

# CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2, Port Talbot)

**Members Present:**

**11 February 2016**

**Chairperson:** Councillor A.R.Lockyer

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor H.N.James

**Councillors:** A.Carter, Mrs.A.Chaves, M.Ellis, P.Greenaway,  
D.Lewis, M.Protheroe, A.L.Thomas,  
D.Whitelock and Mrs.L.G.Williams

**Co-opted Non Voting  
Members:** R.De Benedictis and A.Hughes

**Officers In  
Attendance** A.Evans, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, C.Millis,  
Mrs.K.Jones, N.Thomas, J.Hodges, Mrs.N.Hire,  
Mrs.J.Khaghanian, Ms.N.Sneezum, Ms.N.Bray,  
G.Hughes, P.Williams, Ms.C.Gadd and  
Mrs.J.Woodman-Ralph

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

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## 1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

The following Members and Co-opted Non Voting Member made declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting.

Councillor P.A.Rees Report of the Head of Participation re:  
Looked After Children Pupil Deprivation  
Grant as he is a school governor of  
Crynallt Primary School, which was  
specifically referred to in the report.

Councillor P.D.Richards Report of the Head of Participation re:  
Childcare Facilities within Schools in  
Neath Port Talbot as his wife is manager  
of Baglan Buddies After School Club.

A.Hughes

Report of the Head of Participation re: Neath Port Talbot Music Service (West Glamorgan Music Service) as his daughter is the joint manager of the West Glamorgan Music Service.

2. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2016**

The Minutes were noted by the Committee.

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

The Forward Work Programme was noted by the Committee.

4. **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PUPIL DEPRIVATION GRANT (2015-17)**

The Committee received the report and presentation on the Looked After Children element to the Pupil Deprivation Grant (2015-17), as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Pupil Deprivation Grant was allocated to Free School Meal (FSM) pupils and was distributed to schools proportionate to the number of FSM. It was the Welsh Government's intention for Local Education Authorities to adopt a more strategic approach towards the delivery of services for looked after children and greater emphasis placed on regional working. The funding changed in 2015/16 and was now managed by the regional consortium ERW (Education through Regional Working) and the Local Education Authority rather than the previous arrangement where funding was passed directly to schools on a per pupil basis and ring fenced per child. The changes had resulted in Neath Port Talbot receiving additional grant funding of £265k with £10k topped sliced to contribute to the regional project. This had allowed additional capacity to be built in the Looked After Children Education Support Team (LACES). It was highlighted that the looked after children element now included those pupils who had been adopted or under Special Guardianship Orders. It was highlighted that there were no

firm figures on the number of adopted children in Neath Port Talbot schools but potentially it was around 136 children.

It was noted that the aim of the changes were to build capacity within schools and train staff in meeting the needs of current and previously looked after children. Members were informed that there were three main strands evolving and being rolled out. The first strand was the ERW 'Attachment Aware Schools' pilot project, to build capacity to better meet the needs of pupils who had experienced relational trauma. Phase one included nine schools chosen across the six ERW regions and the Neath Port Talbot representative schools were Llangatwg Comprehensive and Crynallt Primary. The selected schools received training and developed whole school action plans. The schools were expected to share their learning and development experiences and act as Local Authority Champions. It was noted that phase two had started to be rolled out and Members were informed of the schools that would be involved in this phase. It was highlighted that this work would add value as it would benefit all children and not just those looked after.

It was explained that the second strand was the Neath Port Talbot 'Wellbeing Initiative' which would complement the regional initiative. The aim was to continue to build capacity within schools to support pupils to understand and regulate their own emotions whilst respecting the feelings of those around them. It was highlighted that the Initiative would focus on supporting schools and families/carers to ensure the stability of the placement and the consistency of the school provision. The project would better utilise the existing skills available in Education Services for looked after children and encourage engagement with children and try to improve outcomes and prevent exclusions. The third strand of the project was to increase the support and development of the Looked After Children Education Team and to provide additional packages of learning support.

Members were supportive of the approach being taken and how the funding was being utilised. Members asked how outcomes would be measured. Officers explained that it would be measured through improvements in attainment and the Service was looking at developing a well-being measure.

