



City and County of Swansea

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

**Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS**

**Teams**

**Tuesday, 20 June 2023 at 4.30 pm**

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

**Councillor(s)**

Y V Jardine

**Councillor(s)**

E T Kirchner

**Councillor(s)**

W G Lewis

**Other Attendees**

Louise Gibbard

Cabinet Member for Care Services

**Officer(s)**

Julie Davies

Head of Child & Family Services

David Howes

Director of Social Services

Liz Jordan

Scrutiny Officer

Nichola Rogers

Regional Adoption Manager, Western Bay Adoption Service

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): A M Day, K M Griffiths, S M Jones and C L Philpott

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**1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

No disclosures of interest were received.

**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 22 May 2023 as an accurate record of the meeting.

**4 Public Question Time**

No questions were received.

**5 Performance Monitoring**

Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services briefed the Panel on the Performance Monitoring Report for April 2023 and answered the Panel's questions.

Discussion Points:

- In April, Care Inspectorate Wales undertook a rapid review of child protection in Swansea. Feedback was positive.
- Panel noted numbers in residential care have gone up slightly. Heard this links to lack of foster carers. There was a recruitment drive in May with Foster Care Wales.
- Panel queried step increase shown on the graph for people going to Early Help Hubs in April 2022. Informed this was due to a change in recording between March and April 2022.
- Panel queried if the Independent Carers Assessors Team is in-house, and if so, how it is independent. Heard it is because they look at just the carers in their own right, as opposed to a parent/child assessment.
- Panel stated they would be concerned if someone came back on to child protection register less than a year after being taken off it. Officers agreed to include this for future analysis for the performance report.
- Panel queried if there were problems with rolling out the new form and if the Department was satisfied with it. Heard it has progressed as anticipated and continues to evolve.
- Panel noted there was no indication of staffing levels in the report, particularly numbers of agency staff. Informed at last count they were down to four agency social workers but would welcome more currently and are trying to recruit two more.

Actions:

- Data to be included for future analysis for performance report - 'number of children added to Child Protection Register, within 12 months of de-registration who've been re-registered under the same category'.

## **6 Update on Regional Adoption Service**

Nichola Rogers, Regional Adoption Manager attended to brief the Panel and answer questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel queried how the Service generates income. Heard during pandemic years the Service had more adopters waiting than children available. Many adopters went onto adoption register for Wales and looked at children available for adoption across the UK. The regional adoption service gained a placement fee for those placements.
- Panel queried what is meant by 'twin tracking' referrals? Informed that when a local authority decides it needs to issue care proceedings and look for the best plan for the child, if adoption is a likely option, they will refer it to the regional adoption service at that point. Not all regions do this.
- Panel asked if there are currently enough adopters for number of children needing to be adopted. Informed the Service has a pool of waiting adopters,

and through the market share project has additional placements it can use, so thinks this year it will break even.

- Panel noted reduction in the number of approvals and asked if this was a concern. Heard it is a concern and has become a national problem. Panel will need to monitor this.
- Panel asked about the current situation with life stories. Informed Wales is making improvements in this area. Regionally, developed a small team within the Service which looks at life journey work offered to adopters.

## **7 Draft Work Plan 2023-24**

Panel discussed and agreed its work plan for 2023-24.

The meeting ended at 5.20 pm