

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

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

Members Present:

30 June 2016

Chairperson: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairperson: Councillor H.N.James

Councillors: H.M.Bebell, M.Ellis, R.G.Jones, J.D.Morgan,
Mrs.K.Pearson, M.Protheroe, A.L.Thomas,
D.Whitelock and Mrs.L.G.Williams

Co-opted Voting Members: Mrs.M.Caddick, Ms.H.Dale and Ms.D.Vaughan

Co-opted Non Voting Members: A.Hughes

Officers In Attendance A.Thomas, Mrs.A.Thomas, C.Millis,
Ms.K.Warren, Ms.H.Lervy, N.Thomas,
J.Hodges, Dale, Ms.A.Flynn, M.Daley, Burge,
Ms.S.Davies, Ms.L.Clement-Jones,
Ms.S.Thomas and Ms.C.Gadd

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

1. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND
EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 JUNE 2016**

Members noted that there was a typographical error in the minutes. It was agreed that the following:

“Members asked if the Foreword of the Annual Report be proof read before being published as it contained come grammatical errors” would be amended to:

“Members asked if the Foreword of the Annual Report be proof read before being published as it contained some grammatical errors”.

With the above amendment the Committee noted the Minutes.

In relation to Item 6.2 – Regional Adoption Service Inter Authority Agreement, Members queried if the correct financial figures had been confirmed. Officers would follow this up and circulate the information to the Committee.

2. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

It was highlighted that following the session held by the Committee the Forward Work Programme would be amended to reflect the discussions.

3. **SCHOOL AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE REPORT CARD**

The Committee received the Service Report Card for the School and Family Support Team, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the School and Family Support Team sits within the broader Inclusion Service and encompassed a number of different service areas that provided support to schools, governors, parents, pupils and other Council service areas. It was highlighted that the team delivered a broad range of services that included school admissions, governor training, education welfare and safeguarding.

Members highlighted that there had been a successful multi-agency response, co-ordinated by the Council, to the Measles outbreak in 2013/14 and commented that they would have liked to have had more information about this at the time. Officers explained that the information had been reported previously and the Council had presented evidence to a Welsh Government select committee, which had commended the Council for its approach. It was a good example of the breadth of areas that the Service deals with.

Members noted that there were around 100 school governor vacancies in Neath Port Talbot and asked if this was usual or if there were any particular problems in recruiting governors at the moment. Reassurances were given that this was not above the national average and parent governors was the highest level of vacancies,

which correlated with them being the highest percentage of seats. It was noted that the Service had been trying to drive recruitment.

Members noted that there were 17 Local Authority appointed school governor vacancies in across Neath Port Talbot. It was queried if consideration was given to Members who were within the catchment area of the school, rather than just those from the ward where it was based. Officers highlighted that the current Policy stated that it had to be a ward Member. However, due to recent developments with the Schools Improvement Programme Members outside of wards had been contacted as a bigger trawl was required for the new school developments. It was agreed that the Policy required updating.

Members requested that numbers as well as percentages were included in future reports. It was highlighted that in some cases there were numbers in the table and percentages included in the description, which made it more difficult to correlate.

Members noted that in relation to improving safeguarding procedures, practices and understanding one of the barriers was inconsistent reporting to the Local Authority. Members asked officers to elaborate on this and asked what actions were being taken to address it. It was explained that the majority of schools reported any incidents immediately, however, there was a small minority that did not. Meetings were being held with school to emphasise the importance of immediate reporting.

Members noted that the number of secondary school exclusions had dropped and it was queried what the reason was behind this. Officers explained that a lot of work had been undertaken to revamp the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Service, which had had a positive impact. It was highlighted that there was a graduated response to behaviour and it was recognised that there would be occasions where pupils would need to be removed from the school setting and a second nurture centre was being developed to offer more intensive support. There was also a highly skilled Well-being Team in place for school support.

Members asked what was the protocol for reporting exclusions and officers explained that the vast majority of schools followed the 24 hour statutory guidelines to inform the Local Authority. There were a couple of schools that had not and they were being reminded of their obligations.

