

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

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

Members Present:

8 September 2016

Chairperson: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairperson: Councillor H.N.James

Councillors: H.M.Bebell, J.D.Morgan, Mrs.K.Pearson,
A.Llewelyn, 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.Jarrett, A.Thomas, Mrs.A.Thomas, C.Millis,
J.Hodges, M.Daley, N.Thomas, J.Haeney,
Ms.C.Plowman 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 28 JULY 2016**

The Minutes were noted by the Committee.

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

The Forward Work Programme was noted by the Committee.

3. **CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE – BETTER SCHOOLS, BRIGHTER PROSPECTS - HIGHLIGHT REPORT – QUARTER 1**

The Committee received the Better Schools, Brighter Prospects Highlight Report for Quarter 1 (April to June 2016), which provided a progress update for one of the six Corporate Improvement Plan objectives which fall within the remit of the Committee, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the report provided an overview of the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), pupil attainment, attendance, exclusions, safeguarding and Education Regional Working (ERW) partnership. It provided an update on the headlines and highlights over the last 3 months and the work that was currently being undertaken.

In relation to Outcome 1 – we will merge or relocate some schools; increase capacity in others; and continue to build new schools; and to close some others – Members were informed that Ysgol Bae Baglan had been successfully opened. It was noted that there had been a few teething problems, which were to be expected and there would be a full debrief with the Headteacher in due course. The Committee requested to hold a future meeting in the school and invite the Headteacher to the meeting to discuss his experiences of the school opening.

It was noted that the new Melin Primary school that replaced the infants and junior schools had also opened this term. The funding from the Welsh Government for the 3 to 16 school site for Dyffryn had been approved and officers would be requesting permission to consult on proposals shortly. It was highlighted that there had been positive changes to Ysgol Hendrefelin and the physical aspects of the site had been improved. Also the building work on the secondary section of Ystalyfera school would be completed in December and following this work on the primary section would commence. Members commented that there were a number of challenges to make Ystalyfera school and the new Welsh school that would be in Sandfields to bring them up to the standards of the new Bae Baglan school.

Members were informed that work continues to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and the wider community in Neath Port Talbot and the WESP was being implemented. The Committee asked if Welsh speaking families were

linked with Welsh speaking Flying Start Programmes. Officers explained that they were trying to ensure Welsh speaking officers worked with Welsh speaking families. Members highlighted that the Welsh Government had set an ambitious target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers to one million people by 2050. It was recognised that to achieve this changes would have to be made at pace and had to start at primary school and pre-school level. This included effective feeding of pupils from Welsh medium primary to Welsh medium secondary schools. It was highlighted that it was not just the Council that had to be proactive but the wider community as well. It was noted that the population in Wales was three million and one million was a big target. Members felt that the target was a national aspiration, however, it was recognised that without additional resources from Welsh Government it would be difficult to achieve.

It was commented that education was wider than just schools; it also included parents and adult learning. Members highlighted that there was good practice in schools that could be shared to help the development of Welsh in the community. An example was given where a school held Welsh classes for parents one morning a week to help them in understanding their children's homework. Officers noted that it was easier to set up such initiatives in some areas than others as there was a lack of Welsh speaking staff in some wards. It was highlighted that to raise the number of Welsh speaking staff was a longer term aim.

Officers informed Members that in regards to literacy outcomes there had been an improvement in the accuracy of teacher assessments and this year had been the best year for Key Stage 4 results. This was particularly positive when considered in the context of the deprivation levels within Neath Port Talbot. It was highlighted that there had been a lot of work around effectively utilising the Pupil Deprivation Grant and accelerated learning of Free School Meal pupils.

Attendance figures continued to be regularly monitored by the Committee and it was explained that the Education Welfare Officers (EWO) provided a very important service. It was also noted that the EWO team had experienced some sickness, which had caused some difficulties. Members had been told in a previous meeting that there had been a drop in attendance figures in March 2016 due to a lot of illness in schools and this could affect Neath Port Talbot's national ratings. It was highlighted that the Council needed to re-energise and focus attention in the secondary sector and governors needed to

continue to challenge headteachers on this topic. It was noted that there had been an increase in permanent exclusions and the changes to the Education Other Than At School Service would hopefully address this going forward.

Members asked whether or not there had been any prison sentences for parents that had been taken to court for non-attendance and whether the child then attended school after action had been taken. Officers informed them that they did not think there had been any prison sentences in the last academic year and they would check this information and whether court action had improved the attendance of the children involved. It was highlighted that court action was a last resort after all other avenues had been exhausted.

Members asked if outcome 8 – we will provide better support for pupils with behavioural needs - was flagged red status because there was anticipated to be an increase in behavioural needs. Officers explained that the Education Other Than At School service had been restructured and the 2016/17 academic year would be where the changes would really come into effect. There were more resources available to improve performance. Members noted that there was some good practice being undertaken by Communities First Teams and it was asked if officers were aware of these programmes. Officers explained that they were aware of the various support programmes available and worked together where possible and early intervention was a key aspect.

