

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

4 September 2015

Chairman: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairman: Councillor H.N.James

Councillors: A.Carter, Mrs.A.Chaves, M.Ellis, R.G.Jones,
J.D.Morgan, Mrs.S.Paddison, M.Protheroe and
D.Whitelock

Officers In Attendance A.Jarrett, Mrs.A.Thomas, C.Millis, C.Glover,
H.Roberts 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 16TH JULY
2015**

Noted by the Committee with the following amendment:

Members felt that to more accurately reflect the discussion in the meeting under Item 6.1 The Children's Home (Wales) Regulations 2002, paragraph 4 the sentence that reads: "Members highlighted that appropriate action needs to be taken in regards to any incidents that occur" to be amended to "Members highlighted that appropriate action needs to be taken in regards to any incidents that occur, in particular potential criminal allegations".

2. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND
EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 30TH JULY
2015**

Noted by the Committee.

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

The Committee was informed that the Forward Work Programme had been amended and report cards had been scheduled into relevant meetings.

Noted by the Committee.

4. **SCRUTINY INQUIRY TO ASSESS PROGRESS IN PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN NEATH PORT TALBOT**

The Committee received the final report of the scrutiny inquiry to assess progress in protecting children from sexual exploitation in Neath Port Talbot and to agree the recommendations, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny held an Inquiry on this matter, which was based on the Bedfordshire University self-assessment tool. The Inquiry was held outside of the main Committee Cycle of meetings and Members considered information provided by different Council Services and partner organisations. Members that were involved in the Inquiry highlighted that it was very interesting to receive information from other organisations and hear different perspectives and the day had been very beneficial.

The Chairman thanked all the Members, officers and partners that had taken part in the Inquiry for their involvement and the support provided from Democratic Services. It was noted that Barnardos were very informative. In addition Members particularly mentioned the Principal Licensing Officer for the Council, who was well prepared and his presentation to the group was very good.

Members highlighted that a lot of the work had been undertaken by the Council to improve Children's Services and scrutiny processes and it was felt that the Council should be better at promoting good practice. The Scrutiny Officer agreed that ways of sharing good practice would be considered.

The Cabinet Members thanked the Committee for their work in this area and highlighted that it was a good report.

Following scrutiny and that, having given due regard to the Equalities Impact Assessment, the Committee approved the following recommendations:

1. The recommendations contained within the main report are endorsed by the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee.
2. The Chairman of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee writes to the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board, Council departments and other agencies to whom recommendations are addressed drawing their attention to the report and requesting that they:
 - a) Provide an indication that they accept the recommendations addressed to them.
 - b) Provide a response to the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee informing them of what actions will be taken and within what timescales.
 - c) Confirm any relevant actions have been included in strategic and business plans for the organisations.
3. Progress against the recommendations is assessed in six months by the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee.

5. **EDUCATION, LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING DATA UNIT
- REPORT CARD 2014-15**

The Committee received the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Data Unit Report Card to assist them to scrutinise the performance of this team, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Council had introduced a revised Performance Management Framework in 2014/15 and one of the requirements was the production of service report cards. It was explained that the report card outlines the main tasks of the unit and the services they provide. Officers recognised that Members had requested that acronyms were not to be used without the full wording being included and they were working on improving the consistency of this.

It was explained that the Data Unit had started to produce pre-populated self-evaluation reports and National Test Analysis for schools. This work had been effective and had significantly reduced the time that it takes schools to complete the documents. This was particularly useful at inspection time. It was noted that the Service has data on individual schools and was continuing to improve data for all education services. It was highlighted that Education through Regional Working (ERW) consortia also requested data from the Service.

Members requested that the format of report cards be amended slightly so that the graphs were easier to read and for the use of shading rather than colours, as papers were printed in black and white. Officers informed them that they would look at this and discuss options further with the Corporate Strategy Team.

Members queried whether school mergers would result in the data not being complete and would it skew the information reported to the Committee. It was clarified that the Service was working through the data to ensure all relevant information was incorporated. It was explained that if schools had changed from an infant and junior to a primary then the data would be the same. However, if schools were federations then the individual and combined data would be included.

Members queried who the satisfaction surveys were undertaken with and how many were completed. Officers informed Members that when the Service sends data to other departments, schools, external organisations and members of the public they request that they fill in a short satisfaction survey. They receive around 30 to 40 response a year and in the last three years they had received a total of 112 responses. The Service had considered sending an annual survey instead, especially to schools. Members noted that this could be a more effective way to optimise the amount of responses received. Further consideration would be given to the best way to collate feedback by the Service. Members asked if any specific groups had been dissatisfied with the data provided and it was confirmed that there had been complainants who had not been happy with the responses they received.

