



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.00pm THURSDAY, 16TH JULY 2015

COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2, PORT TALBOT

PART 1

1. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
2. To receive the Minutes of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee held on 28th May 2015 (*Pages 5 - 16*)
3. To receive the Minutes of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee held on 18th June 2015 (*Pages 17 - 26*)
4. To receive the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2014/15 (*Pages 27 - 30*)

To scrutinise decisions, information and monitoring issues reported by:

Presentation of the Head of Participation

5. Performance Indicator Monitoring Report 4th Quarter
6. To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board Agenda for pre-scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)

Please note that Quarter 4 Performance Monitoring reports are included within the Cabinet Board papers and should be subject to scrutiny

7. Any urgent items (whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the

Chairman pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972

8. Access to Meetings to resolve to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

PART 2

9. To select appropriate private items from the Cabinet Board Agenda for pre-scrutiny (Cabinet Board Reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)

S.Phillips
Chief Executive

Civic Centre
Port Talbot

Thursday 9th July 2015

Committee Membership:

Chairman: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairman: Councillor H.N.James

Councillors: A.Carter, Mrs.A.Chaves, Mrs.J.Dudley, M.Ellis,
P.Greenaway, R.G.Jones, J.D.Morgan,
Mrs.S.Paddison, Mrs.K.Pearson, M.Protheroe,
A.L.Thomas, Mrs.L.G.Williams and Mrs.A.Wingrave

***Co-opted
Voting Members** Mrs.H.Stephens

***Co-opted Non
Voting Members** R.De Benedictis, A.Hughes and Mrs.C.Wheldon

Notes:

- (1) *If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) *For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) *The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) *Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

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**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

Members Present:

28th May 2015

Chairman: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairman: Councillor H.N.James

Councillors: A.Carter, Mrs.A.Chaves, M.Ellis, P.Greenaway,
R.G.Jones, J.D.Morgan, Mrs.S.Paddison,
M.Protheroe, A.L.Thomas and Mrs.L.G.Williams

Invited Councillors: D.Lewis and L.M.Purcell

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

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, N. Jarman, A.Jarrett, Mrs.C.Connelly,
Ms.B.Evans, J.Hodges, Ms.V.Jones, Ms.A.Flynn and
Ms.C.Gadd

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

1. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Members made declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr.D.Lewis – Report of the Head of Transformation – Home to School Transport Arrangements – Welsh Medium Schools, as he is a governor of Cwmtawe School and confirmed his dispensation to speak but not vote thereon.

Cllr.L.M.Purcell - Report of the Head of Transformation – Home to School Transport Arrangements – Welsh Medium Schools, as she is a governor of Cwmtawe School

and confirmed her dispensation to speak but not vote thereon.

2. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH APRIL 2015**

Noted by the Committee, subject to the following update.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2014/15

Members highlighted that it had been agreed at the previous meeting that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) would be invited to present a report on progress. Officers informed them the lead officers from Local Health Board and CAHMS had been invited to the meeting but had been unable to attend as it clashed with the Local Health Board meeting. It was noted that they had confirmed that they would be attending the 22nd October 2015 Scrutiny Committee meeting.

3. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15**

Noted by the Committee.

4. **PRESENTATION BY CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE WALES ON THE INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN NEATH PORT TALBOT**

The Committee received the report and presentation on the recent Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) inspection of Children's Services in Neath Port Talbot February 2015, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that Neath Port Talbot's Children's Services were made subject to CSSIW serious concerns protocol in November 2012. A further inspection in November 2013 resulted in the protocol remaining in place. A further inspection was undertaken in February 2015 and inspectors focussed on whether sufficient progress had been made to improve the quality and consistency of services for children and young people in need of support or protection, including those looked after and care leavers. Upon completion of the Inspection the Chief Inspector (CSSIW) took the decision to remove Neath Port Talbot's Children's Services from the Serious Concerns Protocol.