Members highlighted that there were only two pupils with behavioural needs that left compulsory education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification in 2014/15 and that this was a good achievement. Officers noted that there had been a lot of positive work in this area and two was still too many.

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

4. **CHALLENGE ADVISERS SERVICE REPORT CARD**

The Committee received the Service Report Card for the Challenge Adviser Team, as detailed within the circulated report.

The Challenge Adviser Team works with all primary, secondary and special schools in Neath Port Talbot and challenge schools on their performance, standards, provisions and leadership. It was explained

that the team provided a bespoke ladder of support for all schools depending on need and the national model was used to categorise schools to determine the support required. It was highlighted that the Local Authority knows its school very well and the consistency of teacher assessments had improved. It was explained that there had been one long term sickness in the team, which had been managed through the appropriate policies.

Members noted that the pairing of schools worked well to assist with improvements and queried if this system was going to continue. Officers confirmed that it would be continuing and it was used for sharing of good practice and resources. For example, all primary schools with over 300 pupils would be meeting to discuss challenges they face. It was explained that schools that were paired together tended to be similar schools as it would not be helpful to pair a red categorised school with a green one. The schools had to be able to take the journey together.

Members asked if the results of the visits by the Challenge Advisers ever misaligned with Estyn's view. Officers informed them that they did at times, but the Challenge Advisers tended to consider different aspects to Estyn. It was highlighted that Neath Port Talbot had a good Estyn footprint. Members commented that the Challenge Advisers engaged well with the chair of governors of a school and they were involved in the core visits and the process.

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

5. **CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE - SAFER BRIGHTER FUTURES - HIGHLIGHT REPORT - QUARTER 1**

The Committee received the Safer Brighter Futures Highlight report for quarter 1 2016-17, which provides a progress update for one of the Corporate Improvement Plan objectives that falls within the remit of the Committee, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that significant progress had been made against all three outcomes. The introduction of Outcome Focussed Practice had allowed practitioners to work in a more positive way with children and families and all social workers have been trained in this method. It had been ensured that the right support was in place for families, which had been assisted through the development of the multi-agency Resource Panel. Members noted that 68% of children

had been supported to stay with their families and queried what number of children this represented. Officers would find out the figure and circulate it to the Committee.

It was noted that the Engagement and Participation Officer had left the Local Authority and a new officer would need to be appointed. Members asked when it was anticipated that the post would be filled. Officers explained that the post was being advertised internally next week in line with the Council's recruitment policies.

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

6. **REVIEW OF KEY PRIORITY INDICATORS**

The Committee received the report on proposed 2016-17 performance reporting arrangements, as detailed within the circulated report.

It was explained that the report had been deferred from the last meeting of the Committee as Members had not received the Children and Young People Services Development Plan. The report provided Members with 12 shortlisted revised Key Priority Indicators for Members to select eight to ten to be reported to the Committee periodically. Officers also recommended quarterly reporting of statutory and key performance indicators, which would provide Members with a more balanced overview of performance within the Service that was less susceptible to monthly variation. It was explained that the suggested Key Priority Indicators were more aligned to the work the Service was now undertaking. The Service would still collate the indicators that have been previously reported and the Senior Management Team would continue to monitor this information.

Members requested that three of the suggested indicators on vacancies, disciplinaries and grievances were incorporated into one report on workforce.

Members noted that the indicators for - the percentage of personal outcomes that have been reviewed during the period that show positive progress or have been achieved as determined by the family (11) and as determined by professional (12) - would not be able to be reported on until the third or fourth quarter of 2016/17. For this reason Members did not select these indicators and would reconsider them

when determining the key priority indicators for 2017/18. Members requested that both percentages and numbers were included in the reports.

The Committee agreed the following Key Priority Indicators to be reported during 2016/17:

1. Staff supervision rates to include qualified and unqualified workers.
2. Average Number of Children's Cases held by Qualified Social Workers across the Service. This will include information for members on the highest and lowest caseloads as well as the total number of cases held.
3. Workforce report on the number of social work vacancies (to include number of leavers, starters and agency staff), number of ongoing disciplinaries and number of ongoing grievances within the Service.
4. Thematic reports on the findings of Case File Audits.
5. Number of Looked After Children.
6. The number of Children who have been discharged from care and then subsequently re-admitted.
7. The number of Cases 'stepped up / stepped down' between Children and Young People Services and Team Around the Family (TAF).
8. The percentage of Team Around the Family cases that were closed due to the achievement of a successful outcome in relation to the Plan.

Members approved the quarterly reporting of both statutory and key priority indicators to the Children, Young people and Education Scrutiny Committee throughout 2016/17.

7. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

7.1 Children and Young People Services Development Plan 2016/17

The Committee received the Children and Young People Services Development Plan 2016/17, as detailed within the circulated report.

