



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 16 September 2020 at 1.00 pm

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

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
S M Jones
W G Lewis

Councillor(s)

M Durke
D W W Thomas

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine
E T Kirchner

Other Attendees

Elliott King
Sam Pritchard

Cabinet Member - Children Services
Cabinet Member – Children Services

Officer(s)

Liz Jordan
Julie Thomas

Scrutiny Officer
Head of Child & Family Services

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): K M Griffiths and P K Jones
Other Attendees: J Davies and D Howes

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

No disclosures of interest were made.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

No declarations were made.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

The Panel considered letters and minutes from previous meetings and agreed the minutes of the meeting on 18 February and 24 February 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were submitted by members of the public.

5 Service Specific Update on Covid-19 Pandemic

Cabinet Member introduced the item stating that it had been an unprecedented situation and there had been a close working relationship with the Health Board and internally with Education. He stated that they are incredibly proud of what the Service has achieved and that this is due to the staff. Julie Thomas, Head of Child and Family Services then updated the Panel on the effects of the Pandemic including impacts, activities, challenges, and recovery.

Discussion Points:

- A Recovery/Modification Plan is in place.
- In performance, the headline figures are stable although there is a level of child protection activity and the front door is busy, but is diverting more cases.
- Focus is needed on assessment, signs of safety metrics and care and support plans.
- Unlikely the Service will return to pre-covid model. What has been learnt will be used to strengthen the Service going forward.
- Panel expressed appreciation to staff working in a very difficult situation and who have adapted the Service to meet demands so quickly.
- Panel feels success of the Service has been front line face-to-face and this cannot happen working from home. Therefore important to strike a balance.
- HOS is very proud of staff throughout the Service who have been exceptional.
- Point 2.6 of Modification Plan – Panel feels this is very important. Informed Service was concerned about producing signs of safety work but they have still been able to do this both virtually and face-to-face. They are three quarters of way through staff wellbeing programme, which demonstrates commitment to staff and the building has been opened to staff on voluntary basis. The Service is also working more closely with Health Board which is a positive coming out of this situation.
- Page 14 of Modification Plan – Face to face between staff and the public. Panel concerned number of areas have red status. Informed other than one area, things have moved on since this report was produced and the Service is dealing with all of these.
- Panel was referred to document on Child and Family Safe Looked After Children (LAC) Reduction Strategy. Looking at the detail it is very impressive. In Swansea vast majority of LAC are placed close to home

Actions:

- Presentation on Child and Family Safe LAC Reduction to be circulated to Panel for information.

The Chair stated that Julie Thomas would shortly be retiring from the Council. Panel expressed their thanks for all her hard work and for everything she has achieved and wished her a long and happy retirement. Julie Thomas thanked the Panel for all the support they have given her.

The meeting ended at 2.05 pm.