The Chief Inspectors presented the Inspection findings to the Committee and highlighted the key areas and recommendations for improvement. It was noted that there had been significant improvement to Elected Members knowledge about performance in the Service. It was highlighted that staff morale was high and there had been no recent reports of bullying or oppressive practice. It was recognised that there were areas that still required improvement, which included the voice of the child being further involved in shaping Service planning.

Members queried to what extent care plans were not being fully completed. It was explained that the files considered by the Inspectors was a small percentage of cases and the basic information was completed, however there were inconsistencies in the level of information, such as if any further support was required. It was highlighted that only signposting to services did not always provide families with enough support, as they often needed support to access those services. It was recognised that it was difficult as there was not the capacity to quality assure all elements of social work, however, further work could be carried out in this area. An example was given of a Local Authority which chooses a theme on a quarterly basis to be audited by staff within the Service, which helps to evaluate consistency in practice.

Members asked if there were examples of good practice that the Committee could use to gain more of an understanding of certain topics. It was noted that case studies can be subjective and identifying themes rather than individual outcomes would be useful. Also speaking to care leavers about their experiences could be helpful to the Committee.

Members highlighted that the report indicated that out of those families that were referred to the Team Around the Family (TAF) fewer than 50% of the families went on to take up a service. They asked if this was a reflection on the way the service was marketed or was it due to services not meeting needs. The Inspectors informed them that they thought it was due to engagement and the level of support families received in accessing services. It was noted that short term interventions, for example for 6 weeks, could assist with providing practical support to families before statutory intervention was required. This intervention did not need to be carried out by a qualified Social Worker. However, it was noted that the balance had to be established to ensure that parents were enabled and did not become dependent on Social Services.

The Committee was pleased that staff morale was high and asked if there was any further support Members could offer staff. It was highlighted that staff felt listened to and had the opportunity to give their views and the Practice Improvement Group was identified as a good example of this

working well. The value of the Improvement Member Panel was also recognised and an example of good practice that could be used by other Local Authorities. The Inspectors commented that the Panel reporting back to the Committee had also been useful in providing Members with feedback from Social Work teams.

Members queried whether it would be useful for them to receive information from any completed feedback forms from children and young people who had been involved in the system. They were informed that there were different ways of hearing feedback, such as talking to groups and attending activity days and it was noted that it was a difficult area for most Local Authorities to address. Members asked who was the newly appointed Participation and Engagement Officer in Children's Services and they were informed it was Andrew Harris.

Members noted that the Welsh Government initiative for student Social Workers to work with families to provide them with experience of supporting families and it was asked if this still takes place. It was confirmed that this still happened and the Council had put a lot of work into supporting social workers in their first year in practice. It was highlighted that it was positive that Neath Port Talbot "grows its own".

Members recognised the work and resources that had been put into the services and the commitment to the improvement journey and it was highlighted that it was not the end of the journey. The Chair thanked Officers, Inspectors, partner organisations and Members for their contribution.

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

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 Western Bay Adoption Financial Support Policy

Members received the Adoption Financial Support Policy developed in line with the establishment of the Western Bay Adoption Service, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Committee was informed that the Financial Support Policy would be consistent across the region but would allow for each Local

Authority adoption agency to retain accountability and control of their budget. Each Local Authority currently had different arrangements in place and this Policy would allow for consistency. The allowances set out in the Policy were based on the Welsh Government guidelines for the base rate.

Members highlighted that there was a difference in payments across the areas. Officers informed them that Bridgend was already applying the new rates and the adoption of the Policy would bring the other areas into line with this. However, it was noted that there was no intention to change the existing arrangements with current adopters.

Members asked if the changes to payments would be likely to impact on the number of families coming forward as potential adopters or for Local Authorities to lose out to Independent Agencies. Officers informed Members that this had not been the case in Bridgend, which was were already applying the Policy. However, it was noted that the intention of the changes to the Adoption Service was to improve the adoption process and if it was seen to have a detrimental effect then it would be brought back to the Committee for changes to be made. There would also be further analysis by the National Adoption Service to provide more alignment across Wales.