Members queried how many Freedom of Information (FOI) requests the Service received and recognised the additional work they created. Officers informed them that they had received 114 requests last year and 80 included information in relation the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning department only.

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

6. PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

6.1 Children and Young People Services – 1st Quarter (2015-16) Performance Report

The Committee received the performance management information for Children and Young People Services for the first quarter (April 2015 - June 2015), as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that due to the necessary changes required to the performance management system the new eight priority indicators, which were agreed by the Committee at the previous meeting, would be produced from the next meeting onwards.

It was highlighted that performance had dropped in regards to SCC/010 the percentage of referrals that are re-referrals within 12 months. Officers informed Members that performance was still within acceptable parameters and it was a cumulative figure and a better picture would be provided later in the year.

Members were pleased that all young carers known to Social Services were assessed (SCC/030a) and there had been an increase in the percentage who were provided with a service (SCC/030b). Officers noted that a caveat to this was that there was still work to be undertaken in identifying young carers.

Members highlighted that there had been a significant increase in the percentage of initial assessments that were completed during the year where there is evidence that the child has been seen alone by the social worker (SCC/011b) and it was asked how important this was. Officers informed them that it was extremely important in the first instance, however, it had to be judged by the social worker if it was appropriate and would not distress the child. It was noted that the improvement in performance was partly due to more accurate recording of data.

It was noted that five complaints received were in relation to Hillside and Members queried how many had been received in the previous year. Officers informed them that there had been 18 complaints in relation to Hillside last year. Members asked if complaints received had similar themes, officers agreed that a more detailed report on complaints would be brought to a future meeting.

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

6.2 Performance Indicator Monitoring Report 1st Quarter (Education)

The Committee received the Education Performance Indicator Monitoring Report for first quarter 2015/16 (April 2015 – June 2015), as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that there had been improvement in secondary school attendance and significant improvement in Key Stage 3. It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of pupils taught through the medium of Welsh at this level, however, improvements still needed to be made. Members asked if there was a difference in performance due to secondary schools using alternative ways of delivering the curriculum. Officers informed them that this would not impact on Key Stage 4 performance as it was directly related to GCSE results. It was highlighted that Neath Port Talbot ranked in the top ten of Welsh local authorities for GCSE results.

Members highlighted that there had been a drop in performance in the percentage of final statements of special education need issued within 26 weeks including exceptions (EDU/015a). Members also queried what qualified as an exception in relation to final statements of special educational need (EDU/015b). Officers informed them that the drop in performance was due to increased complexity of need and not always receiving required information from other professionals in a timely manner. It was noted that exceptions were where the Council had no control over the delay and it was due to waiting for advice from other professionals. It was explained that assessments for special education need were referred to a Panel and on occasions it can be difficult to get parents to engage.

It was highlighted that Action For Children had withdrawn from the Afan Valley and this included Flying Start provision. Members queried if the children affected had been offered alternative provision and it was confirmed that they had.

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

6.3 Attendance and Penalty Notice Report

The Committee received data and information on levels of school attendance and the development of procedures to raise attendance, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members had previously received reports which outlined the procedures put in place to raise attendance levels and the implementation of Penalty Notices for regular non-attendance at school. It was explained that the figures for 2014-15 for primary schools were provisional and for secondary schools were those that had been submitted to the Welsh Government. There had been a slight improvement in both sectors and it had to be taken into consideration that large improvements had been made in the previous year.

Members were provided with information regarding the number of penalty notices that had been issued. It was noted that the Local Authority had taken the view that absences for holidays would not be classed as an authorised absence apart from exceptional circumstances. Members queried whether or not penalty notices were an effective way to improve pupil attendance and officers informed them that it was too early to answer this effectively and they would have a better idea in the New Year.

Members asked if there had been any disputes between the Council and schools regarding whether or not to issue penalty notices. It was clarified that the Council would work with head teachers and schools to make the decision, however, the Council had the final decision. The Committee felt that the wording in reports should be amended to reflect this. Members were informed that withdrawals were generally for medical reasons that had been confirmed by a doctor.

The Committee was provided with information on the prosecutions that had been initiated. It was highlighted that families being taken to court were cases where the parents were unwilling to work with schools and the Service was being more proactive in addressing this.

Members thanked the team for the work they had undertaken in improving attendance and highlighted that attendance needed to be kept on the agenda.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed the report be noted.

CHAIRMAN

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