It was queried if alternative options were considered before the permanent exclusions route was taken. Officers explained that there were pupils in the system that were a legacy of the previous system, mainly at Key Stage 4. It was highlighted that work was being undertaken to transfer those pupils back into schools and some would also receive enhanced support. It was noted that early intervention and prevention was key to developing this service. An example was given that a statutory assessment for a pupil in year 6 was too late and identifying pupil needs and putting the right support in place at an early stage was crucial.

Members queried what was meant by the managed moves mechanism. It was explained that this mechanism was used when a pupil was, for instance, at risk of permanent exclusion and a trial move of school would be undertaken. If the move had positive results then the move would be made permanent.

Members asked which organisations were worked with in partnership to support young people who had been excluded or were Not in Education, Employment or Training. It was confirmed that there was a suite of organisations that the Council worked with, such as LEAP and Baglan Bulldogs. It was noted that a lot of the Services were commissioned through Family Support Services. Members queried what the acronym LEAP stood for and officers informed them that they were not sure but the initiative was LEAP to learn and offered an alternative curriculum to young people.

The Committee asked if some headteachers were reluctant to issue Attendance Penalty Notices. Officers informed Members that some headteachers were keener than others to issue notices. However, the Local Authority's stance remained consistent and there was some evidence that they worked. It was a step before court and kept people out of the criminal justice system. However, it was recognised that it was not suitable in all circumstances. In some instances families had to be sensitively handled and the Education Welfare Officers would work with family and the school. Members provided examples of where concerns over pupil attendance had assisted with identifying families that required support.

The Committee queried if some Local Authorities had abandoned the practice of issuing Penalty Notices, especially as there was a test case in England going through the justice system challenging the Notices. Officers confirmed that the Notices were still a statutory responsibility for all 22 Local Authorities in Wales. It was highlighted

that it was an Education Through Regional Working (ERW) policy and was consistent through the consortium. The Welsh Government was awaiting the outcome of the case in England before issuing any further guidance. It was noted that the Welsh Government guidance was different from English guidance. One of the key differences was there was no 10 day discretion rule in the English guidance. Members requested an update report on Attendance Penalty Notices once the outcome of the English court case was known.

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

4. SUPPORT FOR LEARNING SERVICE REPORT CARD

The Committee received the service report card for Support for Learning (SfL) Service, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Service focused on inclusion and support for achievement for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and sat at the heart of school improvement. The terms school action and school action plus were explained to Members. School Action was put in place when a pupil was identified as requiring additional support and a school education plan would be put in place. If concerns persisted then pupils would be placed on School Action Plus and this was where the Service would target more intensive support.

It was highlighted that there had been a significant reduction in referrals since 2013/14. Members queried what the reasons were for the decrease in referrals. It was explained that part of the reason was the increase of high quality training and capacity building to ensure schools met the needs of pupils. It was noted that a high percentage of referrals received were completed within the year and there was one pathway for referrals to ensure it prevented duplication of assessments. In addition, a recent restructure of the Service had resulted in more capacity in the behavioural team. Feedback regarding the Service had been positive with high percentages of schools and parents rating them as good or excellent.

Members noted that 86% of schools said the service provided by the SfL teams was good or excellent and asked what the 14% had been dissatisfied with. Officers informed them that there had been frustration with some waiting times for services due to capacity

issues. Also there were some minor issues, such as the quality of venues for training.

Members highlighted that overall there was a reduction in referrals but there appeared to be evidence that there was an increase at Foundation Phase and queried why this was the case. It was explained that the data did reflect that there were now more referrals at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 and part of the reason was due to schools being better equipped to identify additional needs at an earlier stage. It was confirmed that Foundation Phase teachers were also seeing an increase in late developing speech and language skills.

Members asked if the services were delivered to Welsh Medium schools in Welsh. It was noted that there was a Welsh speaker in each team and they would carry out the assessments within these schools. Members asked if the speech and language services delivered a translated programme or used a different language specific programme. It was noted that a lot of work was undertaken with Welsh Medium schools to ensure that the services were fit for purpose. For example the “phonic rocket” was delivered in both English and Welsh. It was highlighted that the specific needs of the child would be addressed by the team.