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

5.2 Children and Young People Services – Development Plan

Members received the Children and Young People Services Development Plan 2015/16, as detailed within the circulate report.

The Committee was informed that following the Inspection by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in February 2015, 15 recommendations had been made. The Children and Young People Services had formulated an action plan outlining how these recommendations would be addressed. It was highlighted that there was some cross over with the Strategic Improvement Plan, which had previously been considered by the Committee. It was agreed that progress against the action plan would be reported back to Members in six months.

Members queried the Compliance Statement attached to the report in that it indicated a positive impact on crime and disorder; however, there was no evidence to suggest this in the report. Officers explained

that it was not explicitly mentioned, but there were actions being undertaken that would have a positive impact by reducing the number of young people coming into the Youth Justice System. It was recognised that such information needed to be evidenced in the reports.

Members noted that it would be useful for the new appraisal system to be referred to throughout the action plan rather than just training in some sections. The Committee also highlighted that the annual complaints report was reported to the Social Care, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board and Members of this Committee had been invited to attend for this item. In addition it had been agreed, when the last annual report had been considered, that complaints reports specifically in relation to Children's Services would be reported more regularly to this Committee. Officers agreed that these amendments would be made to the action plan.

Members asked if in light of the recent Inspection report, the eight key priority indicators remained the right areas for the focus of the Committee. Officers informed Members that they would present a report to a future meeting on potential revised priorities for the Committee to consider.

Members asked how the Service encouraged children to participate. Officers highlighted that Social Workers worked with children on an individual basis and would advocate for them and they had access to an independent advocacy service. It was noted that the Service needed to encourage more children to attend their reviews.

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

5.3 Fostering Inspection Report

It was noted that this was a favourable report for the Council.

5.4 Family Support Strategy

Members received the report which outlined the Family Support Strategy including the commissioning of support services to meet need, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Committee was informed that the Family Support Strategy and external commissioning would be based on safely reducing the number of children in care by improving outcomes. Priority and focus would be on services that promote and maintain children and young people, who are at risk of entering the Looked After Children system, in their families and home communities. A number of services had already been commissioned and procured by the Think Families Partnership and would be monitored by the Common Commissioning Unit. Following approval of the Strategy a further full and comprehensive tendering and procurement exercise would be undertaken leading to awarding a new set of contracts between September 2015 and April 2016.

Members noted that the Strategy referred to support for young carers and highlighted that at the Social Care, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee on 14th May 2015, the Carers Strategy had been approved. However, an additional recommendation was submitted and approved by Cabinet Board, that a separate Young Carers Strategy be developed and include the voice of children and young people. Officers confirmed that this Strategy was being developed and would be brought to the Committee for consideration in due course.

Members asked when the remodelling of the contracts with DEWIS would be presented to the Committee. Officers provided Members with an update in that the contracts were being reviewed and that a pilot scheme would be undertaken, before the contracts went out for tendering, to ensure the right service specifications were included. This exercise would be completed by the end of the financial year, however, an interim specification report would be brought to the Committee.

Members noted that the wording around the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in the report should be changed from “will not have an adverse impact” to “will have a positive impact” to accurately reflect the information in the EIA.

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

5.5 Homes to School Transport Arrangements – Welsh Medium Schools

Members received the report to seek approval to consult on access arrangements to Welsh Medium Schools, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Committee was informed that in September 2014 a report had been presented to the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2014-17. The adoption of the WESP was approved, however it was requested that further consideration be given to the access arrangements and brought back for Members' consideration. It was noted that there had been some correspondence regarding this matter from Members and parents.

