

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

3 December 2015

Chairperson: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairperson: Councillor H.N.James

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

Officers In Attendance N. Jarman, A.Thomas, Mrs.A.Thomas, C.Millis, D.Cole, Ms.A.Flynn, M.Lazarus, Ms.H.Lervy, H.Roberts, J.Hodges and Ms.C.Gadd

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.D.Richards, E.V.Latham and J.Rogers

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

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

Councillor A.Carter Report of the Head of Participation re: All Composite Data on Pupil Performance 14/15 as he is a school governor of Cefn Saeson, which was specifically referred to in the report.

Councillor Mrs.K.Pearson Private Report of the Director of Social Services, Health and Housing re: Children and Young People Services Supported Accommodation Needs Update, as she rents properties via Housing Options.

2. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2015**

Noted by the Committee.

Members discussed the potential one day inquiry into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. It was highlighted that the Local Authority had no powers over the Health Board and it was questionable what outcomes would be achieved for the resources inputted. An alternative suggestion was put forward that the Chairperson writes to the Chief Executive and Chairperson of ABMU Health Board stating what information the Committee did not receive in the meeting and requesting that the information was provided in writing to the Committee. If Members were still not satisfied with the response then the Committee would utilise the Welsh Government Petition System to request they look into this matter further. This approach was agreed by Members.

3. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2015**

Members made the following amendments to the Minutes:

- The report re: the Consultation on Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Services Budget and Draft Savings 2016/17 and 2017/18, EDLL 619 – Management and Administrative Review (page 28, third paragraph) the sentence “Members had requested a breakdown of managerial posts” to be added.
- Page 30, the sentence “Members requested to have a breakdown of the budget five years ago compared with the current budget to establish what had changed”.

With the above amendments the Committee noted the Minutes.

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

It was noted that the Hillside Managing incidents report had been rescheduled on the Forward Work Programme to the 14 January 2016 meeting.

Members queried when a report on the access arrangements for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan would be brought back to the Committee. This request would be sent to the relevant officers.

Members requested more information on the inclusion process in schools be added to the Work Programme. It was highlighted that it had been requested that an inquiry was undertaken by the Committee into school sickness and how this could be undertaken was being considered.

Noted by the Committee

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 Performance Indicator Data – Quarter 2 including the Key Priorities Indicators

The Committee received the report on the Performance Management Information within Children's Services for the second quarter period (April to September 2015) and the monthly key priority indicator information and complaints data for the same period, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the report included the full suite of performance information including the priority information and the comments in previous meetings regarding formatting had been taken on board.

Members queried which team were responsible for the Swansea Valley areas. They were informed that the area was covered by the Llangatwg Team. The percentage of children looked after at 31 March who has had three or more placements during the year (SCC/004) Members recognised that this information was reported annually and requested the numbers of children were included as well as the percentages. Officers informed them that for subsequent reported performance the figures were for 2013-14, 30 out of 468 looked after children had three or more placements and for 2014-15, it

was 31 out of 434 looked after children. Members highlighted that the numbers added more meaning to the data reported.

Members asked what the reasons were for the increase in the percentage of referrals that were re-referrals within 12 months (SCC/10). They were informed that this indicator would always be subject to fluctuation from month to month, however, the performance figure of 17.4% for this period was below the Welsh average of 21%. It was highlighted that significant strides had been made to reduce the re-referral rate, which was in excess of 35% in 2012-13.

Members queried if the difference between the attendance of looked after pupils whilst in care for primary and secondary schools was the same for pupils who were not looked after. Officers highlighted that attendance rates were about the same, which Members were pleased to hear. However, it was highlighted that the data did not include those children who were placed out of county and this data was not readily available.

In regards to the percentage of children looked after with a personal education plan within 20 school days of entering care of joining a new school (SCC/024), Members asked why almost 25% did not have plans within the timescales and how detrimental it was to their education. Officers informed them that those that were completed outside of the timescales were undertaken within four working days of the due date and they were all for children who had transferred to new schools at the beginning of the school year. Members highlighted that the story behind the data gave a fuller picture.

Officers clarified that for Key Priority Indicator 5 – the number of looked after children by placement type - the figures under the dates refer to the actual number of children in care by placement type. Members asked if the Service would reach 100% in meeting statutory timetables for reviews of looked after children, children on the child protection register and children in need (SCC/045). It was highlighted that performance in this area was moving in the right direction, however, it was recognised that there were still improvements that could be made. It was unlikely that performance would ever reach 100% and the aim of the Service was to get to 94%. It was noted that

reviews were undertaken even if they were slightly out of timescale.

Key Priority Indicator 4 – the number of foster carers approved by the Council - Members asked if there were any particular reasons for the downward drift in numbers. It was noted that there were fewer looked after children and less of a requirement for foster carers. Members also asked how long did assessment of foster carers take. They were informed that it was dependent on the foster carer, as they would go through the process until they were ready and it could take up to a year. It was noted that the figures for those awaiting approval would include some of the same cohort throughout the months. Members were pleased to note that the Service was continuing to convert agency staff to permanent members of staff for Neath Port Talbot.

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

5.2 Education Performance Indicator Data – Quarter 2

The Committee received the quarter two performance management data and complaints and compliments for the period 1 April to 30 September 2015 for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Services, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that there had been an improvement in most stages, however, the Service were still looking to improve foundation phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 results. There had been a dip in Key Stage 2 and it was noted that there were different cohorts each year that would result in fluctuations. It was highlighted that Key Stage 4 results remained high, which indicated that teacher assessments were more accurate in Neath Port Talbot than other areas.

It was highlighted that attendance figures were up and there had been a lot of work undertaken to reduce exclusions. It was noted that there had been a fall in the number of pupils who were permanently excluded (from 11 to 9 pupils) and there had been a fall in the number of days lost to fixed term exclusions. It was recognised that Neath Port Talbot was joint first in Wales for the percentage of final statements of special education need

issued within 26 weeks excluding exceptions. However, it was highlighted that the service was seeing cases of increasing complexity, multiple issues and the mental health of children and young people was a major concern.

It was noted that there had been an increase in the time taken for final statements of special education need issued within 26 weeks including exceptions (EDU/015a) could be attributed to the increased complexity and long term staff absence and a high number of Special Educational Need tribunals. It was explained that it was a small specialised team and there were not replacements available for qualified staff. Members queried how many tribunals there had been and officers informed them that there had been two, which had taken a lot of officer time. Members highlighted that this indicator was travelling in the wrong direction and queried if Neath Port Talbot were receiving more complex cases than other areas and what were the number of pupils rather than the percentages. Officers informed the Committee that they would look into this and report back. It was noted that the delay was often down to external factors such as, waiting for information from other organisations and parents missing appointments.

Members queried how improving the consistency of teacher assessments at Key Stage 2 (EDU/003) and Key Stage 3 (EDU/004) was being addressed. They were informed that this had been highlighted nationally and standardisation and moderation work was being undertaken and included looking at clusters of schools. It was highlighted that in some areas there were large discrepancies in accuracy between Key Stage 2 and 3 assessments compared with Key Stage 4 results and it was a better position to underestimate at Key Stage 2 and 3. It was explained that there was five years difference between Key Stage 2 and 4. Members were informed that where necessary interventions were put in place for pupils who had boarder line results. Members requested a report on this work at a future meeting to see what progress had been made. The importance of schools knowing their pupils and teachers having an accurate picture was recognised. Members asked if the Standard Assessment Tests in English schools were more accurate and officers informed them that this was unknown.

Members highlighted that Neath Port Talbot were joint first in 2014/15 for the percentage of pupils in local authority care, in

any local authority maintained school leaving compulsory education without approved external qualifications (EDU/002ii). This was recognised as a good achievement.

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

5.3 All Composite Data on Pupil Performance 14-15 (Annual Report)

The Committee received the report on the summary of performance of Neath Port Talbot schools and its pupils during 2014/15, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed of some of the contextual data on the level of free school meal entitlement correlated to pupil performance. The report included performance information on attendance, exclusions, national test results, teacher assessments and Key Stage 4 and 5 examination results. It also provided details of school inspections that took place during 2014/15.

Members were informed that the national data for attendance 2014/15 had been published and Neath Port Talbot ranked 13th for primary schools and 15th for secondary schools, which were good rankings. In considering the quartiles across Wales, where similar schools were compared, Neath Port Talbot was performing well. It was highlighted that permanent exclusions were decreasing, although still some of the highest in Wales. Fixed exclusion days continued to fall and improvements were being made in this area. It was explained that the main reasons for exclusions were drugs and violence.

