



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 11 October 2022 at 4.00 pm

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

Councillor(s)

A M Day

Councillor(s)

S M Jones

Councillor(s)

W G Lewis

Other Attendees

Louise Gibbard

Cabinet Member for Care Services

Officer(s)

Julie Davies

Head of Child & Family Services

David Howes

Director of Social Services

Liz Jordan

Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): K M Griffiths and E T Kirchner

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

No disclosures of interests were received.

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 9 March 2022 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

5 Role of the Child and Family Services Performance Panel

Members discussed the role of the Panel. The Convener raised a number of points. He felt it would be good to see more members on the Panel, but it is a major strength

that many of the Members are experienced. He stated the Panel will continue to hold the Department to account in a constructive manner.

6 Overview of Child and Family Services in Swansea

Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services presented an overview of Child and Family Services in Swansea, including challenges and priorities. The Head of Service went through the Performance Report.

Discussion Points:

- Panel informed lots of pressures on the Service particularly recruitment of social workers and placements. However key statutory requirements are all being carried out and some positives in the August performance report. Priorities continue to be around prevention and early intervention.
- Panel heard local lead inspector very pleased with progress of the performance report and that the Department had taken on board findings from last inspection a couple of years ago.
- Panel queried if the additional detail provided any further guidance for the Department in terms of planning for the future and allocation of resources. Informed data is used to inform and influence how the Department targets resources.
- Panel asked about Alternatively Qualified Staff – how they are likely to be recruited; appropriate salary levels; how much flexibility the Council has in the package offered to make it attractive. Panel informed Council is a living wage employer and a real strength in Swansea is it offers a chance for career progression. Workforce Development Lead for Social Services is helping to develop a progression pathway for all parts of the Service. Council offers flexible and agile working conditions and supports wellbeing very positively.
- Panel queried if there is any scope for doing something with foodbank volunteers, many of whom would appreciate guidance on what to do if they come across a family where they have concern. Informed SCVS offers safeguarding training to volunteers and there may be value in enhancing this offer through SCVS to help them understand the Service's continuum of need, which may help them to understand what to refer into Social Services. The Service can also connect them to its Early Help Hubs. It has Early Help Hub locality meetings, which would be a good place to have this sort of conversation to help with understanding and assurance.
- Panel pleased WCCIS system is continuing to develop and felt the new performance data presented was quite impressive. Director agreed.
- Panel queried if Foster Care with Family Contact extended to grandparents or just immediate family. Informed it can but depends on individual circumstances of the child concerned.
- Panel informed the Council could potentially have four children's homes across Swansea in the next 12 months.
- Panel heard privately run homes in Swansea create a level of demand within the Service and with Police and Health.

Actions:

- Officers to follow up with SCVS regarding helping to enhance safeguarding training for volunteers, and report back to the Panel.
- Officers to arrange for volunteers to be connected to Early Help Hubs.

7 Draft Work Programme 2022-23

Panel agreed the work programme for 2022-23.

Discussion Points:

- Child disability item at January's meeting to encompass the whole range of children with disabilities.
- Performance Monitoring Report to include key data from more detailed workforce report. Panel particularly interested in supervision, percentage of agency staff, sickness levels, wellbeing of staff.

The meeting ended at 4.55 pm