



City and County of Swansea

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

Committee Room 5, Guildhall, Swansea - Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 30 October 2017 at 4.00 pm

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

Councillor(s)

M Durke
S M Jones
D W W Thomas

Councillor(s)

K M Griffiths
P Jones

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine
I E Mann

Others Present:

Kelly Ahern
Helen Davies
Val Jones

Assistant Director of Children's Services, Western Bay
Partnership Manager BAYS Plus
Western Bay Adoption Manager

Officer(s)

Owen Davies
Liz Jordan
Donna Houlston
Julie Thomas

Performance Manager, Social Services
Scrutiny Officer
Principal Officer Permanence
Head of Child & Family Services

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A Pugh

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

No interests declared.

2 Notes of meeting on 21 August 2017

The Panel agreed the notes as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Performance Monitoring

Performance and Progress of Western Bay Regional Adoption Service

Val Jones, Western Bay Adoption Manager presented the report and gave an overview of the performance and progress of the service during the last financial year answering the Panel's questions.

Discussion points:

- Panel informed that CSSIW will be carrying out an inspection of the service.
- Increasingly difficult to find adopters. This is a national problem. Numbers significantly dropped in 2017/18 and the service is not sure why. The numbers of children waiting to be placed for adoption is increasing and some of the children needing to be placed are more complex.
- Panel felt there needs to be a drive to increase adopters especially for sibling groups and older children, nationally as well as regionally. Panel suggests that similar mechanisms as Foster Swansea are used as this has been successful.
- Figure for average time taken to approve adopters does not reflect how successful the service is as it is taken from inquiry stage rather than take up. Intention is to change how the figure is calculated this year so it will start from when the application is taken up.
- Performance in providing Life Journey Material is a big issue for the Service. They have not performed as well as they would like. Action plan is going to be put in place to try and address this. Transition Moving On Programme being rolled out in the region, could also help make improvements.
- Regionalisation of the service continues to be challenging but is a statutory requirement. Discussions taking place about what will happen going forward with changes to the makeup of the region.
- Staffing issues – high levels of staff off with serious sickness. Measures been put in place to support the Service.
- Number of projects in place to help vulnerable families, for example, 'Turn Around' project and 'Reflect'.

Actions:

- Outcomes of survey on 'Turnaround' project to be provided to Panel for information once available.

Performance and progress on Leaving Care System

Helen Davies, Partnership Manager for BAYS Plus gave a presentation to the Panel (circulated separately). Kelly Ahern of Barnardo's and Donna Houlston also attended for this item.

Discussion points:

- Review of Single Accommodation Strategy has been undertaken internally to identify if young people's needs are being met.
- There is a move towards providing more qualitative rather than quantitative outcomes to monitor the difference BAYS Plus is making to young people. The partnership is working towards implementing a Swansea wide outcomes framework in order to provide this information.
- Panel felt Bays Plus is working effectively and to be congratulated on how much they have developed in terms of confidentiality. More information on outcomes needed.
- Partnership group established to try and develop the vision of where next for BAYS Plus.

Child and Family Services Performance Report for September 2017 and Second Quarter Performance

Julie Thomas, Head of Child and Family and Owen Davies went through the reports, highlighting the main issues and answering questions.

Discussion points:

- Panel grateful to the department for incorporating all of its requests into the Performance Report.
- Looked after children in residential care – Concern raised that more are being placed out of county than in. Informed this is usually 50/50 but a sexual exploitation case meant some children had to be placed out of county. Panel assured only children who need to be placed out of county are.
- Assessments – Panel is concerned about the timeliness of assessments. This is still an issue. Panel informed there are a number of issues causing this and that there is an imminent structure change to try and alleviate some of the issues.
- Panel pleased to hear that the department is improving communications with its staff and wellbeing strategy going to be developed.
- Also there has been a reduction in costs for management and senior staff of approximately £200,000 within the department.

Actions:

- Send a letter to the Cabinet member covering the main points and seeking a response.

4 Work Programme Timetable 2017-18

Work programme received and considered by the Panel.

5 Letters

Letters received and considered by the Panel.

The meeting ended at 6.45 pm