Members queried why Neath Port Talbot was ranked 22nd at foundation phase and was not performing well at Key Stage 2 and 3. Officers informed them that part of the reason was the high percentage of free school meal pupils and pupils with special educational needs. Further analysis of the data had been undertaken and the reasons for any near misses of grades or reasons for not achieving as expected had been investigated. There were a variety of reasons for underachievement, such as pupils having additional educational needs, 45% of those that underachieved were free school meal pupils and there was a difference between some children that

were born in the summer time and who were the youngest in the year. Estyn had been pleased with this approach and satisfied that the Service had looked into these areas in detail.

Members asked if plans were then put in place to address the reasons why pupils were not achieving and it was confirmed that they were. It was noted that it was important to consider the journey of a pupil and the achievements they had made. Members queried that for those pupils with marginal attainment that were born in the summer months could action be taken to address this. It was explained that attainment fluctuates each year and that other factors could have an impact. The Service always looked at ways to continue to improve teaching and support to pupils.

Members highlighted that there had been a significant increase in the number of pupils with statements of special educational need and asked what were the reasons for this. Officers agreed to look into this. Members queried that if a pupil joined a school in year 11 could this affect the Key Stage 4 results. It was explained that if a pupil transferred in year 11 then their results were attributed to the school from which they transferred. Members were pleased with the Key Stage 4 results and asked what Neath Port Talbot schools were doing well. It was highlighted that good practice and different approaches were being shared across schools to address commonly arising issues and tools were being used more robustly. It was acknowledged that each year there was a different cohort that required different approaches and it was important that schools knew their pupils and what they were capable of achieving. It was recognised that there were dedicated and hardworking staff and some schools were spending the Pupil Deprivation Grant well. There were specific strategies in place to contribute to and maintain performance. The Service worked closely with the Headteacher networks and provided Human Resources and budget support as required.

It was highlighted that the percentage of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) had improved to 3.8% from 4.4%, which reflected the work that had been undertaken in this area.

Members were informed that in September 2010 a new cycle of inspections were initiated under a new common inspection

framework and the schools that were inspected during 2014/15 academic years and the judgements they received were outlined. It was highlighted that Llansawel Primary was in special measures, Cefn Saeson Secondary was now out of Estyn monitoring (and had achieved this very quickly) and Cwrt Sart Secondary was rated as excellent and was being used by Estyn as a case study. Members queried if Cwrt Sart was achieving so well why was it closing and they were informed that the building was closing not the education delivered and this would carry on in the new super school once development was complete. Members queried if there was an appeals system for Estyn results as the grading could be questioned in instances such as Cefn Saeson, where they were put under monitoring and then removed from it in the next assessment. Officers confirmed that there was an appeals process and it was highlighted that the timing of an inspection can have an impact on the result.

It was highlighted that the unverified data for school categorisation indicated that overall there were more Neath Port Talbot schools in the green and yellow categories than in the amber and yellow.

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

5.4 Reorganisation and Inclusion of the Provision of Pupils who receive their Education Otherwise than at School

The Committee received the report to approve the proposals on the reorganisation and inclusion of the provision of pupils who receive their education otherwise than at school, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members noted that it was the Manager of School and Family Support last meeting before retirement. The Chairperson thanked him on behalf of the Committee for his hard work over his career and wished him all the best for the future.

Members were reminded of the background to the report, which set out the Local Authorities strategic approach to wellbeing and behaviour provision, with particular reference to pupils who were taught outside the school setting. Following the consultation period the proposals had been further developed.

Members were pleased that the Service had listened during the consultation, taken on board comments and made appropriate amendments.

It was explained that one of the main changes was in relation to the education of pupils who were school refusers or had significant and serious medical needs. The Council would maintain this provision for those pupils currently utilising the service and whose needs were such that they could not leave the home. Where possible the same teacher as present would be employed with the teacher coming under the management of the pupil's mainstream school. It was highlighted that the cost would be shared out across the school sector budget rather than having to be met by individual schools. Members supported the proposal for shared costs as it was fairer on all schools. Members noted that it was up to the school whether or not they used this service for any new pupils. It was suggested that if schools proposed not using the service that they had to seek authorisation and provide a plan on how that pupil's education needs would be met. Officers agreed that this would be a good approach and would take it on board.

