



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 1 November 2022 at 4.30 pm

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

Councillor(s)

K M Griffiths
W G Lewis

Councillor(s)

S M Jones
H M Morris

Councillor(s)

E T Kirchner
Cheryl Philpott

Other Attendees

Louise Gibbard

Cabinet Member for Care Services

Officer(s)

Julie Davies
Chris Griffiths
Liz Jordan

Head of Child & Family Services
Principal Officer Residential Services
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A M Day

Officer(s): David Howes

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

No disclosures were made.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

No declarations were made.

3 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

4 Residential Care Services

Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services and relevant officers attended to give an overview of Children's residential services in Swansea.

Discussion Points:

- Panel informed the Service is in a very challenging position with a lack of suitable placements for children, but it is working very hard to develop its own provision and reports show good progress being made.
- Panel noted Statement of Purpose was for 12 weeks and queried what this meant as far as Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is concerned and more importantly for the young people involved. Informed this is an arbitrary figure and depends on if there is a more appropriate transition for the young person to move on to more stable provision within the 12 weeks. The Service is working closely with the CIW regulations and inspections team on this, and they are fully aware of the challenges.
- Panel Members understood why children are not happy for a profit to be made out of them and agreed with going forward with non-profit. Panel queried if there is any negativity with foster placements because they are paid. Panel informed it is never a cause for a placement to breakdown, but it can become an issue if talked about in the wrong way.
- Panel noted there is currently residential care capacity for 3 children in Swansea and that the Service is looking to increase this to 7 but felt that this still seems very low for an area the size of Swansea. Panel queried if the Authority is in a situation where it is having to place children in residential care outside of Swansea and what the numbers are for this. Panel heard some are placed in Swansea and neighbouring authorities and the majority are in Wales.
- Panel expressed concern that Home 3, where children are coming from secure units, and Home 4 which is for emergency provision will be situated next to each other. Informed it will be 2 separate homes and one will be semi-secure.
- Panel asked if it was economically beneficial for the Authority to have its own facilities or facilities provided by external providers. Heard there are still benefits to a local authority having its own in-house services in terms of cost savings, but also value for children and young people to stay local and keep their identity which is of equal value to the cost saving to the local authority. Also, the Authority has a better training offer for staff.
- Panel queried if a child living outside the Authority area has the same standard of care as the Council's services. Panel heard the Authority has a contract and monitoring officer who quality assures all the children and young people placed outside the Authority's provisions. CIW regulators also inspect the provision and share this information with the local authority whose children are based there.
- Panel informed that all children and young people currently requiring care and support are with registered providers.
- Panel queried if there was any local opposition to the new residential homes planned. Informed it is currently in the early stages but the Service does not anticipate any concerns. The plan is to make contact with the local community, in partnership with local councillors, to explain what it is all about before planning signs go up so hopefully then there will be community resilience.
- Panel pleased to hear what children and young people have said about Ty Nant.

- Officers confirmed that life skills are included in the timetable at Ty Nant. They want to try and make young people as self-sufficient as possible.
- Panel wanted to know why staff keep getting admissions paperwork wrong at Ty Nant, as there are so few people it must be completed for. Panel heard it seems simple, but the guidance is quite complicated and there is a lot of information that needs to be on the admissions paperwork that has to be correct. The Service is working with CIW to identify the best models to use so paperwork is not as complicated to complete. Panel very interested to see outcome following further focused inspection of Ty Nant in December 2022.

Actions:

- Add 'Briefing on Focused Inspection of Ty Nant' to future work programme.

5 Corporate Parenting Board Update

Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services attended to give the Panel an overview of the work plan for the Corporate Parenting Board over the next year and progress to date.

Discussion Points:

- Panel mentioned that they previously had concerns about the difference in performance of looked after children between year 6 and year 11. Heard the Virtual School will allow the Service to interrogate this in a more joined up way which is good for attainment and progression. Welsh Government has offered to pilot the Virtual School and Swansea is part of the pilot. Effectiveness of the virtual school will be judged using data on attendance, progress, exclusions, progression and feedback from children and young people about meeting their aspirations. Panel interested to see how these outcomes are reported.
- Panel informed development of software for the virtual school is on track with the implementation plan. Head of Service will confirm if it has been completed and update Panel.
- Panel noted from report that care leavers team had been brought back in house and queried how successful this has been particularly in terms of covid and staff shortages which must have been difficult. Informed the transfer of staff happened with no difficulties and recruitment of staff was successful, as moving over to the Authority improved people's pay and conditions. Heard it was very challenging during covid, young people struggled as not able to have face-to-face contact with people but this has improved now there are more face-to-face interactions.
- Panel queried how many children are currently living in bed and breakfasts and was informed that currently there are none. Over a period of three months there have been between two and five. The Service tries to keep their stay there as short as possible, but the challenge is move on options as there is a lack of availability in Swansea of independent accommodation.

Actions:

- Head of Service to confirm if development of software for the Virtual School has been completed.

6 Work Programme Timetable 2022-23

The Panel discussed the work programme and noted items for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.40 pm