

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

26th February 2015

Chairman: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairman: Councillor Mrs.D.Jones

Councillors: A.Carter, Mrs.A.Chaves, Mrs.J.Dudley, M.Ellis,
R.G.Jones, Mrs.K.Pearson, M.Protheroe,
A.L.Thomas and Mrs.L.G.Williams

**Co-opted Non Voting
Members:** A.Hughes

Officers In Attendance A.Jarrett, Mrs.A.Thomas, C.Millis, J.Hodges,
Ms.A.Harris, Mrs.N.Hire, N.Place and Ms.C.Gadd

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees and P.D.Richards

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST FROM MEMBER

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr.P.D.Richards - Report of the Head of Participation – Childcare Facilities within Schools in Neath Port Talbot, as his wife is manager of Baglan Buddies Afterschool Club, based at Blaenbaglan Primary School.

2. SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

Noted by the Committee.

It was agreed that following the reports previously presented to Members, the Committee would undertake an inquiry day into Safeguarding in Neath Port Talbot.

3. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

3.1 Children and Young People Services 3rd Quarter Performance Report and Key Priority Information

The Committee received the performance management information within Children's Services, for the 3rd Quarter Period (April 2014 – December 2014) and Monthly Key Priority Indicator Information (February 2014 – January 2015).

Members queried the number of initial assessments where the child had been seen alone by a social worker (SCC/011) and how this decision was made. Officers informed them that, as previously explained to the Committee, some of the initial assessments were desktop assessments and where there were grounds some cases moved straight to child protection investigations. Officers suggested that this indicator could be reported more clearly, which would be explored further by the Service. It was also explained that it was generally good practice for a child to be seen alone by a social worker, however, it was for the social worker's determination. Each case was different and there could be reasons why it would not be appropriate for a child to be seen alone, for example if they were too distressed, especially as the social worker would be unknown to them.

It was confirmed that the figures in the report were cumulative totals over the three quarters and it was recognised that the description of indicator could make this clearer. It was highlighted that the percentage of statutory visits to looked after children that took place in accordance with regulations (SCC/025) performance has dipped slightly in the last 2 quarters. Members asked in regards to the visits that were outside of statutory timescales, how far out of timescale were they. Officers reassured Members that systems were in place to monitor any statutory visits that were missed and social workers had to inform the Head of Service for the reasons why. It was further noted that Neath Port Talbot figures were reasonable in comparison with other Local Authorities in Wales.

Members queried in regards to the percentage of eligible, relevant and former relevant children that have Pathway Plans as required and have been allocated a Personal Advisor (SCC/041) if the allocation of Personal Advisor was a result of Pathway Plans or vice versa. Officers explained that the two were not linked and put in place separately. It was noted that the Pathway Plans were put in place by a social worker when a young person reaches 15 years and 9 months old and the Service was planning on the Looked After Children Team completing the plans to ensure this target was better met.

Members queried if the figures for qualified and unqualified workers receiving supervision within 28 working days were being skewed by staff being included who were unable to receive supervision and could they be taken out. It was explained that the performance indicator was set by Welsh Government so they had to be included. It was also noted that the Committee had previously asked for the figures to be split via qualified and unqualified. Members were informed that this information was split within the monthly key priority grids but could not be included in the quarterly figures, as the quarterly performance data had to be reported in a prescribed format. Members expressed concern that unqualified staff were receiving less supervision than qualified staff. Officers informed them that social workers had more complex cases, however, the expectation should be that they receive the same level of supervision and the Service was aiming for 100% for both.

Members highlighted that the key priority indicators had been agreed when the Service went into the special concerns protocol and it was queried with the significant changes that had been undertaken was it time to review them to consider if other areas should now be concentrated on. Officers informed them that once the report on the most recent full inspection by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales had been produced then the findings would be brought to the Committee. Members would then be able to take a view on what performance information should be prioritised.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

3.2 Education Performance Indicator Monitoring Report 3rd Quarter 2014/15

The Committee received the actual performance achieved by Education for the third quarter of the financial year (1st April 2014 to 31st December 2014), as detailed in the circulated report.