The main documents that influenced the arrangements were highlighted and these included the Learner Travel Measure 2008, Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009 and the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014. It was noted that there was a lot of information in the documentation that was open to interpretation and there was some ambiguity, such as what was classed as the nearest suitable provision. There was also some contradictory information in the documentation. Officers required further guidance from Legal Services on what was contained in the statutory guidance. The Local Authority had a legal duty to promote access to Welsh medium education, and the Home to School Transport Policy references this legal duty and sets a broad framework for its efficient and effective delivery. Officers were proposing to consult on access arrangements to Welsh medium schools. There was some discussion regarding the interpretation of the Measure and the guidance. Officers recognised that it was a complex matter and they must ensure their arrangements were in line with the Measure, take account of statutory guidance and capture the views of the communities it affects.

Members provided local examples of where access arrangements had been an issue and the problems that had occurred. There had been a lack of communication in some instances and a cost to parents to send their children to the school of their choice with little difference in distance to travel. Some Members expressed concerns about the management of current transport arrangements within schools and communities. Officers informed them that it was the parents responsibility under the statutory provisions to contact their Local Authority about the nearest suitable school. However, it was good practice for the Service to communicate with parents and this was generally undertaken.

Members had concerns about the consultation. It was felt that it was not clear on what the consultation proposals were. Members asked what difference the consultation would make, if both secondary and primary schools would be involved and exactly what the consultation

would cover. Officers informed them that as explained there was a significant amount of interpretation in the guidance and they wanted to test it against the views of communities. It was noted that the main impact would be on Welsh medium primary schools and therefore they would be the main focus of the consultation. Members highlighted that there was a wider impact with communities and they should also be consulted. It was felt that the consultation proposals should be clearer and it should outline precisely what was going to be included in the consultation. Members referred to a previous consultation exercise – the home to school transport consultation 2013 and informed the Officers that they would be in favour of a similar style consultation.

Members highlighted that the WESP had been approved and not having appropriate access arrangements could have an impact on its success. It was noted that the WESP was a separate document, however, there were certain outcomes and objectives to be met that would be impacted by the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary education and they were interrelated and not interdependent.

Members asked if the distance to travel had an impact on transfer rates from Welsh medium primary to Welsh medium secondary schools. Officers informed them that this did not seem to be a significant factor. There were some Welsh medium primary schools that had lower transfer rates than others and the reasons for this were not clear as there could be several factors. It was highlighted that the proportion of time pupils spent being transported from home to school also needed to be considered.

Members commented that there was no mention of the financial consequences of the different options and they would like to have this information. They would also like to see an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) at this stage, which includes who should be consulted. An updated EIA could then be submitted following the consultation to demonstrate the changes made.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the recommendation be not supported and that the Cabinet Board be asked to consider the following recommendation:

“That a further comprehensive report be submitted to the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board which should include an initial Equality Impact Assessment, financial implications, legal implications and a robust terms of reference and

proposals for consultation, using the home to school transport consultation January 2013 document as a template.”

5.6 Governance Arrangements for the New Primary School Replacing Central Infants and Central Junior Schools

Members received the following verbal amendment to the Compliance Statement contained in the circulated report:

In regards to Community Plan Impacts and Other Impacts these should read no impacts.

In regards to the consultation the report was amended to ‘Central Primary School’ instead of ‘Ysgol Newydd Dyffryn Clydach’.

5.7 Governance Arrangements for the New Primary School Replacing Neath Abbey Infants and Mynachlognedd Junior Schools

Members received the following verbal amendment to the Compliance Statement contained in the circulated report:

In regards to Community Plan Impacts and Other Impacts these should read no impacts.

5.8 Families First Progress and Budget Report 2014/15

Members received the report on the position of the Families First Programme Budget for 2014/15, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Committee was provided with an update on progress and informed that the Programme was focussed on early intervention and prevention. The budget from the Programme for 2014/15 had been utilised to finance the delivery of the action plan which was approved by Welsh Government. The Service was involved in learning sets with other Local Authorities to identify good practice and learn from each other.

