scrutiny team for all the hard work they do.

What did not go so well?

- Nothing that did not go well.

Has the Panel focussed on the right things?

No comments noted.

What have we learnt that will help us with future CFS Scrutiny?

- Think there should be more CFS Panel meetings in future, as it is so important and there is so much ground to cover.
- Outcomes are the most important – what impact is all this having on the lives of children and young people for whom we have a responsibility.
- Seeing linkages between CFS and Education. Very useful and positive.
- Don't celebrate enough all the cases we see closed every month due to the brilliant intervention from CFS. These lessons coming out more would be very useful.

The meeting ended at 5.50 pm