



## Report of the Cabinet member for Children Services (Early Years) and Cabinet member for Children's Services (Young People)

Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 25 February 2019

### CHILD DISABILITY SERVICES

<b>Purpose</b>	To provide scrutiny with an overview of the child disability service area.
<b>Content</b>	This report includes a discussion of service developments that aim to better safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children with a disability and their families. This report is limited to those developments where Social Services is the primary lead agency.
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	To give their views on the recent developments and proposals for moving forwards.
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Early Years) Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Young People)
<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>	Julie Thomas – Head of Child and Family Services
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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Children with a disability are a particularly vulnerable group within our community. They are three to four times more likely than non-disabled children to be abused or neglected. They are more susceptible to bullying and to mental health disorders. Their families are more susceptible to higher levels of stress, lower levels of parental wellbeing and poverty.
- 1.2 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (“the Act”) brings together some of the different legal duties that the Council has to these families from the perspective of social services. Key amongst these duties are:-
- Section 14 requires a Council and the Health Board to secure the provision of prevention and early intervention services that will minimise the effect on disabled people of their disabilities.
  - To assess the child’s need for care and support under section 21. Importantly, section 21(7) states that there is a presumption that disabled children have a needs for additional support.
  - Section 24 of the Act imposes a separate duty on the Council to assess the needs of parents who are caring for a disabled child.
  - Section 54 requires social services to create and maintain a care and support plan to meet the needs identified in the course of the above assessments.
- 1.3 This report provides Members with an overview of the different projects underway to better discharge these and other statutory duties in the future.

## 2. Family Support Commissioning Review

- 2.1 In February 2018 the Cabinet agreed the recommendations of a Commissioning Review focusing on services for children with a disability. The Review noted that the services in question had not been systematically and thoroughly reviewed for many years. The recommendations and progress in implementing them are set out below:-
- 2.2 **Parent / Carer Participation and Engagement** - The Review noted that the Council lacked the mechanisms to effectively and routinely engage with parents and carers. It is acknowledged that parents are often best placed to identify problems and to plan services to meet their child's needs. Parent carer forums are widely used in other parts of the country to harness this expert knowledge. It was subsequently recommended that the Council should commission an independent service provider to develop and run a parent carer forum in Swansea.
- 2.3 The final design of the new forum was co-produced with parents and carers. This was important for the future success of the service but

meant it took longer to procure. The contract was awarded to the successful consortia at the end of 2018. The forum is currently establishing their governance and financial arrangements, developing policies, and lead parents are undergoing training in order to begin fully performing their role.

- 2.4 **Overnight Breaks** – Overnight breaks are part of the continuum of family support services available to support children and families with the most complex needs. The Review noted that Child and Family Services needed to undertake a procurement exercise to ensure compliance with the Council’s Contract Procedural Rules and procurement legislation. The tender exercise was completed in the summer 2018. The existing provider, Action For Children, was successful and the service continues to be delivered at the specialist children’s home, Ty Laura. Nevertheless, the nature of the service offer has changed considerably as a result of the Review. Whereas the service had previously been exclusively reserved for overnight breaks, it is now available to provide families with day breaks during school holidays as well.
- 2.5 **Domiciliary or Home Care** – A relatively small number of families require the support of carers who are registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales to enter the family home to provide support. The form of support varies from cases to case but can include the provision of childminding and personal care. The Review noted that the private domiciliary care market has often struggled for the capacity to support our families to the standard we expect. At the same time our in-house Flexible Home Support Service has a long track record of delivering a high quality care. The report therefore recommended that the service was expanded to meet the needs of the very complex children who require this form of intervention. Recruitment for the (four) new staff members was undertaken in 2018, and they have been trained and available to support families since September 2018.
- 2.6 **Early Help Team** – Early Help Teams started to rise in prominence following a series of high profile reviews into children’s social care at the start of the decade. Many reviews, including one by Professor Eileen Munro, highlighted the potential of prevention and early intervention services to promote safety and wellbeing, whilst simultaneously promoting the financial sustainability of statutory services. These reviews have influenced national and local policy and encouraged many authorities to provide families with an improved early offer of help. Where families need help and support from many different agencies, it is recognised that integrated working is essential to this early offer; it assists practitioners and managers to put children and their families at the centre of holistic, co-ordinated and seamless service delivery. Delivering this in practice can be assisted by the formation of key worker teams to assess and co-ordinate support. The Council is working to develop such teams for children at risk of harm because of neglect or abuse, but had not made similar arrangements

for those where the vulnerability is primarily (not solely) due to their child's disability. The Review recommended that this gap be addressed.