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

5.9 Flying Start Programme Progress and Budget Report

Members received the report on the progress of the Flying Start programme and budget, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Committee was informed of that Flying Start was currently in the second phase of the programme and the Service was operating slightly over the target number but the teams and budget were coping. It was identified that the biggest resource commitment was in childcare settings and there was good attendance as families valued the provision.

Members felt that it was an excellent programme, however, it was noted that some families who would benefit from the services were unable to access them due to only certain areas being eligible. It was recognised that this had been fed back to the Welsh Government. Officers highlighted that the programme did target 25% of 0 to 3 year olds and there were some outreach services available.

It was noted that there was no fixed Flying Start centre and the provision was spread out amongst childcare providers across the County Borough.

Members highlighted that there was an issue with accessing speech and language services and asked if there was any scope for other areas to make use of the speech and language skills. Officers confirmed that there was training available and that if it was of significant benefit for someone to attend such training then the request would be considered by the Service.

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

CHAIRMAN

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**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

Members Present:

18th June, 2015

Chairman: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairman: Councillor H.N.James

Councillors: A.Carter, Mrs.A.Chaves, P.Greenaway, R.G.Jones,
Mrs.S.Paddison, M.Protheroe, A.L.Thomas and
Mrs.L.G.Williams

Officers In Attendance A.Jarrett, Mrs.A.Thomas, C.Millis, Mrs.D. Berni,
Ms.L.Kinsey, J.Haeney, M.Daley, J.Hodges,
Mrs.J.Khaghanian and Ms.C.Gadd

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees and A.Taylor

1. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16**

The Committee received the Forward Work Programme for 2014/15. Members were informed that there would be a workshop in July to consider items for the Work Programme.

2. **SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL TO ASSESS PROGRESS IN
PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

The Committee received the report on the outcome of the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) assessment tool completed by Children and Young People Services in conjunction with representatives from Health, Education and the Police, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Committee had received several reports on Safeguarding and had asked for an inquiry to be undertaken to ensure there were effective strategies in place to protect children from sexual exploitation in Neath Port Talbot. Members were informed that the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board

(WBSCB) had adopted the Bedfordshire “self-assessment tool” to assess progress in this area and to provide a check list of what was required to develop and further improve an effective strategy to address the issue locally. Members were informed that this information would form the basis of the one day inquiry being held on 30th June 2015. It was noted that the tool was completed to ensure robust arrangements were in place in relation to training and managing cases and for more strategic systems to be developed to help identify potential hotspots to be tackled. It was highlighted that the report was the Neath Port Talbot version and similar exercises were being undertaken in Bridgend and Swansea. They would then feed into a strategic approach across the Western Bay area.

Members requested a list of the acronyms used in the report for the one day inquiry. They also requested a list of the lead professionals, details of the organisations which sat on the CSE Strategy Sub-Group, the all Wales Child Protection Procedures and what skills and knowledge would be expected of officers.

Members commented that the report included the views of professionals and queried if the voice of the child was represented as they could have views on addressing such issues. Officers informed them that the tool was designed to be completed by professionals. However, the Service recognised that they needed to gather the views of children and young people more routinely. It was noted that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) was looking into developing a helpline for children, young people and families who had concerns about CSE.

Members asked who monitors the work of WSCSB. It was noted that some reports were brought to this Scrutiny Committee and there were similar arrangements in the other Local Authorities. It was highlighted that Neath Port Talbot had lead the way in the Western Bay region in ensuring protection from CSE arrangements were robust.

Members asked which officers in Education were trained in CSE and if it was just teaching staff, as children and young people often spoke to other members of school staff. It was agreed that this question would be asked to Education representatives at the inquiry day. Members also noted that involving school governors should be considered as part of the awareness raising for CSE.

The Chairman highlighted that further in depth questions would be asked during the one day inquiry and a report would be brought back to Cabinet Board following its completion.

