

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

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

Members Present: **1 December 2016**

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

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

Councillors: Mrs C.Edwards, Mrs.K.Pearson, M.Protheroe,
A.L.Thomas, Mrs.L.G.Williams .

Officers In Attendance A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, Ms.H.Lervy, A.Mundy,
P.Walker, Mrs.A.Thomas, C.Millis, J.Hodges
and Mrs.J.Woodman-Ralph

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors E.V.Latham and P.A.Rees

1. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND
EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER
2016**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 3 November were noted with the following request.

That all information pertaining to Members questions be circulated to all members of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board.

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

Members noted and agreed that due to the number of items being presented at the next meeting, the following items be deferred to the 26th January 2017 meeting:

- Data Unit Report Card,
- Skills and Training Report Card,
- Adult Community Learning Report Card.

3. **SAFER BRIGHTER FUTURES QUARTER TWO HIGHLIGHT REPORT**

Members received an overview of the Corporate Improvement Objective – Safer Brighter Futures – Highlight Report – Quarter 2 (1st April – 30th September) as detailed within the circulated report.

It was highlighted that Looked After Children numbers remain steady at 350 but work is continuing to reduce this number.

Members asked how was the figure of 67.3% of children who remain with families defined? Officers explained that at present work is on-going with the Welsh Government to try to establish a measure to enable this figure to be defined. The outcome will be brought back to Committee when finalised.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

4. **BETTER SCHOOLS BRIGHTER PROSPECTS QUARTER TWO HIGHLIGHT REPORT**

Members received an overview of the Corporate Improvement Objective Better Schools, Brighter Prospects Highlight Report – Quarter 2 (April 2016 – September 2016, that provided a progress update for the first six months of 2016-17 as detailed in the circulated report.

It was highlighted that work is continuing on the Strategic School Improvement Programme (SSIP). Business Cases have been submitted to Welsh Government in regard to Ysgol Newydd Margam and Ysgol Ystalyfera responses are currently awaited.

Also, Officers reported that the new addition to Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera Comprehensive School is very impressive and Members asked that arrangements be made to convene a future meeting of Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee on site.

In addition, plans are progressing on the new primary school build in Briton Ferry with tenders for construction being sought currently.

Members asked in the light of the economic climate and the effect on the housing market was there an impact on the development of the new school in Coed Darcy. Officers explained that contained within

the conditions of the planning consent was a Section 106 agreement which states that further housing development cannot take place without the provision of the new school and although the timescale of opening the new school has been delayed until 2019 discussion are taking place with the developer on the design of the school. Also, there are enough places within Crymlyn and Coedffranc Primary Schools to cater for any increase in school numbers at present.

Also, it was explained that although there are no designated family rooms within new school builds due to the accommodation criteria set by the Welsh Government there are flexible rooms that could accommodate a variety of uses.

Members noted that although school attendance in both primary and secondary schools has overall increased from previous years the latest figures show a very slight decrease but not all data has been collated. An update report will be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee on the 5th January 2017.

Members also queried whether schools are able to deal with children with special educational needs since the withdrawal of the Education Other than at School Service (EOTAS). Officers explained that schools have been provided with additional support and training which is ongoing and plans are in place to continue increasing the capacity within schools as part of the authority's long term plan. Also, continued monitoring is taking place with a review scheduled for a future date.

Members asked what plans are in place to raise the standards of the Welsh Language in schools where Welsh is a second language. Officers explained that work is ongoing but there is a lack of funding to enable additional teachers to be recruited. Education through Regional Working (ERW) is aware of the issues and the authority is looking at options for increasing the numbers of teachers that can teach Welsh. Also, Welsh Government targets do not always reflect the composition of the individual authorities that has an impact on the figures.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

5. **EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE REPORT CARD**

Officers gave an overview of the Education Psychology Service Report Card as detailed in the circulated report.

It was highlighted that a pilot of Consultation Clinics had been completed in 23 schools within Neath Port Talbot which focuses on an improved early identification and intervention of pupils needs. As a consequence of the pilot there has been a reduction of referrals from 2012- 2015 levels and work is ongoing to cascade the Clinics to all schools within Neath Port Talbot.

Members queried whether there was a cost to the referrals to School Action Plus? Officers explained that there is cost to the service but the target was to reduce the numbers of referrals by August 2018 to 400 per annum. Also, there had been a reduction in referrals to services due to the preventative work carried out by the pilot Consultation Clinics which has had positive feedback from schools with increased links being developed.

