



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 13 December 2021 at 4.00 pm

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

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
K M Griffiths
D W W Thomas

Councillor(s)

A M Day
Y V Jardine

Councillor(s)

M Durke
W G Lewis

Officer(s)

Julie Davies
Chris Francis
David Howes
Liz Jordan

Head of Child & Family Services
Principal Officer Commissioning and Care Services
Director of Social Services
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): S M Jones and E T Kirchner
Other Attendees: E J King

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Disclosure of interest – Mike Durke.

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 21 September as an accurate record of the meeting.

Under matters arising the Convener raised a query regarding data on progress of looked after children in education compared to others. Officers responded that the Welsh Government run system that would normally provide the data has been paused due to the pandemic and the Education Department did not have the resources to do this manually at present in a way that could be shared to be able to see the comparison. However, for individual children, this would be done as part of the Looked After Children statutory reviews. The department hope to be able to provide some analysis in the new year and this will be shared with the Panel.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were submitted.

5 Performance Highlight Report and Emergency Staffing Plan

Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services attended to brief the Panel on this item.

Discussion Points:

- Panel currently receiving a shortened performance monitoring report. Hope to resume full performance reporting from February 2022 onwards.
- Outcome of inspection of Youth Offending Service to come to a future CFS Panel meeting.
- Panel raised the recent tragic case in Solihull and asked officers to give an idea of what went wrong. They also sort reassurance that this would not happen to children in this local authority area.
- Directorate had worries about being able to recruit social workers for two to three months. In this time, they have pulled in staff from other areas of the service to assist and support. Weekly safeguarding meetings held with Education, Health and Police to ensure they keep in contact with children they are most worried about. This was one of the challenges raised in the case in Solihull – keeping in contact with children they are most worried about. Officers in Swansea believe they are doing everything they possibly can.
- Panel asked about the difficulty in recruiting to the Service. Local authorities across Wales have spoken to the Welsh Government about medium- and long-term strategies. Officers confirmed they are pursuing 'growing their own'. The Authority is strengthening links with universities and supporting staff to pursue qualifications. Recently some of the senior social workers may be holding higher caseloads than usual. However, because additional family support worker posts have been appointed, this should make a difference in the new year as they can hold some of the non-statutory cases.
- Panel requested a breakdown of the total CFS staff team. Panel feels the Service need people with skills, knowledge and aptitude and should be encouraging these people into key roles and not just looking for people with degrees. Officers are looking at how they can support these individuals across the Service to progress their careers.
- Director stated that they value all staff and all staff contributions. Social Services have hundreds of differently qualified staff and they are the bulk of the workforce but there are some statutory requirements about having qualified social workers in particular roles and it is for these roles that there is a shortage of social workers.
- Panel asked about market supplements and if they are only to be offered to social workers and senior social workers in the three locality teams. Officers confirmed that no other financial incentives are planned for CFS currently but there is a big focus on wellbeing.

- Convener stated that progress with the Department over the last 10 years has been remarkable and it gives him confidence that the Head of Child and Family Services came from a safeguarding background.

Actions:

- Information on breakdown of CFS workforce to be provided to Panel.

6 For Information

Panel noted items on the work programme for the remainder of this municipal year.

7 Exclusion of the Public

Panel voted and agreed on exclusion of the public from the meeting during consideration of item 9, as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. Relevant paragraph of Public Interest Test is 13.

8 Ty Nant - Update on Progress with Action Plan

Panel discussed the item in closed session.

Chris Francis, Principal Officer Commissioning and Care Services attended to update the Panel on this item.

Discussion Points:

- Officers confirmed that going forward they want to go much further than what was in the action plan and that a number of checks and mini reviews will be taking place to check on impact.
- Inspection highlighted a number of areas where the process was positive including management.
- Staff felt the inspection gave an unfair reflection on their practice in some areas as there were periods of crisis management throughout that time due to the pandemic.
- Staff felt that with regards to quality assurance, there were fantastic examples of good practice however these were not documented anywhere. Therefore, when the inspection was held the inspectors could not see what had happened to achieve the outcomes.
- Training deficiencies were mentioned in the inspection report. Staff felt this was unfair as their practice was underpinned by really good training but as it was not captured in the training matrix, it was not readily identifiable to inspectors.

Minutes of the Scrutiny Performance Panel – Child & Family Services (13.12.2021)
Cont'd

- Panel queried if the deputy manager was still having to undertake a working role as well as managing. Officers confirmed that in the new structure this member of staff is 'off rota' when undertaking the managerial function.
- Panel stated that if there is anything they can do as a scrutiny panel, in terms of the performance element, to help officers with their job to let them know.
- Officers confirmed an annual report will be produced in April 2022 and it could come to the Panel if they wished to check out the findings.
- Panel was interested to hear any ideas for it to see exactly how this service works. Officers responded that they could think about producing a 'Life in the day of' video of children in Ty Nant, for some time in the future.
- Officers stated they had been talking to education about school exclusions with regards to looked after children and different ways of dealing with this. They would like to bring a report on this to the Panel in the future.
- Panel was pleased to see a lot of thought going into the report received from Care Inspectorate Wales and that they were dealing with the issues.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm