



## Report of the Cabinet Member for Care Services

### Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023

#### DELIVERY OF CORPORATE PRIORITIES/POLICY COMMITMENTS IN RELATION TO CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

<b>Purpose</b>	To update scrutiny panel on the delivery of the corporate priorities and policy commitments in relation to Child and Family Services
<b>Content</b>	This report provides an update for each relevant policy commitment on the activity undertaken and progress made during 2023/24.
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	Consider the report as part of their routine review of performance and improvement in Child and Family Services.
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services
<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>	Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services
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## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's policy commitments statement for 2022-2027 covers a broad range of topics, along with outlining commitments that will deliver against specific objectives within the first one hundred days of term. These were adopted by Swansea at its full council meeting on 7 July 2022.
- 1.2 The commitments reflect the priorities of the people of Swansea and the priorities the council is committed to delivering through the corporate plan. The report agreed by Council also pledged to make progress on many of those commitments within 100 days of the commitments being adopted.
- 1.3 The Council's corporate plan [Corporate plan 2023 / 2028 - Swansea](#) provides the strategic framework for the transformation that is needed to achieve the council's vision while ensuring it is able to respond to the challenges of the present and the future.
- 1.4 Six well-being objectives are prioritised in order to meet the challenges ahead. These objectives include safeguarding people from harm, so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation. The ambitions behind this objective are detailed below:
  - Swansea is a fair and equal city in which children can have the best start in life to be the best they can be, safe within their families.
  - Swansea is a healthy city in which all people can expect to live happy, healthy, fulfilling lives; to achieve their own wellbeing outcomes and age well.
  - Swansea is a human rights city committed to enhancing the health, wellbeing, safety and to promoting the rights of vulnerable adults, children, and families.
  - We aim to prevent and intervene early, where a person or child is at risk of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation, and to ensure the right care and support at the right time.
  - We will continue to promote safeguarding vulnerable people as everyone's business, across the council, through a skilled and professional workforce, our elected members and any organisation or person who undertakes work on our behalf.
- 1.5 The policy commitments cover education, better care, climate change, communities, housing, regeneration and attractions. For Child and Family Services, the relevant commitments for Child and Family are:

### Better Care:

- Swansea Council will commit to investing £750 million for better care in Swansea.

- The Council will commit to fairer pay for care workers.
- Swansea Council will strive to provide new children's care facilities within Swansea.

#### 100 days target – Better Care

- We will progress a new children's care facility.

An overview of the activities delivered, and progress made against the Council's corporate objectives and also its policy commitments, relevant to Child and Family Services, is given in the following sections of this report.

## **2. Safeguarding people from harm, so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation**

- 2.1. The priorities for the service are focused on three critical areas, in support of the corporate safeguarding objective:
- Prevention and early intervention
  - Placement sufficiency
  - Workforce

### Prevention and Early Intervention

- 2.2. Introducing Senior Lead Workers aligned to specific schools, as part of the Early Help Hub model, means that multi-agency discussions are able to take place when needed, involving families, and enabling the right support to be accessed at the right time. Children, young people, their families and professionals are able to receive the right information, advice and assistance at the earliest opportunity and means that needs can be met at the lowest level of the continuum of need, and without the need for statutory intervention.
- 2.3. Support for parents and carers has been enhanced and strengthened through a number of new and different ways of working, these include:
- (a) Neuro diversity - Early Help has had a significant increase in the number of referrals received for families where neuro diversity is presenting as a significant issue for both children, young people and their parents to understand and manage. Quality assurance work highlighted opportunities to develop the skills of our workforce to be able to support all aspects of neuro diversity. A new Lead Worker dedicated to the development and delivery of interventions for families, providing workforce development opportunities and staff consultations, was created. This will ensure we have robust offers in place whilst building on a whole service response to all aspects of neuro diversity.

- (b) Out of court disposal - A specialist role has been created within our Early Help Hubs to help support parents outside of the court process as a result of the Welsh Government's removal of reasonable chastisement. This role works with parents to manage behaviour in a different way to prevent the need for prosecution. The role delivers child development programmes and behaviour management programmes on both an individual and group basis.
- (c) Parental conflict - Since the pandemic the Single Point of Contact and Early Help have had a significant increase in the number of referrals received for families whereby parental conflict is a significant issue, impacting on the behaviour of children of all ages. A Lead Worker post dedicated to the development and delivery of interventions for families, providing workforce development opportunities and staff consultations, was introduced. This will ensure targeted support can be provided, whilst building on a whole service response to parental conflict.
- (d) Parental advocacy network - we have worked with Neath Port Talbot to support the further development of a parental advocacy network. This provides peer support for those who might be experiencing the child protection process. The work includes parent cafes, run by parents for parents. The cafes are able to provide ad-hoc, relational support to other parents in similar positions. The cafe's also gives us the opportunity to support parents into volunteering roles within the network. The scheme was awarded funding by Welsh Government for 2 years from April 2023.
- (e) Carer assessments - A new carers hub has been developed within the Single Point of Contact as a result of an increase in demand for carers assessments. This work is being prioritised within The Academy so that newly qualified workers can deliver these assessments.
- (f) Family network project - This team supports families to develop their networks to help them achieve safety for their children and to exit safely out of social services by developing their own plan, supported by their naturally occurring network. This has enabled children to be removed from the child protection register, and also prevented children needing to become looked after.

### Contextual safeguarding and supporting young people

- 2.4 The blended approach to youth work in Swansea has continued to go from strength to strength over the last year. Numbers of young people positively engaging via youth clubs, outreach work, targeted group work, schoolwork and access to online support, have grown significantly and remain on an upward trend. Multi-agency working with a range of partners, and involvement in the Police's problem-solving groups, is assisting in finding positive solutions to anti-social behaviour through whole community approaches.