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

3. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

3.1 Neath Port Talbot Fostering Service Quality of Care Report 2014/15

The Committee received the Fostering Service Quality of Care report 2014/15 for the purpose of monitoring the arrangements of the Service, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the report sets out the activity of the Service during 2014/15 and it was submitted annually to the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). It was noted that the intended improvements to the Service were set out in the Looked After Children's Strategy. It was highlighted that there was a separate Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy being developed that would be reported to the Committee in due course.

Members asked whether the events held by the Fostering Team were shared out across the County Borough and suggested that Members should be advised of such events to share with their communities. It was also asked how many foster carers were recruited through such events. Officers confirmed that the events were held in different areas of the County Borough and that some events were tied into national campaigns run by the Fostering Network. It was highlighted that the Fostering Team had a website and used social media and the Team would look at how to improve informing Members of upcoming events. It was noted that further information on numbers of foster carers recruited would be contained within the Recruitment Strategy. Officers informed Members that there was a 14% conversion rate from initial enquiries to people completing the process to becoming foster carers.

There was some concern that Independent Fostering Agencies were offering additional incentives to that offered by the Local Authority could offer. It was noted that the draft Foster Carer Finance Policy had been previously considered by the Committee and the Service had felt that the Policy needed to be more holistic in approach. It was confirmed that the final proposed Policy would be reported to the Committee and Cabinet Board in due course for approval. Members highlighted the "When I am Ready" Scheme, which was due to come into effect in April 2016. Members felt that it was a good

scheme and that young people should not have to move out of a supported home until they were ready for independence. However, the impact that would result from this scheme was recognised and that it could result in more Foster Carers being required. Officers informed Members that the Service was already considering the resource implications and were looking at how the Scheme could be implemented effectively. It was identified that there was already work underway in regards to care leaver accommodation and the consideration of the implications of the new Scheme would dovetail with some of this work. One potential issue outlined to the Committee was whether fostering rates would remain the same once a child was no longer looked after, which may not be financially viable to foster carers. Consideration of such issues had to be undertaken before the Scheme was in place and any proposals would be brought to the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board for approval. Members suggested that financial allowances around the “When I am Ready” Scheme could be included in the Foster Carers Finance Policy.

Members asked if there were incidences of conflict between children looked after by foster carers and the carers’ own children. It was noted that the Service works closely with the foster family and always considers their needs as well as the needs of the looked after children and would work with them to resolve any concerns.

Members noted that in the recent CSSIW Fostering Inspection Report 2015, one area identified for improvement was the engagement with foster carers who did not engage in training. It was asked if this had been addressed by the Team. Officers highlighted that there was a range of training offered to foster carers and they were required to attend at least three training sessions a year. The Fostering Panel had a key role to play and would check that this minimum standard had been met. The Service was now better at recording what training had been received and they were also looking at different options, such as online training. Other potential incentives were being considered to encourage foster carers to attend training but it was noted that it had to be balanced with it being a requirement of the role. It was confirmed that during supervisions with foster carers training would be discussed and an approach of constant reinforcement was taken. It was further asked if for long term foster carers there was additional and specific training offered that suited individual circumstance. Officers confirmed that the training packages were creative and responsive.

Members asked how many Looked After Children were now placed out of County as this had a cost implication. Officers informed them that it was under 100 and would confirm the exact number.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed the report be noted.

3.2 Neath Port Talbot Fostering Service Statement of Purpose Revised 2015

The Committee received the revised Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2015, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that each Fostering Service was required to have a statement of purpose which included aims and objectives and the services and facilities to be provided. The revised version of Neath Port Talbot's Statement incorporated all the actions from the Looked After Child Strategy that had previously been considered by the Committee.

