



City and County of Swansea

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

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

**Teams**

**Monday, 5 December 2022 at 4.00 pm**

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

**Councillor(s)**

A M Day  
W G Lewis

**Councillor(s)**

C L Philpott  
H M Morris

**Councillor(s)**

K M Griffiths

**Other Attendees**

Louise Gibbard

Cabinet Member for Care Services

**Officer(s)**

Julie Davies  
David Howes  
Liz Jordan  
Damian Rees  
Gemma Whyley

Head of Child & Family Services  
Director of Social Services  
Scrutiny Officer  
Principal Officer Safeguarding & Performance  
Principal Officer Transformation

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): S M Jones and E T Kirchner

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**1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

Cheryl Philpott declared a personal interest.

**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 1 November 2022 as an accurate record of the meeting.

**4 Public Question Time**

No questions were received.

## **5 Update on Child and Family Improvement Programme and Performance Monitoring**

Gemma Whyley, Principal Officer for Transformation updated the Panel on the Improvement Programme and Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services updated the Panel on the Performance Monitoring Report for October 2022.

### Discussion Points:

- Panel pleased to hear about Social Work Academy and feels it is very innovative.
- Panel asked about neuro diversity and what effect the backlog in diagnosis is having. Heard across Wales there are waiting lists for diagnostic assessments. Welsh Government has agreed additional funding for regional partnerships, but it is unlikely to have much effect on waiting times.
- There is still an acute shortage of social workers and no sign this is coming to an end.
- At previous meeting Panel requested figures for number of looked after children not looked after in Wales. Officers confirmed that of 479 looked after children, 112 are living in neighbouring authorities, 52 are living in other authorities in Wales, 20 living in England and 1 in Scotland with family members.
- Numbers of looked after children living outside Wales is rising. One of the reasons is lack of suitable placements in Wales, partly due to Welsh Government's 'Eliminate' Programme, making some providers nervous about their future in Wales.
- Panel noted quite a number of items in Performance Report where it says 'report to be developed'. Informed some of it is because of changeover to WCCIS, had to develop systems and focus has been on core data and information and the gaps are mainly new asks. One of the biggest challenges is validating the data and this takes time.
- Panel queried what a Section 47 inquiry is and heard it is the investigation part. It sets out the framework for what all agencies need to look at.
- Panel noted that the Number of Cases Awaiting Allocation seems to be rising. Officers confirmed there are more cases coming in and they are waiting for more staff to come into post in Early Help to allocate them to.
- In Performance Report it says, 'HR processes continue to create a block to filling posts quickly to prevent waiting lists occurring'. Heard Department is in discussion with Corporate HR and combination of churn of number of posts within the Authority and capacity issues linked to Oracle Fusion led to a backlog in the service centre. Subsequently Department has had assurance all the backlog has been caught up and resource to prioritise some of the most urgent posts, including CFS posts will be prioritised.
- Department has approximately 159 vacancies currently and 12 agency staff. Panel concerned with the number of vacancies across the Service, about coming back to the situation it had in the past with staff shortages and agency staff who do not fully understand situations. Panel felt that with the Academy being set up, the Department is making a big effort in respect of this issue.

## **6 Update from Regional Safeguarding Board**

David Howes, Director of Social Services attended to brief the Panel on this item and answer questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel heard about the opportunities of the Parent Advocacy Network (PAN) and felt that the Service being informed by people who have used that particular Service was very advantageous.
- Panel queried if the Department was happy the Regional Safeguarding Board is working as well as it should. Heard there are additional challenges and complexities working on a regional basis rather than having a local board, but it also provides greater opportunities. Panel also heard there is a good level of reassurance overall from having our own corporate safeguarding board; having good feedback from WAO about the arrangements; having our own Audit Committee taking an interest; having a positive Estyn inspection which reflected well on this and having good feedback on CIW reports on safeguarding.

## **7 Safeguarding Quality Unit Annual Report**

Damian Rees, Principal Officer Safeguarding and Performance attended to brief the Panel on this Unit's Annual Report for 2021-22 and answer the Panel's questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel pleased to see a reduction in the number of re-registrations in 12 months on the child protection register and a reduction in the number of children coming off on first review. This is positive.
- Panel queried if personal education plans are also looked at when they look at personal plan reviews. Informed personal educational plans would be looked at in all the looked after reviews if the child was still in education.
- Panel felt the discussion on Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) was very useful and will look at it again in a year's time.

## **8 Work Programme Timetable 2022-23**

Panel considered the work programme and noted the items for the next meeting.

Actions:

- Cllr Mary Jones to be invited for the item on CAMHS as the chair of the previous scrutiny inquiry.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm