



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

Dinas A Sir Abertawe

Councillor Christine Richards
Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member,
Children and Young People

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**Overview &
Scrutiny**

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CFS/07

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Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Services for Children and Young People following the meeting of the panel on 19 December 2016. It covers the Child & Family Services Performance Report for October 2016.

Dear Councillor Richards,

Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel, 19 December 2016

The panel examined the Child & Family Services Performance Report for October 2016. We would like to thank your officers for attending and answering the panel's questions.

Letters

Before the panel began to examine the performance report we had a discussion on your response to our October letter. It was agreed that the protocol to help staff at Hillside deal with challenging behaviour would be presented the panel at a later date. The panel felt very strongly that steps needed to be taken to prevent the criminalisation of children in care. We look forward to providing our comments on the protocol.

Performance Report, October 2016

Overall the panel was pleased with performance across Child & Family Services. There were a number of areas that we were particularly pleased with which we would like to highlight.

- The panel was pleased with the further reduction in the number of looked after children and the sustained performance that the department has achieved in maintaining the downward trend. We continue to support the department's endeavours in this area.
- The Head of Service reported to the panel that care review conferences had the full attendance of relevant agencies and representatives. The panel supports the inclusion in the QA framework of data on attendance at reviews so if issues arise with attendance they can be identified.
- The panel was encouraged to see that no child had been on the child protection register for over 2 years.
- Signs of Safety continues to deliver positive results and this was reflected in the reduction of Public Law Outline proceedings figures for October. We were delighted to learn that Swansea was bucking the national trend which has seen an increase in the number of PLO proceedings and looked after children.
- Performance in looked after children's participation in their reviews was good. The panel would like to understand a bit more about this area of work and requested additional information to be included on the reasons why children attended but did not participate, figures on the number of reviews that are due and trended data. We understood that capacity issues meant that some of this additional information would take some time to produce. The panel looks forward to receiving this information in the future.
- The panel was pleased to learn that no looked after children had been accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation for a number of months and that the development of the 16 plus service had helped to achieve this.

We had a number of concerns which we discussed with officers which we would like to bring to your attention. These are detailed below.

1. The number of referrals made to Child & Family Services remained high. We understood that work was ongoing to understand why referrals were at this level. The panel would like the outcome of this work to be fed back when it is available.
2. Officers informed the panel that the number of assessments where there was evidence of the child being seen alone was actually higher than reported in October figures. This was caused by difficulties in recording this information. The panel is keen to see this issue resolved and an improvement in the recording of this information.
3. The panel noted further problems with the recording of accurate information regarding child protection visits. We understood that the department will focus on this as part of the service review and we supported this. We also felt that the need to stress the importance of resolving the issues with recording information as quickly and as thoroughly as possible so that performance can be improved.
4. The panel noted the dip in performance of the number of Personal Education Plans received within prescribed timescales and was

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informed that the issue will be addressed with the relevant team in the Education department.

5. Whilst the panel acknowledged that the majority of staff supervisions were completed there remained a significant minority that were not completed for October. Supervision is an important aspect of good quality social work and the panel would hope to see an improvement in this area when it next examines performance.

The panel and officers agreed:

- That the Head of Service would investigate the feasibility of recording a case conference so that it could be shown to the panel to help develop our understanding of the care review process.
- That trended data on placement types would be added to the data in the report. This will help the panel spot trends and patterns and contribute to the panel's greater understanding of performance in this area.
- The panel would like additional information to be included in the performance report on the reasons why children attended their reviews but did not participate and figures on the number of reviews that are due. With regards to the trended data the panel understood it may take more time to produce, but we would hope to see it in the report soon.

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We welcome your views and comments on any of the issues raised but in particular we would like your comments on the panel's concerns, numbered 1-5 above.

The panel would be grateful if you could also include in your response when the protocol to help staff at Hillside deal with challenging behaviour is likely to be available. The panel would be grateful for a response by February 1 2017.

Yours sincerely

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