The other main change was there were a number of pupils, particularly at years 10 and 11 for whom education at mainstream school was unsuitable. The provision currently based at Bevin Avenue caters for most of these pupils but in unsuitable premises. The Council would source and staff an alternative site for the education of up to 24 pupils with three teaching and four non-teaching staff. The cost would be met within the existing budget cost base and under the management of a yet to be determined school. It was highlighted that early intervention would help to reduce the number of pupils requiring this service. It was explained that pupils would be taken off the school roll when attending this unit. It was highlighted that in Pupil Referral Units the staff were isolated, the provision was inadequate and there was a lack of leadership and this model would overcome these specific issues. The aim of the units was to attach them to a school so they could access a full range of subjects. Members queried if a site and school had been identified yet for these proposals. Officers informed them that discussions in this area were ongoing to identify the right provision to best serve the pupils. It was asked if schools would be receptive to managing this unit and officers informed them that they were confident that the

schools being considered would be receptive to it. However, it was recognised that it would be a challenge. Members noted that a similar proposal had been put in place 10 years ago and had not been successful and hoped that the proposals had been planned properly. Officers highlighted that these proposals provided a whole continuum of support to improve the service. It was confirmed that the money for the pupils attending this provision would go into the Education Otherwise Than At School budget. The proposals offered different ways of funding places without increasing the budget for the Service.

Members noted that feedback on the range of services offered by the Engage project had not been that positive and agreed with officers comments that the pupils becoming part of a large school would result in access to a wider range of subjects and better meet their needs. It was highlighted that the Engage staff had done a good job, however, the project was not sustainable. Members highlighted that there was a private company looking for funding for an engagement retreat for young people and they would send information to officers.

Members noted that the new Senior Well-being Post was to be grant funded and queried if the post would still exist once the grant period had finished. It was established that the grant funding would be in place for two years, which would be a suitable time to assess if the post was working and if so a decision would be made on whether it should be funded from the core budget.

Members were taken through the consultation comments and the officer responses to them. Members queried whether the consultation period had been long enough and would there have been more than 30 responses if it had been extended. It was also noted that some school governor meetings were on a quarterly basis and governors may not have had time to respond. Officers felt that the consultation had been long and broad enough and some of the responses were on behalf of groups.

It was noted that staff were anxious as there were 25 positions at risk. There were 16 posts being created that were ring fenced to these staff initially provided they had the right skills for the job. Other opportunities may arise in schools when they

consider what additional support they required to manage the changes.

Members were informed of the following amendment to the report that the Equality Impact Assessment, page 139, section 2, under marriage and civil partnership to be amended from “Pupils – this characteristic is not applicable due to the age of the pupils” to “Pupils - There is no impact on the group of young people we are currently dealing with”. The Head of Transformation also provided the Committee with a further explanation of recommendation (c) that the delegated authority was in relation to confirming the school(s) to manage the alternative provision and to identify the site(s).

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

5.5 Hillside Secure Children’s Home – Estyn Inspection

The Committee received the Estyn Inspection Report (2015) for Hillside Secure Children’s Home, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the primary focus of the report was to comment on the quality of education provided to children and young people. The Estyn report in 2013-14 identified many shortfalls within the education provision and the inspection was to measure the progress made against the recommendations contained within that report and used these as a benchmark to evidence progress within the department. It was highlighted that the department had been unaware of when the inspection was going to take place and it was unannounced. Estyn were content that progress had been against all the recommendations and good progress had been made in some areas. Supplementary recommendations were made to support the continued improvement. Members were pleased to note that progress had been made.

Members queried what impact the arrangements had made on Cefn Saeson school and officers informed them that the arrangements worked well and had been of benefit to both Hillside and the school.

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

6. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS**

Resolved: that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 12 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

7. **MANAGING SITUATIONS AT HILLSIDE (YOUNG PEOPLE)
(EXEMPT UNDER PARAGRAPH 13) WITHDRAWN**

Officers informed Members that due to a number of inaccuracies in the report it had been withdrawn from today's meeting. The report would be refreshed and brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.

8. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

8.1 Hillside Managers Report

Members received the Manager's report on Hillside Secure Centre for the period of 1 July to 30 November 2015, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were provided with information on the admissions to the Unit. It was explained that following the reduction in Youth Justice contracted beds there had been a rise in the number of welfare admissions. Also following discussions with the Police there had been an increase in PACE (Section 38) placements for one night. It was highlighted that the majority of young people admitted were from Children's Homes. It was emphasised that using facilities, such as Hillside, earlier in their care history would have more impact and could result in less placements and trauma in the future. It was noted that the

welfare placements did not have a fixed end date which could cause negative behaviour from the young people.