Members noted that 72% of the referrals received by Sfl were accepted and asked what would be the basis for the acceptance. It was clarified that the acceptance of referrals was based on professional judgement. Officers confirmed that the other 28% of referrals did not enter into the system and a graduated response would be put in place or they would be signposted to other services.

It was noted that 7.8% of referrals were referred to ABMU Health Board Services. It was highlighted that ASD team had been proactive providing additional support for those on the waiting list for these services. Members highlighted that the waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) were not acceptable. Offices explained that it was not a CAMHS Service and those waiting lists would not have an impact in this instance. The Chairperson highlighted that the Committee had not received a response to their letter highlighting concerns with CAMHS. The Committee would be considering its next steps in regards to this and possibly writing to Welsh Government and local Assembly Members.

It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of learners with ALN over the last three years and they continued to increase. It was highlighted that instances where pupils with Special Educational Need (SEN) did not achieve the Core Subject Indicators the data was analysed to identify the reasons why. Specific actions would be put in place to target vulnerable learners, for example, a lot of work was undertaken with the Looked After Children Education Services (LACES).

Members asked if the Service had been within budget and if they had delivered any savings allocated to them in the Forward Financial Plan. Officers highlighted that that it was a large and important budget area. It was explained that there were some areas that were overspent, particularly in the Education Other Than At School Service, which had been reported corporately. This had been part of the reason for the restructure of the Service to ensure that the budget was effectively utilised and to reduce exclusions. It was noted that overall, the section had been within budget.

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

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 Children and Young People Services End of Year (2015-16) Performance Report Quarter 4

The Committee received the Children and Young People Services end of year (2016-16) performance report, which advised Members of the performance management information, monthly Key Priority Indicator information and Complaints Data, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members asked how quickly cases were stepped down and stepped up between Children and Young People Services and Team Around the Family (TAF). Officers explained that each case was considered on an individual basis and cases would be stepped down in a timely and safe way and where the risks had reduced sufficiently. The Service wanted to ensure that cases did not get stepped down and back up continuously and new

processes had been put in place, that when a case was stepped back up Children's Service would keep it for at least three months until it had stabilised.

Members asked if moving TAF into Neath Civic Centre with other Children's Services teams had been positive. Members were informed that the Senior Management had received some representation from some members of TAF raising some concerns. They had met with the team to address these concerns and to ensure that any anxieties they had could be discussed in an open way. An action plan had been developed following these discussions. There had been some anxiety regarding safeguarding issues with some cases and they had all been looked at by the Principal Officer who had confirmed that there were no child protection concerns in any of them. It was noted that the team manager had been an agency worker who had offered significant experience. The team manager post was currently being advertised and there would be a handover period.

Members noted that the percentage of personal education plans within 20 school days was improving and asked what the reason for this. It was highlighted that work had been undertaken in this area, however, it was a statutory requirement and further improvement was required.

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

5.2 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2015-16 – Quarter 4 Performance

The Committee received the quarter 4 performance monitoring data, complaints and compliments for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the report provided education results and assessments at Key Stage 2, 3 and 4. It also included data relating to attendance, exclusions, the statutory assessment process, the Youth Service and Childcare. It was highlighted that it was a good news story at Key Stage 4 with an increase in the percentage of pupils reaching the level 2 threshold indicator and was above the Welsh average. In the

Average Wider Points and Capped Points Neath Port Talbot were placed second and third in Wales respectively. It was highlighted that these were good results especially considering the levels of deprivation in the area.

It was noted that at Key Stage 3 the Core Subject Indicator had improved but Neath Port Talbot were still ranked 22nd in Wales. At Key Stage 2 the performance in Core Subject Indicator had dropped slightly and Neath Port Talbot were also ranked 22nd for this indicator. It was noted that these indicators were based on teacher assessment.