Members queried who the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant training was aimed at and it was confirmed that it was specifically aimed at teaching assistant staff. However, it was highlighted that the team was considering the development of a package for carers.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed the report be noted.

## 5. **REPORT CARD - ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING**

The Committee received the Report Card on the Adult Community Learning Service, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Adult Community Learning Service provides a range of learning activities for post 16 year olds in Neath Port Talbot. It was highlighted that there were two sources of funding one was from Welsh Government and the other was a franchise with Neath Port Talbot Group. It was noted that there was a typo in the Report Card and the direct funding from the Welsh Government had reduced since 2013/14 from £221,039 to £135,235. It was also noted that the funding for 2016/17 had been confirmed by Welsh Government and there would be a 2% increase. It was highlighted that the 2014/15 data would be published at the end of March 2016 and this would be considered in future presentation for Report Cards to the Committee.

It was noted that they were a small team and any sickness absence was managed robustly. It was recognised that there had been positive feedback from the learners that had completed the learner survey. The key actions for improvement for the Service were outlined to the Committee and this included improving the quality of teaching through continual personal development and that digital literacy was a major priority for Neath Port Talbot communities.

Members highlighted that there had been a drop in the number of learners in 2012/13 compared with 2014/15 and queried why this was the case. Officers explained that there had been a reduction in the number of arts and crafts and languages courses due to reduced funding and the Service had to concentrate on employability skills.

Members asked if the franchise funding had been reduced for Neath Port Talbot College as well. It was confirmed that this was the case. Members asked if any income was generated from learners being charged for courses. Officers informed them that some courses were charged for and they tried to keep costs as low as possible. It was noted that there was no charge for numeracy and literacy courses.

Members requested a list of the community facilities where courses were held and whether community libraries were used. Members

were informed that the Service would look at using Local Authority buildings in the first instance and if Members were interested in a course being held in their area to inform officers. It was noted that the rationale for Services such as Adult Community Learning, Training Skills Unit and Flying Start all being under one co-ordinator was for better joined up working. Members noted that the recording and storage of learner data had improved.

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

## 6. **REPORT CARD - SKILLS AND TRAINING UNIT**

The Committee received the report card developed by the Skills and Training Unit, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that the Skills and Training Unit delivered a range of work tasters, learning programmes, qualifications and employment opportunity programmes for people aged 14-65. The Service delivered across Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Bridgend and engaged with approximately 250 to 300 learners and job seekers at any one time. It was highlighted that staffing levels had reduced by half in the last three years, however, the team had still managed to produce good results. The Princes Trust had awarded the Service the 'Best Delivery Partner in Wales' 2015 and staff representatives had been invited to Buckingham Place as reward for the work that had been done. Members congratulated the Service on its work in this area.

It was explained that the Unit worked with local employers to interrelate their programmes with the skills required to assist learners with becoming more employable. It was noted that the Unit works with numerous partners and had good relationships with them. Members were pleased that the Unit worked with employers to establish local demand and it was asked if they received data from Job Centre Plus, local businesses and the data observatory. Officers explained that they received data from different sources and were very proactive with different groups and partners, including Job Centre Plus, and they were part of the skills academy.

It was highlighted that the Unit achieved well against national comparators. It was noted that there had been a shift to more work being undertaken with 16 to 18 age range. The Welsh Government had made some changes and restricted the funding for the over 25 age group, which was having a negative impact on recruitment and

progression opportunities across all sectors. Members queried if the Welsh Government priorities matched Neath Port Talbot priorities and it was confirmed that overall they did. However, there were a couple that did not, such as the change to the age ranges that were being worked with, as this had a negative impact locally. It was highlighted that the Unit was part of the National Trading Federation Wales, which reports directly to Welsh Government and fed back local issues.

Members asked if the Service engaged with any retail partners. It was explained that retail tasters were undertaken and there was a Customer Services Skills course. It was asked if there was support from international retailers. Officers highlighted that there were some difficulties as local stores were interested in placements, however, it took time to agree at head office level.

