

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

24 September 2015

Chairperson: Councillor A.R.Lockyer

Vice Chairperson: Councillor H.N.James

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

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

**Officers In
Attendance** N. Jarman, A.Jarrett, Mrs.A.Thomas, C.Millis,
J.Hodges, K.Mort 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 4 SEPTEMBER
2015**

Noted by the Committee.

It was noted that A.Hughes was in attendance at that meeting and the attendance would be amended accordingly.

Members highlighted that they had asked for graphs in reports to be amended to make them easier to read without colour and it was noted that there was still some work to do in this area.

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

Noted by the Committee.

Members queried when a report on behaviour in schools would be brought back to the Committee. It was highlighted that an Inclusion Consultation Report was included on the Cabinet Board work programme for the next meeting. Officers would check how much information in relation to behaviour in schools would be included in this report.

3. **REPORT CARDS FOR FLYING START PROGRAMME AND PLAY AND FAMILY PLAY**

The Committee received the report cards developed by the Flying Start Programme and Play Teams within the Think Families Partnership, as detailed within the circulated report.

Officers recognised that there was still some work to be undertaken on the presentation of data and further discussions would take place to clarify the best reporting format. Members highlighted that there was a lack of data in the report card and it was explained that the data for Flying Start was reported at the end of the financial year. Including last year's data would have meant the information would be out of date and the time of year the report card was presented would make a difference. Officers noted that comparison work needed to be developed and more information on the impact of performance included rather than the background.

Members noted that Neath Port Talbot had been performing above the Welsh average in regards to achieving key stage level 2, however, the results had now plateaued and the reasons why were queried. It was explained that Neath Port Talbot had been achieving above what would be expected for the deprivation levels in the area. There continued to be small improvements which were not reflected in the graph due to the small percentage increases.

Members enquired what a Lower Super Output Area was and officers informed them that it was a geographic area used in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. Members also queried if the Speech and Language Therapist post was permanent in the Flying Start team and it was confirmed that it was. It was noted that it was difficult to find qualified Speech and Language Therapists.

In relation to the Play and Family Play report card Members highlighted that the graph illustrating the percentage of adults who were overweight or obese was from 2011 and queried if there was a

more recent survey. Officers would check how often this survey was undertaken and inform Members.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed the report be noted.

4. **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES - KEY PRIORITY INDICATOR INFORMATION**

The Committee received the key priority indicator information within Children's Services, as detailed within the circulated report, for indicators:

- Priority Indicator 1 – Average number of cases held by qualified workers across the Service
- Priority Indicator 2 – Staff supervision rates
- Priority Indicator 3 – The number of social worker vacancies across the Service (including number of starters/leavers/agency/sickness)
- Priority Indicator 4 – Number of approved foster carers within Neath Port Talbot

Officers highlighted that it was the first report produced for the new priority indicators and comments from Members were welcome to further develop the reports.

In relation to Priority Indicator 1, Members highlighted that it would be useful to also have the data for unqualified workers. It was felt that this would provide a more balanced picture of the cases held by each team. It was recognised that it was important that the data was useful and relevant to Members and there would be further discussions on how to present it effectively. It was suggested that the next report included anonymised dashboard data that outlined the cases held per worker. Members noted that having the information over time would be useful to be able to measure and compare data. Members also queried if the overall figure for average caseload was correct and officers would check the figures behind it.

It was highlighted that the data was useful as it provides information on caseloads and this was an important factor in ensuring the Service remains stable and in attracting social workers to the area. Members noted that cases had different levels of complexity and officers agreed that it was an important distinction that was considered during supervision. It was explained that each case was an individual child not a family.

In relation to Priority Indicator 2, it was noted that 10% of supervisions were not meeting the 28 day target. Members highlighted that it would be useful to know how far out of timescale the supervisions took place. Officers agreed that this would be taken on board and gave assurance to the Committee that it continues to be a management instruction for supervisions to be completed on time and specific areas of concern were targeted.

Members highlighted that figures for Priority Indicator 3 did not reflect the achievements of the Service. It would be useful to include what vacancies agency staff were covering, for example, maternity leave, long term sickness or post vacancies. It was noted that there were only four agency staff being used by the Service and this was a good achievement and demonstrated the progress that had been made.

Members asked in relation Priority Indicator 4, if the nine foster carers undergoing assessment were the same nine from April to August and it was confirmed that they were. Members queried if there were enough potential foster carers going through assessment to meet demand and officers informed them that there were not. It was an area that needed to be targeted and a more detailed report was scheduled to be brought back to the Committee.