Members highlighted that a question had been referred from Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 29th June 2016, asking what was being done to address the issues of standardisation and moderation of teacher assessment across Education through Regional Working (ERW) consortium and the rest of Wales. The current ranking did not appear to be an accurate reflection of where Neath Port Talbot should be considering the performance at Key Stage 4. Officers explained that there was a large amount of work being undertaken on standardisation and moderation. Neath Port Talbot could not influence other Local Authorities but a national programme had been put in place to ensure that teacher assessment was accurate across the four education consortia in Wales. In addition, Estyn would hold Local Authorities to account. It was explained that in Neath Port Talbot teacher assessment had been looked at in depth and there was a consistent approach to support. Schools had also completed a questionnaire about what they thought of the process and most of the feedback had been positive. It was agreed that the report on this information would be shared with the Committee.

It was highlighted that cluster working within schools in the area was strong and there was good information sharing. Members asked that if the cluster process was working well, when this would be reflected in the results at Key Stage 3. Officers explained that each year there was a different cohort of children with different needs and abilities that would impact on the results. It was noted that there had to be confidence that the assessments in schools were correct.

Members highlighted that teacher assessment should show progression throughout a pupils school career to ensure that

areas of concern were addressed. Assessment at secondary school level should identify inaccuracies at primary school level. Officers agreed that this would be the case and children who had not achieved as expected the reasons why would be examined with the school. Pupils would be set targets and interventions would be put in place to improve areas that required it.

Officers explained that at Key Stage 2, where there had been near misses for core subject indicators, a further analysis had been undertaken to establish the reasons behind it and to hold the schools to account. The Committee noted that there had been a lot of work undertaken in addressing earlier identification of Additional Learning Needs and where necessary pupils receiving statements of educational need. It was noted 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 with 100% performance. It was noted that with exceptions performance was not as good and officers explained that this was mainly due to waiting for information from other agencies or parents not attending meetings.

It was highlighted that there had been a reduction in the number of complaints received by the Service. Any lessons learned from complaints were included in training. Members requested information on the Ombudsman case that had been upheld and it was agreed that it would be circulated to the Committee outside of the meeting.

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

5.3 Families First Progress and Budget Report 2015-2016

The Committee received the progress report of the Families First Programme and budget for 2015-16, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that Families First was a Welsh Government funded programme that promoted the development of effective multi-agency systems and support, with a clear emphasis on prevention and early intervention for families, particularly those living in poverty. The Programme

assisted with reducing the numbers of families developing more complex needs and requiring intensive and costly interventions. It was a five year programme that commenced in 2012 and would end this financial year. Officers highlighted that there had been a 13% reduction in funding from Welsh Government for 2015/16, which had been met by the Council. There would be ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the projects to ensure that the needs of vulnerable families were met and positive outcomes could be evidenced at an early stage of intervention.

Members highlighted that the number of referrals to TAF continued to grow and enquired what the size of the team was. Officers informed them that there were between 15 and 20 workers within the team and the workforce was pretty static at the moment. Members queried how many cases were held per worker in the team. It was explained that caseloads were around 14 per worker. It was noted that performance management of the team would be reported through Children and Young People Services. It was highlighted that there would be a monitoring report at a future meeting identifying what difference TAF had made.

Members noted that due to problems in Action for Children recruiting clinical psychologists, the Graded Approach to Support and Counselling Service was not delivered during 2015-16. It was asked would the funding for this Service be rolled over to the following year or did it have to be paid back to Welsh Government. Officers explained that the funding had been used for other services when it became apparent that this service could not be delivered. Members asked if there was a need for the clinical psychologist post. Officers explained that they had exhausted all options for recruiting this post, as it was a part time and fixed term contract and they were considering other options to deliver this service.

Members noted that some services had underperformed and officers explained that it was the first year of these services and it took some time to embed and it would also be dependent on referral numbers. Some lessons had been learned and there had been a lot of monitoring work undertaken. It was highlighted that the contracts specifications were payment by result and more resources had been put into those that were over performing.