Members asked what the main reasons were for foster carers to deregister. It was highlighted that there was a low drop out rate for foster carers once they had completed the process and if they did stop there did not seem to be a pattern in the reasons why. Members asked how long the process took to become an approved foster carer and it were explained that it took an average of 196 days, which was below the benchmark set for the Service. Members also asked if there were there any particular barriers that prevented people from becoming foster carers. Officers informed them that the main barrier would be if they had committed an offence that related to a child. Members asked if people who smoked were prevented from becoming foster carers. It was explained that the national regulations guidance was followed and foster carers who smoked could not have a child under 5 placed with them. There was some concern that this could put some potential foster carers off applying and could agreements be put in place such as the carer only smoked away from the children. Officers explained that they could not deviate from the guidance as it was based on medical expertise. It was noted that foster carers who smoked could foster children over the age of 5 and agreements would be made with the carers about where they smoked. It was highlighted that this was not a major factor as the main challenge was finding foster carers for teenagers. Officers informed Members that further information on these areas would be detailed in the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy.

Some Members requested further information on the Letterbox Club and it was agreed that this would be circulated outside the meeting.

Members recognised the work that was undertaken by the Fostering Team and foster carers in Neath Port Talbot.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed the report be noted.

3.3 Business Strategy, Public Protection and Housing Services Business Plan 2015/16

The Committee received the Business Plan for Business Strategy, Public Protection and Housing Services 2015/16, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed of the services covered in the Business Plan and the areas that were relevant to this Committee, which included: Business Support Services, Complaints and some aspects of Housing Strategy and Housing Options. The achievements accomplished during the last financial year and the objectives for this year were outlined. It was highlighted that there was further work to be undertaken on the reporting of complaints to ensure they were not just seen as statistics. It was noted that it was important to continue to provide adequate business support to Children Services following the recent Inspection and the Service being taken off the Serious Concerns Protocol.

The potential risks were also highlighted to Members and it was noted that for this Committee one of the main risks was accommodation for Care Leavers. The Service had undertaken work to ensure that no care leaver would end up homeless or in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation. A Working Group had been established to ensure there would be adequate provision of housing accommodation and to review existing commissioning arrangements with housing providers. It was noted that a report would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee on the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, as it would impact on performance reporting requirements, which would be more outcome focussed.

It was highlighted that the Welsh Government had announced plans to develop a single national Community Care Information Solution (CCIS). Members were informed that the system was in early stages of development but there was an expectation that all Local Authorities would adopt the system in the future. It was not that the current 'in house' IT system for Children's Services meets the requirements of the Service and was capable of reporting on all statutory performance indicators. This was however not the case for Adult Services where

such a system would benefit the integration agenda with Health Services. Officers wanted to be involved to ensure Neath Port Talbot had an input into shaping the system and they would be suggesting that it was trialled for Adult Services only in the first instance.

Members requested that the performance report cards for the Services relevant to this Committee be reported to a future meeting. Officers agreed that they would take the view of the Members as to when they would like this information reported.

Members highlighted that some of the information contained within the attached Compliance Statement was not evidenced within the Business Plan. Officers took on board this comment and explained that it was a balancing act to include relevant information and not make the plans too detailed.

Members asked if the staff appraisal system for Children's Services would be developed by Business Support. Officers informed them that the training department would be developing it. Officers would bring a report to a future meeting on the Foundation Apprentice Scheme implemented within Business Support and explore potential opportunities for care leavers.

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

3.4 Progress Report on Engage Programme and NEETS

The Committee received the report on the outcomes achieved by the ENGAGE programme, progress made with the Not in Education, Employment of Training Service (NEETS) and how new developments may affect both areas of work in the future, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the 25 places had been filled and they had achieved 165 qualifications between them. It was also highlighted that the three Keeping in Touch Youth Workers were held in high regard.

Members noted that when work started with the NEETS project it was shared with Carmarthenshire and it was queried if Neath Port Talbot still worked with them. It was explained that some elements of the work undertaken with NEETS was shared across the Education through Regional Working (ERW) consortium. The ENGAGE

project was a Neath Port Talbot initiative, however some elements were touched on in regards with participation and deprivation.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed the report be noted.