Members queried if the improvement in Key Stage 2 results (EDU/003) had an impact on the ranking of Neath Port Talbot in Wales. Officers informed them that Neath Port Talbot had dropped in the rankings despite improvements as other areas had also improved. The Service was looking at what actions other areas were putting in place to see if they could be used in Neath Port Talbot. It was noted that there had been a drop in the percentage of pupils assessed in Welsh (first language) at the end of Key Stage 2 (EDU/006i). Members were assured that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Forum was looking into reasons for the drop in accessing Welsh medium education provision.

It was noted that Neath Port Talbot continues to improve its school attendance performance. Officers informed Member that one pupil had been excluded from Primary School. Members queried if the number of school days lost due to fixed term exclusions (EDU/010a and b) had an impact on attendance. It was confirmed that they do, it was further explained that if a child was permanently excluded they would no longer be on the school roll and this would not impact on attendance.

Members noted that in relation to the percentage of final statements of special education need issued within 26 weeks (EDU/015a) that the time taken to issue statements was attributed to the increasing complexity of individual cases. Members asked if the increase in complexity was a pattern across Wales and had it had a similar impact on performance in other areas. Officers explained that there was an increase in complexity across Wales, however, in Neath Port Talbot the time taken to issue statements was linked to the level of deprivation. It was highlighted that the majority of cases that had not been issued within timescales was due to parents not attending meetings or filling in the correct forms.

Members were pleased to note the percentage of children that achieved the level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A-C in English or Welsh first language. Members highlighted that figures did not reflect that certain groups, such as Looked After Children, perform significantly worse. Officers informed them that Neath Port Talbot

was performing better than the Welsh average in this area, however it was still recognised that further improvement is needed. The Service wanted to ensure that all pupils received the support they require and their needs were identified.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

3.3 Childcare Facilities within Schools in Neath Port Talbot

(At this point Cllr.P.D.Ricahrds reaffirmed his interest and withdrew from the meeting for this item).

The Committee received the report to update Members and for the authorisation to regularise the position of childcare settings on school sites, as detailed within the circulate report.

Members were informed that the Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide sufficient childcare places for those parents and carers that required them. A Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was being undertaken and Members noted that the working group reported to the Think Families Board. Members requested that a monitoring report be brought back to the Committee on the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Delivery Plan. Members noted that there could be potential to include parts of the foundation phase curriculum in some childcare settings. Officers highlighted that these sorts of activities were being looked at and how they could assist with the transition processes for pupils. It was recognised that some of this work had already been undertaken by Flying Start but that service only covers certain areas and more consistency was required.

Members queried if there were gaps in areas of the County Borough in the provision of childcare facilities. Officers informed them that gaps had been reduced by working with after school clubs to set up full day holiday clubs. Members were pleased that school facilities were being utilised where possible. Members noted that only one childcare facility was run by a school and it was queried why more were not. Officers explained that it cost more for schools to run the childcare facilities.

Members asked if childcare facilities were funded for only certain areas, such as Communities First areas, and if the funding was linked to the Pupil Deprivation Grant or the number of Free School Meal pupils. It was explained that the funding was Welsh Government's

Out of School Childcare Grant and was available to every area of the County Borough.

Members queried how many childcare facilities were run by Cylch Meithrin. Officers informed Members that there were around nine spread across the County Borough. It was recognised that Cylch Meithrin was a very good way of encouraging Welsh language.

It was highlighted that not all groups that ran childcare facilities were aware of how to obtain extra funding and this area could be developed further. Officers confirmed that the Service works with providers when considering expressions of interest and existing provisions in the area were taken into consideration. It was confirmed that all childcare providers in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment were regulated by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), which included staff having the appropriate safeguarding checks. Any childcare setting providing childcare for more than two hours in any one day for children under the age of eight must be registered with CSSIW.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board. It was also agreed that Cabinet Board be asked to consider the following recommendation that a monitoring report be requested on the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Delivery Plan.

3.4 Acquisition of Playbus

The Committee received the report to seek Members approval for the transfer of ownership of the Playbus facility from Play Right to the Council, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that a Playbus had been purchased in 2010 as part of a Big Lottery funded project. The four year lottery funding for the project had ended on 31st December 2014 and the Play Team were seeking approval for the facility to be kept within Neath Port Talbot.

