

## **Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel Update**

### **1. Remit of the Panel**

The overarching purpose of the panel is to: provide ongoing challenge to child and family social services performance to ensure that as the service is undergoing major change performance is maintained and that further improvements are made across all areas of the service.

### **2. Key Activities**

The Panel discussed and agreed their work plan for the year in August and is currently meeting on a bi-monthly basis. Since then the panel has looked at the following:

- a) Overview of the priorities and challenges for this service area (August)
- b) Performance Monitoring report including adoption and the Youth Offending Service and the Leaving Care System (October)
- c) Pre-decision Scrutiny: Family Support Services Commissioning Review – Focusing on Children with Additional Needs and Disabilities (November)
- d) Advocacy update (December)
- e) Draft budget proposals for Child and Family Services (February)

### **3. Achievements / Impact**

We have sent four letters to the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing since August in order to give our views, raise concerns and make recommendations, for example:

Positives:

- Overview of Child and Family Services - the number of children experiencing care is safely reducing.
- Performance Monitoring - department is improving communications with its staff and a wellbeing strategy is going to be developed.
- Performance monitoring - reduction in costs for management and senior staff of approximately £200,000 within the department.

Issues / Concerns:

- Front door - figures for assessments completed in 42 days and for assessments completed in 10 days continue to be well below target. Panel supports department's approach to remedying this by developing an assessment dashboard and providing written guidance and training workshops on assessment triggers. However the Panel feels a fully functioning front door is an essential part of the service and expects proper attention to be paid to this issue over the coming months to ensure it improves.
- Western Bay Regional Adoption Service - regionalisation of the service continues to be challenging but is a statutory requirement. Discussions are taking place about what will happen going forward with changes to the makeup of the region.
- The importance of Life-Story work for Looked After Children when determining the suitability of adopters.

Action Recommended / Agreed:

- Child Protection - a number of the indicators around child protection are significantly lower than the target. This is partly due to recording error however figures still lower than department would like. Suggested that implementation of the system that has been developed to improve performance in this area is undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Cabinet Member responded that the Department has seen an unprecedented high level of child protection activity over recent months which has impacted on some performance figures but not on the ability of the department to work with parents and partners to achieve safety for children. Often the number of exceptions is very small but this does result in figures being skewed. He accepted that there is room for improvement and the action plan to improve performance in this crucial area is being progressed. This includes addressing concerns recording accurate data capture.

- Western Bay Regional Adoption Service - there needs to be a drive to increase adopters especially for sibling groups and older children, nationally as well as regionally. Suggested that the service uses similar mechanisms to what Foster Swansea used, as this has been successful.

The Cabinet Member responded that placing children with complex needs and sibling groups is an ongoing issue not only within Western Bay but nationally. This is despite the work of the National Adoption Service in raising awareness and the profile of adoption. There is a two year recruitment strategy in place in Western Bay and the National Adoption Service is monitoring performance in this area.

- The Panel has asked that the life journey materials for Looked After Children be regularly updated and recorded.
- Leaving Care System - Bays + appears to be working effectively and are to be congratulated on how much they have developed in the last few years in terms of confidentiality. However more information is needed on outcomes in this area.

The Cabinet Member agreed information on measuring actual outcomes for children is essential moving forward. It is important we understand how services are making a difference to improving children's lives. This is not an easy task, however a distance travelled tool is being developed to measure outcomes across the continuum of need, including Bays +. This will be a focus of work in the New Year.

#### 4. Future Work Programme

The programme for the remainder of this municipal year is as follows:

Meeting date	Item to be discussed
<b>Meeting 4</b> 26 Feb 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Monitoring</li> <li>• Prevention and Early Intervention</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting 5</b> 30 Apr 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Monitoring</li> <li>• Evaluate year and discuss possible topics for new municipal year</li> </ul>

#### 5. Action for the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None.