3.5 Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Services Business Plan

The Committee received some of the Business Plans 2015/16 for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Services, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the managers from different Services within Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning had undertaken an exercise to read and comment on the Business Plan for each Service to ensure there was joined up working and to reduce duplication. The Education Business Plans had also taken on board the Estyn Framework. Members requested that the report cards for each Service be presented to the Committee in due course.

In regards to the Flying Start Business Plan, Members asked about speech and language services funding being available through the Scheme. Officers informed them that Plans may need to be re-adjusted to take account of this and would find out about specific resources packs.

In regards to the Education Development Inclusion Service (EDIS) Business Plan it was highlighted that one action was a universal training programme to improve the quality and consistency of Challenge Advisors and Members queried if this had been an issue. It was confirmed that there had been issues with consistency and quality across ERW and that training should address this to ensure there was quality assurance across the six areas. Members were informed that a new post had been created in ERW to quality assure Challenge Advisors.

Members asked who monitored ERW and it was explained that the Education Service's role was to hold ERW to account. It was further explained that several measures were being undertaken to ensure there was a consistent approach to scrutiny across ERW. For example, Scrutiny Officers from across the six areas meet on a regular basis to ensure that the relevant information was being considered by Scrutiny Committees. In addition a Seminar for Chairs and Vice Chairs of the relevant Scrutiny Committees across the areas was being held in

September and would be hosted by Neath Port Talbot. It was noted that ERW was also inspected by Estyn.

Members asked if the standardisation and modernisation work that had been undertaken had an impact on the performance of Neath Port Talbot across the area. They were informed that there was a similar pattern across Wales in regards to this and further work in standardisation across schools needed to be developed to improve accuracy. Members asked if performance still remained lower at key stage 2 and 3 compared with key stage 4. Officers informed them that this was still the case and standardisation work would help to address it. However, it was recognised that it was better for pupils to be achieving at key stage 4 and underperforming at key stage 3 than the other way round. It was highlighted that the Donaldson Report 2014 would have an impact on the way performance was assessed as it advocated more focus on the measure of the journey of the child.

In regards to the Adult Community Learning (ACL) Service Delivery Plan, Members highlighted that a lot of courses had been transferred to Neath Port Talbot College. It was asked what discretionary funding was used to support community members who were deprived. Officers informed them that courses that covered priorities set by Welsh Government, for example literacy and numeracy, remained free. In addition some reduced cost courses were run in Community First areas. It was noted that there was a franchise agreement with the College and fees were set by them.

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

CHAIRMAN

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**Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee
Draft Forward Work Programme 2015/16**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item
28 th May 2015	Presentation from CSSIW on Children's Services Inspection Report
	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items
18 th June 2015	Safeguarding Self-Assessment Toolkit
	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items
16th July 2015	Quarterly Performance Reporting
	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items
30 th July 2015	Youth Service Report
	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items

4th September 2015	
	CSE Inquiry Report
	Quarterly Performance Reporting
	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items
24 th September 2015	
	Pre-Scrutiny – Cabinet Board Items
22nd October 2015	CAHMS Progress
	School Standards Monitoring Group Thematic Report
	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items
12 th November 2015	STAND ALONE BUDGET SCRUTINY

3 rd December 2015	
	Quarterly Performance Monitoring
	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items
14 th January 2016	
	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items
11 th February 2016	
	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items
10 th March 2016	School Standards Monitoring Group Thematic Report
	Quarterly Performance Monitoring
	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items

7 th April 2016	
	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items
28 th May 2016	
	Pre-scrutiny - Cabinet Board Items

Note: Reports requested include:

- Monitoring of WESP
- Schools Sickness (through report cards)
- Evaluation of Playbus
- Report Cards
- Behaviour in schools final guidance, result of pilot and progress updates
- Young Carers Strategy
- Transport Arrangements for WESP – Consultation
- Early Years Monitoring Reports