



To:
**Councillor Elliott King, Cabinet Member for
Children Services**

Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:

Scrutiny

*Scrutiny Office
Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrchol:*

01792 637314

*e-Mail
e-Bost:*

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

BY EMAIL

*Date
Dyddiad:*

16 November 2020

Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Children Services following the meeting of the Panel on 28 October 2020. It covers WAO follow up review of corporate safeguarding arrangements for children in Swansea.

Dear Cllr King,

The Panel met on 28 October 2020 to receive an update on WAO Follow Up Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements – Children in Swansea Council and to discuss the work programme for 2020-21.

We would like to thank you, Dave Howes, Julie Davies and Simon Jones for attending and answering questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response. The main issues discussed are summarised below:

WAO: Follow Up Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements – Children, in Swansea Council

We queried the link with Education in terms of safeguarding. We heard that the pandemic has accelerated improving the relationship with Education and that the Departments are meeting on a weekly basis to prioritise the children they are most worried about to ensure they are safe. We also heard that Departments have learnt from this and maintained meetings from March to the present day, which shows a collective wish to work together. We were informed that Education has its own statutory guidance, as Social Services does, and they are held accountable about how they deliver against it through inspections etc. We were very pleased to hear that interactions are there and building and both Departments are on the same page as to how to support each other.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

www.swansea.gov.uk / www.abertawe.gov.uk

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In terms of the action plan, we raised the fact that a timeline has been scheduled for the first few items only and sought clarity on when other items would be dealt with. We were informed that the impact of the pandemic has meant concentrating on managing the short-term crisis but that safeguarding is right at the centre of this. We heard that some work has had to be delayed but has not been lost sight of, as the Corporate Safeguarding Group will be maintaining oversight of the programme, as well as ensuring children and adults are kept safe in the meantime. We heard that any suggestions from the Panel can be directed to the Corporate Safeguarding Group and that the Director of Social Services will make sure these are picked up in a timely fashion.

We received clarification that there is a Corporate Safeguarding Group that has oversight of corporate safeguarding work and there is a Regional Safeguarding Board, which is the overarching board for the area. It was suggested that the Panel receive an update from the Regional Safeguarding Board, at a future date, to formally receive feedback on how regional arrangements are working. We agreed to add this to next year's work programme. We were interested to hear that the Director thinks it is working really well and the pandemic has improved partnership working in the region.

In respect of DBS, under proposals for improvement, we heard that the Audit Committee has been looking if appropriate arrangements are in place for DBS checks, that they have major concerns and that a report is coming back to the Audit Committee in the next few months. We raised queries about how often DBS checks are required, if they are undertaken before staff start and how many each person is supposed to have. We were advised that if we have any outstanding issues we want assurance on, we should put together a list and feed them into the Audit Committee.

You informed us that the Head of Democratic Services has circulated a link to all Councillors to complete safeguarding training and suggested that this should be completed by all Councillors, to set an example to the rest of the Council.

We sought clarity regarding collaboration around CFS and AS in terms of domestic abuse. The Head of Service suggested that this be included in the item on the work programme titled, WAO report: Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic.

We endorsed the conclusions and actions set out in the report.

Child and Family Services Work Programme 2020-21

We discussed the draft work programme and agreed:

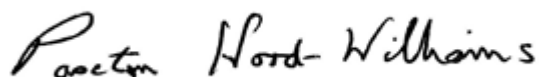
- Item on *WAO: Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic* is to include a briefing on the increase in domestic violence over the pandemic and a breakdown of collaboration between CFS and AS in terms of domestic abuse. AS panel members to be invited for this item.
- Meeting to be arranged between Cabinet Member, Head of Service and Panel Convener to discuss scheduling of future items and the effect of the pandemic going forward, to help shape future work programme.
- Chairs of the AS Panel and CFS Panel to look at work plans to identify opportunities for any items to go to joint meetings.

Since this Panel meeting took place, the Convener of the CFS Panel and AS Panel have agreed to pause the current programme for 3 months whilst officers deal with the latest covid-19 crisis. Therefore, joint Social Services scrutiny meetings will take place in December and January and a joint budget meeting in February. The plan is that the programme for each Panel will recommence in March 2021.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your views and comments on any of the issues raised but, in this instance, a formal response is not required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paxton Hood-Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

PAXTON HOOD-WILLIAMS
CONVENER, CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
CLLR.PAXTON.HOOD-WILLIAMS@SWANSEA.GOV.UK