Members highlighted that there was likely to be an overlap between services, because if a family was eligible for one service then it was likely that they would also be eligible for others. It was asked how duplication was prevented. It was noted that there were good relationships between TAF and service providers, which assisted with identifying which service would be best suited to the needs of a family.

Members commented that there was a high level of demand for counselling services, however, only 47% reported an improvement in their emotional health and well-being. It was asked if this was a low result. Officers highlighted that this information would be included in the monitoring report that was being brought to a future meeting.

It was noted that the Thriving Families project had delivered to capacity and there had been an increase by 56 during the year. Members asked what the total number of the families the Service worked with and it was confirmed that it was 153. Members queried if part of the project could have been funded through the Regional Development Plan. Officers explained that it would be up to the organisation delivering the service to apply for the funding.

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

5.4 Flying Start Progress and Budget Report 2015-2016

The Committee received the progress report on the Flying Start Programme and budget, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Flying Start Programme was funded via a Welsh Government grant and was being delivered to up to four year olds living within Flying Start postcodes. It was highlighted that the Programme had a big impact and delivered quality childcare, elements of outreach and health visitor services. It was noted that there were 34 childcare settings and attendance rates were around 87%. There were also one to one sessions within homes available where necessary. It was noted that the Programme had exceeded capacity in Neath Port Talbot and had been operating within the allowed 10% over target number. The teams and budget were coping within the current scope, however, the programme was

not allowed to expand further according to the Welsh Government.

It was highlighted that there had been some delivery problems within the Upper Afan Valley and the Service had worked in partnership to resolve these issues. Cases studies had been included for Members information to demonstrate the quality side of the work that was undertaken.

Members commented that it was a good service that was needed in the area. It was asked if the Service was under pressure to accommodate more families. Officers explained that they were always under pressure and had informed the Welsh Government of this. Members noted that it was unfortunate that the Programme was not more widely available. Members asked if there was any possibility of the Service linking up with the voluntary sector so parents that were not eligible for the Flying Start Programme could still access the courses for parents. Officers explained that if there was capacity within a course then it would be opened up to others that were interested. It was highlighted that those that completed the courses were often eager to continue with other courses.

Members asked if children who had received Flying Start services could be tracked through the school system to establish the long term outcomes. Officers explained that the data was there and they were considering ways that it could be collated and analysed. However, anecdotal evidence indicated that there were long term positive outcomes.

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

5.5 Pupil Attendance

The Committee received information and data in relation to Neath Port Talbot pupil attendance, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members had previously received reports outlining procedures the Council and schools followed in order to increase pupil attendance. There continued to be an emphasis on this priority and it was highlighted that governors should continue to challenge attendance figures in their schools.

It was noted that there had been a slight decrease in performance both in primary and secondary schools compared with the same period last year. Officers provided an update that since the report had been written there had been a slight increase in secondary school attendance and a further slight decrease in primary school attendance. It was explained that the main reason for this was the level of illness in March. Members noted that there had been more of a decrease in attendance in some schools compared with others and it was asked was this due to illnesses circulating schools. Officers confirmed that the significant issues had been illness and if a pupil comes into school unwell it will often be caught by other pupils.

Members asked if there was less capacity within the Education Welfare Team. Officers confirmed that this was the case as there had been some long term sickness and maternity leave within the team, which has had an impact on the service. Members asked if the sickness absence was being covered and officers explained that it was not at the moment and the team had worked hard to cover the absences. It was noted that it was planned to reshape the Service to ensure that it was focussed on pupil attendance.

Members noted that attendance was an Estyn category and could have a disproportionate impact on the judgement of a school. Officers highlighted that the inspection framework would have to be modified to amend this and Estyn were aware of this issue.

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

5.6 Integrated Family Support Service (Western Bay)

The Committee received the report that sought approval to enter into a collaborative arrangement with the City and Council of Swansea and Bridgend County Borough Council in relation to the finance and governance arrangements for the Western Bay Integrated Family Support Services, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the collaborative arrangement for Integrated Family Support Services had been operational since April 2013 and this report was regarding the governance and financial aspects of the arrangements.

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

CHAIRPERSON