It was noted that the Service was facing lots of challenges and different delivery options had been considered, including whether it could be delivered by a third party. Officers confirmed that this was not a route that was going to be taken at the moment. Members were pleased that the Unit was being kept in house as they were providing a good service.

Members asked if the Unit received much competition from private providers and if they experience problems with recruiting learners. Officers highlighted that there was some competition but the Service had been there for a long time and had a good reputation, both locally and regionally. It was noted that a lot of candidates, such as Princes Trust candidates, were Not in Education, Employment or Training and some organisations would not be prepared to accept them. It was explained that candidates were normally on a course for 12 weeks and a high percentage continued on to other courses. Members asked how outcomes were measured. It was explained that it was data driven and information was submitted to Welsh Government on a monthly basis.

Members requested numbers to be included in future report cards as well as percentages. Information on returning learners would also be useful. Members requested that compliments and complaints information was included in future report cards. Officers took this on board and confirmed that there were none.

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

## **7. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES - KEY PRIORITY INDICATORS**

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

- Priority Indicator 5 – Number of looked after children by placement type.
- Priority Indicator 6 – the number of children who have been discharged from care and then subsequently re-admitted.
- Priority Indicator 7 – the number of cases held within the service categorised by status – child protection, looked after or child in need.
- Priority Indicator 8 – The number of cases “stepped down” from Children and Young People Services to Team Around the Family.
- Priority Indicator 9 – The percentage of children looked after during the year with a Personal Education Plan within 20 school days of entering care or joining a new school.

Members were pleased to hear that there had been a reduction in the use of independent foster carers (Priority Indicator 5), as generally it was in the best interests of the child to be with internal foster carers. It was also noted that this had positive financial implications as well.

In relation to Priority Indicator 6 it was noted that there had been fewer number of children discharged from care and then subsequently re-admitted. Members highlighted that there seemed to be an increase in the number that were readmitted into care in August, which could be explained by school holidays. Members asked if the Service could predict when it was likely that there could be problems and what additional support could be provided. Officers informed them that they looked into specific cases and tried to address this where possible.

Priority Indicator 8 – Members asked if the processes for stepping up and stepping down cases were working well. Officers informed them that the processes had been streamlined and there were fewer cases that had to be stepped up rapidly.

Priority Indicator 9 – Members noted that performance in this area was good and that there had been a drop in September, which was understandable as that was the time there would be more changes of school.

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

## 8. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

### Cabinet Board Proposals

#### 8.1 Children's Services Staff Survey

The Committee received the findings of the workforce survey conducted in late 2015 within Children and Young People Services, as detailed within the circulated report.

It was noted that the Head of Children and Young People Services was unable to attend the meeting for this item and any questions regarding the Service would be responded to outside of the meeting. Members were informed that this was a fifth consecutive year that the survey had been administered within the Service and there were many areas where improvements had been made and sustained since the initial survey in 2011. It was noted that there were still some areas for further improvement. The staff survey assisted with demonstrating the journey the Service had undertaken and was one of a number of ways to monitor staff satisfaction. It was highlighted that the Children's Services Improvement Member Panel was still in existence and visited Children's Services social work teams. It was noted that the Panel was finding that meeting with the teams had moved on from identifying issues to discussing ways of developing practice and were very positive. A report would be brought to the Committee once the current meeting with teams had been completed.

It was highlighted that in order to maintain the impartiality, ownership of the questionnaire sits with the Chief Executive's Directorate. A total of 88 questionnaires were received, equating to a 33% response rate, which was similar to previous years. It was noted that a lot of work had been undertaken to encourage responses to the questionnaire. It was highlighted that it was useful to note more than half (61%) of respondents had been with the Council for more than five years and as such would have been with the Council during the lead up to the



invoking of the Serious Concerns protocol and whilst improvement work was undertaken.

Officers highlighted that some of the accommodation questions may no longer be relevant and consideration would be given to revising these questions for future surveys. Members highlighted that the comments indicated that there could be clearer communication with staff regarding any potential accommodation changes, which would be fed back to relevant officers.

It was noted that one area of decline was around appraisals and it was recognised that the new system was in the process of being rolled out in the Service. Members requested further information regarding this matter.

