

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 performance in Child and Family Social Services and 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 is currently meeting on a six-weekly basis and since the beginning of this municipal year the Panel has looked at the following:

Meeting	Topic(s)
11 October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel • Overview of Child and Family Services in Swansea (including key priorities and challenges and performance monitoring report) • Draft Work Programme 2022-23
1 November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Care Services (including Ty Nant) • Corporate Parenting Board Update
5 December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Child and Family Improvement Programme and Performance Monitoring • Update from Regional Safeguarding Board • Safeguarding Quality Unit Annual Report
24 January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on progress with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) • Update on Child Disability Services
13 February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Budget Proposals for Child and Family Services / Adult Services (Joint Social Services Panel)

3. Achievements / Impact

We have sent 4 letters to the Cabinet Member for Care Services since our first meeting of the Council term in October 2022, in order to give our views, raise concerns and make recommendations, for example:

Positives:

- Overview of Child and Family Services in Swansea – Panel pleased to hear that at the six-monthly catch up with the local lead inspector he was very pleased with the progress of the performance report and pleased to see the Department had taken on board findings from the last inspection a couple of

years ago. Panel heard the performance report continues to evolve and was pleased with this report and thought it a big improvement.

- Corporate Parenting Board Update – Panel mentioned it previously had concerns about the difference in performance of looked after children between year 6 and year 11 and heard the Virtual School will allow the Service to interrogate this in a more joined up way which is good for attainment and progression. Also heard Welsh Government has offered to pilot the Virtual School and Swansea is part of the pilot. Effectiveness of the virtual school will be judged using data on attendance, progress, exclusions, progression and feedback from children and young people about meeting their aspirations. Panel interested to see how these outcomes are reported.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – Panel queried how CAMHS measures up against the original Scrutiny Inquiry recommendations and was pleased to see the Inquiry's recommendation that CAMHS should come in house was now being taken forward. The Inquiry had also raised the issue of transition from children to adults and how children felt that one minute they had access to CAMHS and then when they reached 18, especially young boys/men, they were left without the support they needed. Informed transition is one of the key areas that CAMHS has been exploring but needs to do more on and that they see the transfer of CAMHS back into Swansea Bay as one of the key drivers for this. Panel pleased to hear CAMHS are looking at recruiting a transitional nurse and have a new regional transitional policy.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – Panel queried what support mechanisms would be available to a youngster in crisis and if they would be referred through to CAMHS in the first instance or if there would other mechanisms to pick up the young person and heard CAMHS has a crisis service which operates between 9am and 9pm and is accessed via the single point of access number. Panel pleased to hear the plan is to increase this service to 24-7 by June 2023 at the latest.

Issues / Concerns:

- Overview of Child and Family Services in Swansea – Panel queried if privately run homes in Swansea are causing any concern and heard it does create a level of demand within the Service and with Police and Health. Also heard the Service in Swansea would not choose to place some of its children in these homes for various reasons.
- Residential Care Services – Panel noted the Statement of Purpose was for 12 weeks and queried what this meant as far as CIW is concerned and more importantly for the young people involved and their feelings of surety and further abandonment at being moved on again. Panel informed this is an arbitrary figure and depends on if there is a more appropriate transition for the young person to move on to more stable provision within the 12 weeks. If there is not, the Service will use the evidence it has to delay it until it is the right time. Also heard the Service is working closely with the CIW regulations and inspections team on this, and they are fully aware of the challenges. Panel noted the main point of having a timeline stipulated is not for it to drift if it is best for the young person to move on.
- Corporate Parenting Board Update – Panel queried how many children are currently living in bed and breakfasts and was informed that currently there are none but over a period of three months there have been between two and five. Children have regular contact from a personal advisor and are supported

by other agencies. The Service tries to keep their stay there as short as possible, but the challenge is move on options as there is a lack of availability in Swansea of independent accommodation. They are mainly people aged 18+ so the Authority does not have as many rights to intrude on their lives, so it is their choice if they want to see officers from the Authority or not.

- Performance Monitoring - 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 extended family members. Panel noted the number of looked after children living outside Wales is rising and that 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.
- Performance Monitoring – Panel noted the Department has approximately 159 vacancies at the time and 12 agency staff. Panel is concerned with the number of vacancies across the Service, about coming back to the situation in the past with staff shortages and agency staff who do not fully understand situations. Cabinet Member commented it is important to see the strategies that are being taken, for example the Academy, to try and help with the vacancies. Panel agreed it is not a quick fix but will hopefully create the home-grown workforce and longevity needed so the Department won't need to have agency backup. Panel feels with the Academy being set up, the Department is making a big effort in respect of this issue.

Action Recommended / Agreed:

- Panel mentioned referrals and that it would expect the Health Service and Police to be fully aware of what needs to happen if they come across any cases of concern but queried if there was any scope for doing something with foodbank volunteers, many of whom do not have a background in health or social care and would appreciate guidance in terms of what to do if they come across a family where they have concern. Cabinet Member stated that SCVS offer safeguarding training to volunteers and that there may be value in enhancing this offer through SCVS by offering a conversation to help them understand the Service's continuum of need, which may help them to understand what to refer into Social Services. Officers offered to take this away and have a follow up with SCVS colleagues. Panel added that whilst volunteers may be aware of training on safeguarding, what do they do if they have a question or concern or may be fearful of raising something which turns out to be nothing, it's giving them the assurance that it's more important to raise the issue. Panel informed the Service can also connect them to its Early Help Hubs and that it has Early Help Hub locality meetings, which would be a good place to have this sort of conversation, not about individual families but helping with understanding and assurance.
- Panel wanted to know why staff keep getting admissions paperwork wrong at Ty Nant, as there are so few people it must be completed for. Informed it seems simple, but the guidance is quite complicated and there is a lot of information that needs to be on the admissions paperwork that has to be correct. Panel heard that the Service is working with CIW to identify the best models to use so paperwork is not as complicated to complete and that it is a work in progress and Service hopes to see improvement when the further inspection of Ty Nant is carried out in December 2022. Panel very interested

to see the outcome following this further focused inspection and it has been added to the future work programme.

4. Future Work Programme

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

Meeting date	Item to be discussed
7 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update on Support for Carers (including assessments)• Performance Monitoring• Briefing on Youth Offending Service
25 April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivery of Corporate Priorities in relation to Child and Family Services• Update on Regional Adoption Service• Child and Family Complaints Annual Report 2021/22• End of Year Review

5. Action for the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None.