Officers highlighted that the Plan had been called several different names and wanted to clarify that it was the Children and Young People Services Strategic Improvement Plan. The Plan had been set out in the Corporate Format and there was some information missing from the Corporate Measures and this information would be completed.

Members were informed that the Service was outward facing and it was explained that the priorities were outlined in an accessible and concise format. The Service's vision continued to be "achieving quality, supporting families and effectively managing risk". It was noted that the Service had delivered on its priorities for 2015/16. The number of looked after children continued to be reduced in a safe way. There were workforce challenges, however, currently there was only one vacancy across the Service, which was a good achievement.

Members queried what was classed as an unplanned departure under the Corporate Measures. It was explained that it referred to employees who had left the service because they had a new job.

The Committee asked how mothers with young babies were referred to the Service. It was explained that there were two main routes, the first was they would already be known to social services and a social worker would be working with them and the second was through the Team Around the Family and early intervention services.

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

7.2 Children and Young People Services 1st Quarter (2016-17) Performance Report

The Committee received the Performance Management Information for Children's Services for the 1st Quarter period (April 2016 to June 2016), as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that there had been an introduction of a new suite of Welsh Government Statutory Indicators for Children and Young People Services. However, the previous priority indicators would continue to be monitored by the Service.

It was highlighted that there had been some fluctuations in figures due to school holiday times and the Service expected to see the figures to level out again. For example, there had been an increase in the number of child protection cases as fewer reviews took place during holiday times.

Members highlighted that the Looked After Children team had the highest average caseload per worker and asked if this was a concern. Officers explained that 16 to 17 cases was not considered to be too high and the cases did not tend to be as intensive as those held by other teams.

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

7.3 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2016-17 – Quarter 1 Performance (1 April 2016 – 30 June 2016)

The Committee received the quarter one performance management data, complaints and compliments for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that there had been a rise in the number of statements of special education need and new statements issued within this period. Officers explained that this was a positive development that was due early intervention programmes. There were also more children being de-stated and a report would be brought to a future meeting regarding this. The Committee highlighted that there had been

a spike in the number of statements in year 6 and 7. Officers explained that this had been recognised and noted that primary schools met pupils' needs in a different way. Data on this area would be included in the report to be brought back.

It was highlighted that attendance had been covered earlier on at the meeting and work was also being undertaken with schools to ensure that inset days were spread across the school year, as this could have been the reason for some absences at the beginning of the school year. The Committee highlighted that this would also be of benefit to the pupils.

It was noted that there had been a small decline in the number of contacts with the Youth Service during this period and it was explained that this tends to be the case during the summer term. In the last financial year there had been school council elections and this had been the reason for better performance when comparing with the same time period the year before.

It was noted that there had been positive performance in regards to complaints and compliments.

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

7.4 Annual Progress Report on Young People who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

The Committee received the report on outcomes and progress made with young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or those young people at risk of becoming NEET, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that a lot of Neath Port Talbot Youth Service's work with NEET young people was funded through various external funding streams and there was some degree of risk with continued funding. Members asked if representations could be made for the Service to know the levels of grant funding they would be receiving each year earlier on. Officers explained that this had been flagged with Welsh Government.

The NEET Provision within the Service was spread across separate teams that work closely together to support young people, this included Keeping in Touch Workers (KIT) and

Families First Youth Workers. The Service worked in close partnership with Job Centre Plus to support young people to overcome any barriers they have to entering employment. The Service had mobile provision (the Rolling Zone) that was used as an outreach resource for young people who were NEET and required additional support. It was noted that the average attendance this year had dropped and this was mainly due to KIT workers now referring all young people from Communities First areas on to the Communities First Cluster teams.

It was highlighted that early intervention was an important part of this work. Members were provided with case studies that gave them examples of the positive outcomes resulting from the work undertaken. Members asked if the Service linked in with Social Services and it was confirmed that they did, mainly through the Team Around the Family.

Members requested the numbers of young people as well as the percentage in regards to the improvement in reducing the number of year 11 NEET young people from 4.4% in 2013 to 3.6%. Officers informed the Committee that 3.6% related to 56 young people.

Youth workers were also trained as Emotional Literacy Support assistants to assist with supporting the emotional needs of their pupils. The Families First team had developed a Transition Programme for young people in Year 6 and 7 and was having positive results. It was noted that there were concerns regarding transition from secondary school to further education and work was also being focussed in this area.

It was highlighted that a lot of engagement work had been undertaken and there was an engagement strategy in place. There had been more effective working with Career Wales recently and improvements to data available. Career Wales had developed a five tier model of engagement for post 16 young people. It was explained that the higher the tier the less work was required with the young person, for instance tier 5 required less intensive support than tier 3. It was highlighted that young people in tier 1 were not known to the services and this group was very difficult to target. Members queried this tier and it was explained that young people in this tier were known about but there was no information available about their education or employment status. Members queried what tier 0 referred to

and it was explained that it related to young people who had moved out of the County.

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

CHAIRPERSON