2.5 Our Contextual, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (CMET) work is acknowledged as an exemplar of best practice in working with young people who are at risk of exploitation. Of particular note is:

- The creation of a CMET panel of young people including those who have experienced extra familial harm
- Over 5,500 young people have engaged with our work
- More than 80 detached youth work sessions and 182 group sessions focused around safety
- Trained 60+ adults working in supported accommodation on the risks associated with extra familial harm
- Ran 72 community engagement events and 28 pop-up youth club sessions
- City Rangers have updated their procedures to include guidance on child welfare approaches
- Young people developing a language guide for professionals

#### Edge of care and supporting care experienced children and young people

2.6 Born into care - Following research across the UK into the population of unborn children being 'born into care' Swansea Child and Family Services has been part of a UK-wide group of local authorities considering how best to address the recommendations and develop a road map for implementation of the draft guidelines alongside our existing services. We have created a new, early assessment panel which includes multi-agency, reflective discussions within 10 days of allocation. Family network meetings are also being used to ensure that the whole family are involved in supporting the safety of the wider network and the future safety planning. This development work means staff can access support for families of unborn children prior to the 12-week scan which allows additional time to work directly with families and support them to remain together once the baby is born.

2.7 Special Guardianship Orders - Recognising there are potentially unmet care and support needs for children and their guardians, where Special Guardianship Orders have been granted, work has progressed to identify opportunities to improve the support available to families, whatever age the child may be. This includes updating policies and reviewing financial arrangements, working directly with guardians and children and young people to co-design different approaches.

2.8 Foster Wales Swansea – in line with the strategic aims and ambitions of the National Adoption Service, Foster Wales Swansea is on a drive to increase the number of local authority foster carers, thereby reducing the need to use independent fostering agencies, and to strengthen the support available to foster carers. Specific achievements over the last year include:

- Targeted recruitment campaigns for adolescents, and parent and child carers.

- Securing additional funding from Welsh Government to expand our recruitment and assessment capacity.
- Commissioning Homes for Good to attract foster carers via faith-based organisations.
- Developing therapeutic support services with support from our internal therapy service.

2.9 Supported accommodation – we have created regional offer for unaccompanied asylum seeking children in partnership with Neath Port Talbot LA, working in partnership with a local provider to acquire 3 homes, using grant funding, offering up to 10 placements. We are exploring the development of move on accommodation when these young people reach the age of 18, in line with their care leaver entitlements.

2.10 We have been re-thinking the current supported accommodation pathway process for young people aged 16+ to improve the type of accommodation that is available as well as the support that is provided to them. The aim is to ensure young people are able to develop independent living skills and engage in employment, education or training on their journey into adulthood.

### Workforce

2.11 We are proud of our approach to supporting staff wellbeing, which came into its own during Covid and gave us a roadmap of better supporting all of our workforce during challenging times, alongside celebrating and raising awareness of the excellent practice in Swansea.

2.12 To build our workforce of the future and acknowledging the ongoing challenges of there not being sufficient social workers in Wales, we have implemented our Social Work Academy in the front door. This has been spotlighted at the ADSS Spring Seminar and seen by Social Care Wales as exciting workforce development.

2.13 Our Social Work Academy is now fully operational, and a number of recently qualified workers have been recruited to fill the vacant positions in those teams. The Academy is preventing demand in work within our statutory teams and providing opportunities for the newly qualified social workers to develop their skills in a nurturing environment. The first cohort of newly qualified social workers will be moving into the area social work teams from May 2023 onwards, with the second cohort of workers coming on stream over the coming months.

## **3. Better care (including 100 days target)**

3.1 The availability of suitable placements in Wales for looked after children continues to be an on-going challenge. The Welsh Government programme for change to eliminate profit and radically

reform services for care experienced children will require local authorities to rapidly expand their in-house provision (residential and fostering) in the next 3 years.

- 3.2 There are a number of ongoing pieces of work designed to expand our in-house residential provision by creating new children's homes. Over the last year we have secured an existing Council property and converted this into a 2-bedded children's home. This is in the final processes of being registered by Care Inspectorate Wales. The home will provide short to medium term placements to support transition into longer term accommodation.
- 3.3 We have purchased another property, which is an adjoining semi-detached house. Capital funding has been secured from the Regional Partnership Board to convert this into a residential children's home. Various building surveys are near completion, with a planning application hoping to be submitted in the next couple of months. A comprehensive engagement plan has been developed, which will include the involvement of local councillors, the local community and care experienced young people.
- 3.4 Our commissioning team has been working tirelessly with our externally commissioned providers to ensure all of their staff are receiving a fair pay. We have been part of the whole directorate approach to reviewing and quality assuring current commissioned services so that there is transparency in individual contracts to reflect the costs associated with delivering the contracted services.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 Despite the challenges and pressures Child and Family Services have faced on its post pandemic recovery, it has continued to not only deliver a safe and effective service, but also to co-design improvements and service change with key stakeholders. The increase in and different types of demand that is being presented is probably indicative of the impact that Covid has had on people of all ages, leading to negative changes in family dynamics and the behaviours of individuals.
- 4.2 This is inevitably adversely affecting the lives and lived experiences of vulnerable children, young people and their families. There are opportunities over the next 2-3 years to utilise Welsh Government's programme for change grant funding to further innovate and re-design services so that we are able to best meet the changing demands and needs of children, young people and families.

#### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 None

## **6. Finance Implications**

- 6.1 All of the budgetary implications associated with the service delivery, improvement and transformation are costed into the forecasted budget for Child and Family Services, as agreed at Full Council.

## **7. Integrated Assessment Implications**

- 7.1 None.

**Background papers:** None

**Appendices:** None