2.7 In 2018/19, Child and Family Services and Poverty and Prevention worked with a third sector organisation to pilot a small Early Help Team. Largely delivered by volunteers with professional experience of supporting disabled children, it is judged to have been a successful pilot with emerging evidence that it has helped to alleviate demand for the Child Disability Team. Work is underway to take the lessons learnt from the pilot and apply them to the formation of a larger and more robust Early Help Team that can support a greater number of families from 2019/20.

2.8 **Play and Leisure Opportunities** – Participating in play and leisure opportunities are key to a child's development. They enable them to develop their social and physical skills and become more confident in their communities. They are also beneficial to parents as they offer parents a short break from parenting responsibilities while their child is playing with friends or involved in leisure activities. Unfortunately, disabled children too often have limited opportunities as our community-based opportunities are not always inclusive.

2.9 The Review noted that play and leisure opportunities are separately funded by Child and Family Services and Poverty and Prevention. It was recommended that in the future the service areas should pool their resources to jointly commission targeted and specialist services. The intention being for the new interim service arrangements to be in place from 2018/19 and, during the course of 2018/19, further work could be undertaken, in partnership with the newly established parent carer forum, to determine what should happen in the long-term.

2.10 Services were jointly commissioned in 2018/19 and plans are at an advanced stage to commission services for 2019/20.

### **3. Palm Tree Resource House**

3.1 In 2018/19 Child and Family Services utilised Integrated Care Funding to develop a specialist family centre setting to support children with a disability and their families. The centre, named the Palm Tree Resource House, opened towards the end of 2018. Work is presently underway to fully develop the scope of the offer for families. This includes identifying third sector organisations that can run complementary services from the House, and to extend our capacity to support families during the evenings and weekends.

### **4. Pathways for support**

4.1 In 2018/19 Swansea led strategic projects at a national and regional level that seek to improve the way in which we work with partners,

especially Health, to support children with a disability and other complex needs.

- 4.2 Child and Family Service chaired a group established by the National Commissioning Board which has produced best practice guidance to enable partners to work efficiently, effectively and in a child centred approach.
- 4.3 At a regional level Swansea has been part of work to understand how this best practice guidance can be put into practice. This work has led to the design of an integrated pathway for children with complex needs. Further work is still required and one of the key outstanding tasks is to devise a mechanism for determining multi-agency funding responsibilities for children who require high-cost packages of support.

## **5. Transition and the Policy Development Committee**

- 5.1 In the autumn and winter of 2018 Child and Family Services started to work with the Policy Development Committee which sought information on the arrangements for how we support children with a disability to transition adulthood. Having reviewed the situation as it currently operates, the Committee has instructed Officers to revise the Transition Protocol with the input of disabled children and their parents. The timescales for finalising the Protocol are the summer of 2019.
- 5.2 Furthermore, the Terms of Reference for the operational Transition Meeting have been revised. The meeting quality assures the plans of young people transitioning between Child and Family Services and Adult Services. Previously attended exclusively by the two sections of Social Services, the intention is to increase representation to include professionals from other agencies such as health and education. By including a greater range of agencies it is hoped that plans will be more effective and better co-ordinated.

## **6. Local Offer**

- 6.1 In January 2019 a project group met for the first time to create a Local Offer for Swansea. A Local Offer is a concept enshrined in legislation in England. In essence it means the publication of the provision and arrangements available for supporting children with a disability and their families. The Local Offer has the following key objectives:-
  - To provide clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about how agencies meet needs.
  - To make agencies more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving children and their families in its development and review.
  - Support greater service alignment and identification of opportunities for better integration and joint working.

- The identification of any duplication of service provision and any gaps.
- Improved joint working across organisations and with families.

6.2 In developing a Local Offer, it is important to learn the following lessons from England:-

- It must involve children, young people and their parents as this will help to ensure the advice and information is easily accessible and that the arrangements are more likely to meet local needs. The initial project team meeting had four representatives of the parent carer forum.
- To be effective requires the input of all key service partners including education, health and social care.
- The Local Offer should support the third sector by promoting their offer as well.
- It should be accessible in a number of formats and widely publicised.
- It will need to be well maintained to have any real value.
- The language should be clear and it should be attractive and visually interesting.

6.3 The plan is to finalise the Local Offer by the end of 2019.