



# CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

Dinas A Sir Abertawe

Councillor Mark Child  
Cabinet Member, Well Being  
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**18 March 2014**

Dear Councillor Child

## **Well Being Performance Panel on 17 March 2014**

The Panel met on 17 March 2014 to consider the Child and Family Services performance monitoring report with Dave Howes, Head of Child and Family Services and Simon Jones, Performance and Improvements.

### **Child and Family Services Performance Report – January 2014**

The panel welcomed the opportunity to challenge performance in this area. Overall, the set of figures presented in January's report were very encouraging. The panel acknowledged that there had been good levels of improvement in performance over the year. The panel agreed that the Safe Looked After Children Reduction Strategy was a coherent and joined up strategy that had begun to produce positive results.

After reviewing the report provided and discussing the issues with officers the panel wished to highlight that:

- Although numbers of looked after children have stabilised, the panel remained concerned about the numbers of looked after children overall, and in particular at some schools in Swansea. Resources need to be targeted at the areas of greatest need.
- There must be sufficient levels of support for Special Guardians, including financial, training and social worker support to ensure that permanence is maintained

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- Looked After Children who reside in a particular area are often sent to schools outside of their area and this could have a negative impact on their friendship groups and socialisation. There needs to be a greater understanding of this and the factors which influence it.
- The panel required further information on the legal definitions of the different types of orders, legal frameworks and classes of children that are supported by Child and Family Services
- Unallocated cases amongst Children in Need and Looked After Children remained a concern of the panel, and in particular the length of time that cases were unallocated.
- The panel was concerned that no reason had been given for 9 children not being seen during their initial assessment.
- The potential for 50 new born babies requiring social services intervention in the coming months meant that new and appropriate mother and baby services would need to be developed.
- Children should not remain on the Child Protection Register for too long and that systems and scrutiny set up to ensure this did not happen were robust.
- The increase in the numbers and different types of foster carers was very positive.
- The large cohort of looked after children will transition to care leavers over the next few years and will require a range of support services to ensure that they are able to begin adult lives which are independent and successful.
- The panel was pleased to see that supervision levels had improved since the last quarterly check on performance in this area, but there still remained room for improvement.
- The panel was pleased to see that Child & Family Services had no agency workers. This was good in terms of the financial position and stability of the department.

### **Safe Looked After Children Reduction Strategy**

- The panel was pleased to see that the total number of children becoming looked after to date had fallen in comparison with the same time last year. The panel was also pleased that the total number of children ceasing to be looked after had increased since the same time last year.
- Performance needed to be improved in adoption orders granted and adoptive parents approved as there are high demands across the region for this.
- The legal position of Special Guardians and their recourse to the “skills allowance” that is paid to foster carers needs to be clarified to mitigate the risk of legal challenge.

### **Performance Indicators**

- The panel expects to see an improvement in performance over the coming months in the following performance indicators and a move from the “red” status:
  - timing of initial core group meetings held within 10 days of the initial case conference

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- percentage of looked after children with a PEP
- health assessments for looked after children

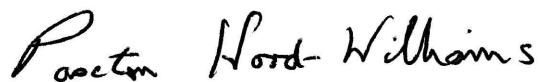
As a result of the issues highlighted above, the Head of Child and Family Services agreed:

- to look into the factors that influence the decisions to place looked after children in schools that are not in the areas where they live and report back to the panel
- to circulate the revised information on the reasons that 9 children were not seen during their Initial Assessment.
- to provide the panel with the legal definitions of the different types of orders, legal frameworks and classes of children that are supported by Child and Family Services
- to provide an analysis of the amount of time that cases remain unallocated and an explanation of what it means for a case to be unallocated.

The panel looks forward to your attendance at its final meeting of the year on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

I hope you find this letter useful and informative and look forward to your response.

**Yours sincerely**



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**CC: CABINET MEMBER**  
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