It was noted that pay levels were mentioned a few times in the survey and it was suggested that the social workers pay scales bench marking exercise against other local authority areas could be repeated. It was highlighted that there had been some concerns raised regarding the Western Bay Adoption Service. Members queried how this Service was monitored and it was noted that currently it was not clear how this information would be reported to Members as it was a joint service. The Committee requested a report on this service to be added to their work programme as a priority.

Members noted that there had been one comment that mentioned bullying and queried how the Service was addressing this comment. It was recognised that it could be a reaction to a different management style and a further response would be requested from the Head of Service. It was also noted that the Improvement Member Panel had not heard any reports of bullying during their visits to teams.

The Committee highlighted that the report was a valuable source of information, as it was independent and confidential. Members recognised that overall it was positive.

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

## 8.2 Childcare Facilities within Schools in Neath Port Talbot (Cllr.P.D.Richards reaffirmed his interest and left the meeting for this item only).

The Committee received the report on the current situation with regard to childcare facilities located on school sites and to seek authorisation to regularise the position of those settings, as detailed within the circulated report.

It was noted that the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) inspected the facilities and all the reports would be available on their website.

Members highlighted that to raise standards in schools then this was the starting point and there should be links to the foundation phase curriculum. Officers explained that there was no curriculum for 0 to 3 year olds, however, all the childcare settings worked towards the ethos of foundation phase and training was provided.

Members noted that 35 primary schools provided facilities and it was asked how it was decided which ones would be utilised. Officers explained that all primary schools were contacted to establish interest. In some cases it would not be possible to use the schools due to such issues as size and capacity. If the school was not viable then it could be offered in the community. Members asked if there were any grants for work to be undertaken to upgrade rooms to the required standard. Officers explained that there was some grant available and it was a limited budget so cost benefits would have to be considered.

Members noted that Ysgol Gymraeg Gwaun Cae Gurwen classroom was classed as exclusive use and it was queried if this was no longer for community use. Officers explained that the use of the room would be dependent on the agreement and there was a formula in place to calculate allocation.

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

### 8.3 Neath Port Talbot Music Service (West Glamorgan Music Service)

(A.Hughes reaffirmed his interest and left the meeting for this item only).

The Committee received the consultation proposal to end the West Glamorgan Music Service with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 and to create a single Music Service in each local

authority under a Service Level Agreement with schools and colleges in Neath Port Talbot, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed of the current role of the Service to support schools to deliver high quality music education. The Service supports and enhances the teaching of music in schools by providing children and young people with opportunities to learn a wide range of instruments, to develop singing and to perform in ensembles, choirs and other groups at regional and national levels. It was highlighted that Neath Port Talbot was not cutting their subsidy to the Music Service and were considering the best options to take forward a single Service with the current funding.

Members were informed that a 30 day formal consultation was being undertaken and would end on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016. It was confirmed that staff were being consulted with, as well as the schools, pupils, parents and wider stakeholders. It was highlighted that Neath Port Talbot schools had been surveyed to establish if they would continue to use the Music Service and 95% of schools had confirmed they would and only four schools had indicated that it would be dependent on budget.

Officers explained that they would be undertaking a skills assessment to establish which skills were already available in Neath Port Talbot and which skills would be required from Swansea employees. Members asked why there was a reduction of 164 hours a week teaching hours. It was explained that it was due to the skills split between Neath Port Talbot and Swansea. Neath Port Talbot staff would be fitted into school requirements and then gaps would be filled by Swansea staff. Swansea would also utilise Neath Port Talbot staff where required.

Members asked if existing regional orchestras and ensembles would continue and it was confirmed that they would. It was highlighted that there were three in Swansea and three in Neath Port Talbot and young people would cross over depending on their skills.

Members noted that the Service was valued at school level and asked what impact there would be on schools. Officers explained that there would be an increase of £1.50 an hour to schools, however, the rates still remained low compared with

other local authorities. It was noted that the Pupil Deprivation Grant could be used, where appropriate, for Free School Meals pupils. It was highlighted that some schools currently charged an additional cost to pupils for music lessons. Officers noted that the changes to the Service were causing anxiety to staff and efforts were being made to try and mitigate against negative impacts. It was recognised that there could be hidden costs to schools in supporting pupils in accessing music services.