Members highlighted that the graphs for percentage of children placed with in house and independent foster carers by age group were difficult to read. Officers would look at a different way of formatting them and it was suggested that breaking the figures down further by age range would be helpful. It was also agreed that including the costs for the placements would add to the information considered by Members.

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

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 Serious Concerns Protocol Focused Review

The Committee received the report of the review of the journey and learning by Children and Young People Services during the Serious Concerns Protocol, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) had requested that the Council put together a report of the lessons learned whilst the Council was subject to the Serious Concerns Protocol. The review of the two year journey set out the main lessons learned, such as keeping the caseloads manageable. It was requested that testimonials from partners were included and partner organisations were happy to provide them. Views from stakeholders provided a different perspective on how the Service had progressed. It was highlighted that it was now important to maintain the improvements.

Members asked how the Scrutiny Committee and Elected Members had assisted the improvement journey. Officers informed them that Elected Members had played a key role and had made it the top priority for the Council. Good relationships were an important part of the process and political stability had made the journey easier. Members had vastly improved their knowledge of Children's Services and this had been evident to the Inspectors. The Committee were pleased that the report had been completed and that it highlighted the good work that had been undertaken.

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

5.2 Supervision and Appraisal Processes

The Committee received an update report on the continued improvements for workforce support and development following actions identified in the addendum to the Children and Young

People Services Strategy for 2015-16, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Supervision Policy had been reviewed and aligned to quality standards within Children's Services. The Appraisal process had also been amended to be more user friendly within the Service. Consultation was undertaken with a range of groups and both processes were being rolled out to staff and managers. It was confirmed that the policies had been written in line with Investors in People standards.

It was noted that work to improve the Supervision Policy commenced two years ago with advice from the Independent Support Team, internal officers and comparable Councils. Supervisions now included two elements; caseloads and personal concerns. It was explained that the notes regarding caseloads would be recorded on the system and the personal notes would be kept on the individual's file. Members were pleased that a person centred approach was in operation with additional opportunities for learning and development.

Members noted that the target for managers was to be trained to undertake supervisions within six months of being in post. It was asked if the intention was for them to be trained as soon as possible with six months being the worst case scenario. It was confirmed that this was the case and the target was in relation to the formal corporate training, in the interim Principal Officers would support team managers to undertake supervisions. Members asked if a sample of supervisions would be considered to ensure there was consistency in the way they were carried out. Officers confirmed that this would be part of the audit process and there were now good standards to be measured against. Members noted that one of the standards was for supervisions only to be cancelled in exceptional circumstances. It was queried if supervisions were generally cancelled by the manager or social workers. It was clarified that it was a mix of the two, however, the importance of them continued to be emphasised.

Members asked if it had to be team managers who undertook supervisions and whether some of them could be completed by deputy team managers. Officers informed them that previously it had only been team managers, however, the Service had

progressed to where there was scope for deputies to undertake some supervisions depending on their experience.

Members highlighted that the development of these policies was a reflection of how the Service had evolved and was now in a position to take such work forward.

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

5.3 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

The Committee received the report on the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Act provides the statutory framework to deliver Welsh Government's commitment to integrate social services to support people of all ages as part of families and communities. The new duties were outlined to the Committee. It was highlighted that the intention was to transform the way social services were delivered by promoting people's independence and giving them a stronger voice and control. Early intervention and prevention was an important aspect of the Act and to identify the best way of meeting needs rather than generating dependency.

Members felt that it was important to improve choice and were in favour of services becoming more person centred. It was noted that there would be more emphasis on direct payments and service users would be able to purchase services from the Council, which meant the in house workforce would not be excluded.

The Act would also encourage social enterprises and if organisations were delivering services on the Council's behalf then it would need to be ensured that standards were in place and being met. It was noted that the Common Commissioning Unit that had been established in Social Services would be instrumental in monitoring such contracts. Members noted that some third sector organisations had found the commissioning process difficult in enabling groups to come together to bid for contracts. It was highlighted that there was nothing preventing third sector groups from bidding for contracts. However, it was

noted that there was not always the capacity in the sector to meet the demands of a contract.

Members highlighted that the extra duties had financial implications and there was not much support from Welsh Government in this respect. More consideration should have been given to resources.

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

CHAIRPERSON