Members asked if other funding options had been explored with Play Right or if there were any other third sector organisations that would be in a position to run the facility. Officers informed them that Play Right had considered different opportunities for the continuation of funding throughout the project and had not been able to identify any viable options. The use of other providers had been explored and it was felt that there was not another third sector organisation that had

the right experience and resources to take over the running of the bus. It was also highlighted that costs such as parking and insurance were cheaper for the Council than for an external organisation. Another advantage was the Council had the capacity to staff the bus with the reorganisation of existing posts.

Members queried what the total annual costs would be and they were informed that £10,000 had been allocated over the next year to cover running costs, maintenance and diesel. The additional cost would be a driver, which was estimated to be around £18,000 including on costs.

Members felt that the Playbus delivered a good service and were pleased to see that actions were being taken to keep it. The Committee asked if new areas for the Playbus to cover were going to be considered. Officers confirmed that they were going to utilise the Playbus to cover as many areas as possible and to extend the use of it over the summer holidays. Members also asked if it could be used to generate income and it was confirmed that such options were going to be explored.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board

3.5 Addendum to the Children and Young People Services Strategic Improvement Plan 2015-16

The Committee received the addendum to the Children and Young People Services Strategic Improvement Plan 2015-16, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Strategic Plan was approved by Members in March 2013 to ensure efforts were concentrated on delivering the required improvements. The back to basics approach had been achieved and in order to further improve Children and Young People Services other priorities now needed to be addressed and the addendum set out the new priorities. The new priority areas had been consulted on and the focus would be on quality of work through an outcome based framework. It was highlighted that safely reducing the number of Looked After Children and effectively engaging with children and young people were part of the priorities. It was confirmed that staff had been consulted on the addendum and priorities.

Members queried if the Engagement and Participation Officer post had been recruited yet. Officers informed Members that the post had been re-advertised as initially it had been restricted by requiring a social work qualification and people had applied who had other skills and experience to offer, so the Service had reviewed the job description and opened it out to include equivalent qualification or experience.

Members asked what methods would be used for measuring and evaluating the quality of interventions. Officers informed Members that there had been extensive audit work undertaken and consistency in supervisions had been improved which allowed the Service to collate quality information. In addition feedback from training had been gathered and included how staff had used it, which would continue to be measured over three months and then six months. Methods such as these would be brought together under the Quality Outcome Framework. Members asked when the Outcome Based Framework would be developed. Officers explained that there were two pieces of work to be completed. One was the all Wales work that the Neath Port Talbot team were assisting with and would take some time to complete. The second was Neath Port Talbot's own pilot that was being undertaken with selected teams.

Members highlighted that listening to children was a very important aspect of the Plan and integrating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Officers informed them that from September the Service was planning on implementing a distance travelled model, which would assess how children and young people feel at the beginning, middle and end of process. It was noted that schools were also engaging in the rights of the child and that the UNCRC had been adopted by the Council.

Members asked when the final Family Support Strategy would be produced. Officers informed them that it was planned for the Final Strategy to be brought to Cabinet Board today, however, it was felt that the consultation had not been wide enough so further consultation was being undertaken. It was anticipated that final Strategy would be brought to either the April or May meeting for Members to scrutinise.

It was highlighted that the Service was in a good position going forward. The Committee agreed that the priorities in the addendum would be integrated into the Forward Work Programme for the new Civic Year.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board

3.6 Children and Young People Services Staff Survey 2014

The Committee received feedback from the annual staff survey undertaken in Children and Young People Services and related Business Support Services carried out during August and September 2014, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the survey contributed towards the monitoring of the Children's Services Improvement Programme and the findings were in line with other management information and improvement reports.

Members noted that there were no significant declines in any areas and those areas where there had been slight declines how were they going to be addressed by the Service. Officers explained that there had only been a small drop in some areas and the Service would be analysing the results in more detail to see where improvements could be made. It was also noted that there was some confusion over what was meant by appraisals as a system was being developed and not in place yet. It was suggested that staff may have been referring to supervisions rather than appraisals in this section.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

CHAIRMAN