Members highlighted that the Donaldson report had identified music as an integral part of the curriculum and added value to pupils' education. The Committee were supportive of keeping the Music Service in Neath Port Talbot and highlighted that they were in favour of officers exploring options of maintaining a joint service if possible.

The Committee agreed that they would develop a formal written response to the consultation to submit by the deadline.

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

#### 8.4 Access Arrangements – Welsh Medium Schools

The Committee received the report to confirm access arrangements to Welsh medium schools in respect of home to school travel, as detailed within the circulated report.

It was clarified that this report was specifically in relation to access arrangements to Welsh medium schools and did not cover other aspects of the Home to School Transport Policy. Members were reminded of the background to the report. Since an update report was brought to the Committee in September 2015 the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate had sought Welsh Government advice on the contradiction between the Learner Travel Wales Measure and Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Guidance relating to home to school transport. Following correspondence from the Welsh Government acknowledging an inconsistency, in relation to the concept of the nearest suitable school, the Directorate would continue to apply its current interpretation of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. It was noted that the issue regarding most suitable school remained until there was further guidance from the Welsh Government. It was highlighted that

the Council had a duty to promote access to Welsh medium education.

Officers recognised that communication to parents regarding changes to transport arrangements should have been clearer and more timely. It was noted that when changes to practice had been challenged it had been suspended and reimbursements had been made. Officers informed Members that in accordance with a report received from the Ombudsman, the Service had recently settled a complaint relating to this matter. It was noted that the Ombudsman did not comment on the policy. It was highlighted that officers were not aware of anyone who remained disadvantaged and would take appropriate action if made aware of it.

Members queried whether a primary school being classed as a partner school to a secondary school would affect the designation of suitable school in consideration of transport provision. Officers explained that partner schools were the main primary schools that worked closely with particular secondary schools in the transition period. However, it was confirmed that it had no bearing on decisions for home to school transport.

Members noted that the cost for transport to Amman Valley Comprehensive was high and asked if these pupils were to remain in county would it reduce transport costs. In addition was there capacity in Neath Port Talbot to provide for these pupils. It was confirmed that there was capacity for these pupils in Cwmtawe and Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera. It would be highly likely there would be a reduction in transport costs as there were already buses travelling to these schools and routes could be rationalised to make efficiencies. It was highlighted that these pupils going out of county resulted in a loss of funding to Neath Port Talbot schools. Officers highlighted that work was being undertaken on Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera to upgrade the facilities.

Members suggested that making Cwmtawe a bilingual school could encourage pupils to attend there rather than Amman Valley Comprehensive school. Officers explained that it had previously been piloted, however, it had to be discontinued as it was not sustainable.

Members asked why Welsh medium primary schools had been removed from the Cwmtawe secondary school catchment

areas. Officers explained that the catchment areas had not changed. Welsh medium primary schools were not partner schools for Cwmtawe but that was not the same as catchment areas. Members highlighted that there had been a change to the webpages that assisted parents with completing admissions forms. Officers informed Members that they would look into this matter.

Members asked if this report was the follow up report from the update in September 2015 and it was confirmed that this report superseded any previous reports and, if approved, outlined the approach of the Service going forward. Officers informed Members that a full review of the Home to School Transport Policy would be undertaken in the autumn term. Once the review had been completed it would be considered by Cabinet and Cabinet Scrutiny. It was highlighted that Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Members would be invited to this meeting to ensure the Committee had the opportunity to scrutinise any changes.

Officers confirmed that the A474 was not a suitable walking route and therefore did not require a Safe Route to School assessment.

There was some disagreement over previous reports and the contradictions between the Learner Travel Wales Measure and Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Guidance. Officers highlighted that advice had been taken and the matter had been resolved. The majority of Members indicated that they supported the recommendations and highlighted that it helped to promote Neath Port Talbot schools. Members were pleased that any future policy would take into account any revised statutory guidance issued by Welsh Government.

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

## **CHAIRPERSON**