Officers also confirmed that Staff Appraisals would be completed by March 2017.

Members were pleased with the development of the Consultation Clinics and that schools, teachers were being supported to identify and address, at an early stage the problems being experience by some children and remedial action put in place but asked if parents were involved in the process. Officers explained that work is on-going with schools to involve the parents and confirm the responsibilities.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

6. **SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING SERVICE REPORT CARD**

Members received an overview of the School Based Counselling Service Report Card as detailed within the circulated report.

Members asked whether primary school children can access the service. Officers explained that funding is only available to provide the statutory service as set out by the Welsh Government which provides for Year 6 pupils upwards. In addition, younger children

need different approaches such as alternative play therapies rather than the service provided for older children.

Officers also confirmed that referrals to the Counselling Services can be made via the website and that 65% of all referrals are self-referred.

Members also asked whether Counselling is provided in the medium of Welsh. Officers explained that the service is provided in Welsh schools delivered by a counsellor who has some Welsh language skills and is following a study programme to improve these skills and work in taking place to increase numbers within other schools.

Also, queried was the length of waiting times to receive the service. It was explained that the waiting times vary according to the time of year as there are identified seasonal fluctuations. The report card identified that data will be collected regarding waiting times and will be used to baseline future service targets as well as future service delivery such as with a review on-going looking at the similarity of issues presented by young people so that a variety of ways could be developed to deliver the service.

Following scrutiny, that the report was noted.

7. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:-

Cabinet Board Proposals

7.1 Children and Young People Services – 2nd Quarter (2016-17) Performance Report

Members received an overview of the Performance Management Information within Children's Services, for the 2nd Quarter April 2016 – September 2016 and the Monthly Key Priority Indicator Information for October 2016 and Complaints Data April 2016 – September 2016.

It was highlighted that comparative data is unavailable due to the recent introductions of a new set of statutory Welsh Government Indicators for Children and Young People's Services.

Members queried whether the current numbers for caseloads was sustainable at 11.6 per worker and whether there was a recommended number per worker. Officers explained that the support measures were in place to sustain this but there was no recommended number because the complexity of the case had to be taken into account with some Local Authorities in Wales having more than 15 – 20 cases per worker.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

7.2 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2016-2017 – Quarter 2 Performance (1st April 2016 – 30th September 2016)

Members received an overview of the quarter 2 performance management data, complaints and compliments for the period 1 April to 30 September 2016 for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate.

Members were concerned that children can be removed from school for by parents for Home Tuition and the Authority has no statutory powers to monitor the standard of education received by the child or to prevent the child being removed from school. Officer also highlighted that ERW (Education through Regional Working) has also voiced concern over the pattern that is developing across Wales. Members noted that there are 100 children in Neath Port Talbot receiving Home Tuition. Members asked whether a contributing factor to the increase in parents opting for Home Tuition was the Fixed Penalty Notices for Non-school attendance and whether there was any data around this issue. Officers agreed to investigate.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

7.3 Home to School Travel Policy Review and Consultation

Members received an overview of the consultation exercise to review the Home to School Travel Policy 2014 as detailed in the circulated report.

It was asked what was the reason for the review of the Policy. Officers explained that when the policy was adopted in 2014 there was an agreement to review in 2016. The consultation

will include the proposal of the new policy to be introduced in September 2017.

Members asked for clarification in regard to the Post 16 students who attends St Joseph's Roman Catholic School and 6th Form who pay £100 per academic year which states no change. Officers explained that the £100 cost was for post 16 students.

Members requested that on Page 99 of the Consultation Document clarification on the wording at Pupil D to read: *Attends YG Ystalyfera but it is not their nearest suitable secondary education provision but is their nearest suitable school for Welsh-medium secondary provision. Free home to school travel.*

Members also asked that at Page 100, Under Secondary pupil (Faith) 11- 16 age to be added.

Following Scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet Board subject to the provision of the amendments as above.

7.4 Admission To Community Schools: 2018/2019

The Committee received an overview of the consultation on the admission arrangements for community schools in relation to the 2018/2019 academic year.

Members asked what was the reason for the change in the policy. Officers explained that it was to enable better management of school numbers and future planning.

Members also asked for clarification on the oversubscription criteria secondary phase education. It was proposed that the wording be amended to read. *Other Children and young people who live within the catchment area of the school for which the application is made but do not attend a partner primary.*

Following Scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet Board subject to the provision of the amendments as above.

CHAIRPERSON