The education achievements of the young people were highlighted to Members and the range of Agored Cymru qualifications offered had increased significantly. It was noted that Hillside facilitated a visit from Charlie Taylor, who was the Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Justice, as part of the Justice Review of the Juvenile Estate. He had chosen to visit the Centre as the first secure children's home after being advised by the Youth Justice Board of the good work that had been undertaken. He particularly focussed upon the education provision and the positive outcomes which needed to be achieved by young people. It was highlighted that Hillside was the only secure children's home to have the official career mark, which it was awarded in July 2015.

Members were informed of staff leaving employment and those commencing employment. It was explained that some had left for career enhancement reasons and others had retired. The Centre was also going through a cultural change and repurposing and repositioning the service, which did not suit all staff. It was highlighted that there had been a lot of training undertaken and continual personal development for teaching staff had been recognised. It was noted that it was a challenging environment to work in but it was identified that only one out of eight long term sickness absence was work related.

The achievements of the Centre were recognised. Members were invited to visit the Centre to see the walled garden, which was a project undertaken in partnership with the Arts Council for Wales. It was highlighted that Hillside had formally been invited to the Her Majesty's Official Garden Party for their contribution to the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. The Centre was piloting a revised staff rota to improve service delivery and recovery time for employees. It was recognised that the development of psychologist and clinical team had made a significant difference and the young people were benefitting. Members welcomed this development.

It was noted that the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales inspection report would be brought to a future meeting once it had been received.

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

8.2 Hillside (The Children's Home (Wales))

The Committee received the Children's Homes (Wales) Regulations report on the monthly visits, from May to September 2015, to Hillside Secure Centre by a member of staff not directly concerned with the conduct of the Centre, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members highlighted that on some occasions the control and sanctions logs had not been available as it could not be located. Officers recognised that this was a concern and steps had been put in place to ensure this does not happen again. This included daily check lists being developed for unit leaders.

It was noted that there had been failures in responding to complaints and delays in recording them. Officers recognised that it was not acceptable and the process had been looked at and changes had been made to address this and ensure complaints were dealt with in a timely manner. In addition all incidents were investigated by a senior manager and reported to social workers and the medical team. It was emphasised that the complaints officers should distinguish between a complaint and a criminal act.

It was highlighted that the number of sanctions was due to increased challenging behaviour and all had been deemed reasonable. It was important that staff understood what was driving behaviour and training had been undertaken on responding to traumatised children.

It was commented that there had been reports of water within in children's rooms due to showers overflowing. Officers informed Members that this was being rectified on a rolling basis through the modernisation process.

Members queried if there was any scope for the produce from the walled garden to be sold by the young people outside the Centre to increase their skills and raise income. Officers highlighted that the produce was available at the front of the building but not for profit and they would like to expand on this. The produce was used for meals and young people were

learning where food came from and increasing their skills. Members informed officers that Glynneath Training Centre had undertaken a similar project and maybe able to offer some advice and experience. Members were pleased with reports of how easy it was for relatives to communicate with the young people.

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

8.3 Children and Young People Services Supported Accommodation Needs Update

The Committee received the report updating Members on the accommodation and support needs of 16-25 year olds, with a specific focus on Care Leavers and those who meet Local Authority thresholds within Neath Port Talbot, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the report followed on from a number of previous reports that had been brought before Members to ensure that the accommodation and support services provided for children and young people in Neath Port Talbot were suitable and appropriate. A task and finish group had been established to identify the current and future accommodation and support needs of young people in order to determine future commissioning needs. The needs analysis work undertaken by the group highlighted the requirement to develop a seamless step-down supported accommodation model and a new pathway had been developed. A new Supported Accommodation Service specification would be going out to market via the open tender procedure. The contract would be outcome focussed and monitored on a quarterly basis via the Common Commissioning Unit.

Members were informed that to ensure the Council's commitment not to place young people in bed and breakfast accommodation new service specifications would be provided for supported lodgings, 24 hour emergency accommodation and shared housing with floating support. It was highlighted that 24 hour emergency accommodation should negate the need to use bed and breakfast and at any one time there should be up to 10 emergency beds available.

It was noted that there would be the establishment of a Resettlements and Re-enablement Panel aimed at addressing the needs of hard to reach young people. Also in line with the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention work there would be the redevelopment of the former role undertaken by the Homelessness Prevention Worker to a more holistic Accommodation Officer. The remit would largely centre on meeting the needs of young people presenting as homeless and those at risk of placement breakdown. The process for dealing with sixteen and seventeen year olds who present as homeless or in need of accommodation was explained to Members. Members queried where the young person would be placed during the three to seven days whilst suitable accommodation was found. Officers informed them that it would be in emergency accommodation.

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

CHAIRPERSON