



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Leisure Scrutiny Committee
19th March 2020

Report of the Head of Participation

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Report Title. Update of the Vulnerable Learners Service (VLS)

Purpose of the Report:

To provide members with information on the structure, provision and support of the Vulnerable Learners Service (VLS).

Executive Summary:

This report will provide information on how the Vulnerably Learners Service addresses support and provision for learners within the Local Authority.

Background:

Recent cuts to the Welsh Government's Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG) and Traveller Education Grants (TEG) 2018-19 resulted in subsequent loss of funding for the LA to support the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) and The Traveller Education Service (TES) service.

The initial impact resulted in the loss of staff from both services. In view of this the LA amalgamated these two services in April 2019 creating the Vulnerable Learners Service (VLS).

Commencing March 2019 the Welsh Government partially re-instated a proportion of the grant which has now enabled the Vulnerable Learners Service (VLS) to restructure and recruit part time staff, this has also enabled the new service to provide suitable support to meet the increasing demands and needs of schools within the Local Authority, in particular addressing the concerns that schools have with regards to the diversity of their families and learners.

The VLS focusses on providing support and guidance for families and learners from the following backgrounds: Ethnic Minority (EM) learners, learners who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL), learners from the Gypsy and Roma Traveller communities (GRT), as well as learners and families associated with the armed forces and Young Carers.

In Line with LA initiatives the VLS employs staff that reflect the needs of the community and schools that it supports; the VLS employs 13 staff on a full time and part time basis. Staffing includes, Teachers, Teaching Assistants, the majority of whom are bilingual (BTA).

Funding Streams

To maximise provision for the LA the VLS has sourced funding (as well as from the Education Improvement Grant) from various organisations which include:

1. 14-19 Fund
2. British Council
3. Cynnydd Project
4. Home Office
5. Armed Forces Covenant

Funding for the VLS can be broken down as follows:

- One full time Senior Teacher Development Officer (responsible for overseeing the Vulnerable Learners Service).
- One full time Teacher Development Officer (Responsible to oversee the Cynnydd Project, which is funded by the European Social Fund and WG/LA).
- One part time Teacher Traveller and Armed Forces Liaison Officer (Responsible for overseeing traveller and armed forces families and learners, funded by the WG/LA and Armed Covenant Fund).
- One full time Bilingual Teaching Assistant (Polish –BTA funded by the WG/LA).
- Two part time BTAs (Romanian and Bengali funded by the WG/LA).
- One part time Teaching Assistant (TA) responsible for traveller learners (funded by the WG/LA).
- Four Arabic BTAs (responsible for Syrian Refugee learners and their families who arrived under the government's Syrian Re-location Programme 2015 and funded by the Home Office).
- Two part time Chinese Language Assistants (funded by the British Council)

VLS Support and Provision

The Vulnerable Learners Service works in partnership with all Primary and Secondary schools in Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) as well as the Neath Port Talbot College (NPTC) group.

The Service is core funded by the Education Improvement Grant (EIG), and now the Welsh Government (WG) and LA. However to maximise this provision the service has initiated other streams of funding.

The Focus of the service is to support the learners from Ethnic Minority (EM) backgrounds who are at risk of underachievement which also includes those learners with English as an Additional Language (EAL).

In addition we support families and learners from the Gypsy Roma Community, families and learners from other Traveller communities (Irish, English, Welsh and Scottish, Circus families), and lastly families and Learners who belong to the Armed forces or have been associated with the armed forces for the past 6 years.

The VLS also works in corroboration with the LA Young Carers forum.

NPT Statistics 2019-20

NPTCBC have approximately 1,400 EM/EAL learners (500+ speak very little or no English).

There are 68 different first languages spoken, other than English and Welsh within the LA The most frequently spoken are: Bengali, Polish, Chinese, Mandarin and/ or Cantonese, Arabic, and Romanian. These statistics have enabled the service to recruit staff to reflect the Authority's diversity.

There are also approximately 81 Traveller Learners currently on roll in both Primary and Secondary Schools, with 30 additional traveller Children not on role, but educated off site in their own education and monitored by the LA Elective Home Education Service.

There are approximately 68 Children on roll in our schools belonging to families associated with the armed forces.

Approximately 40+ schools annually have some form of support or advice from this VLS.

However, these figures change almost weekly.

The VLS works closely with other Local Authorities and partner organisations to ensure we can maximise suitable provision for schools, learners and families.

Some examples of support and provision the VLS can provide:

- In Class support for the above learners.
- Translation of school documents.
- Sign posting to relevant partners.

- Language Clubs.
- First Language support to gain GCSE/AS/A Level in Home Language examinations.
- International days and cultural events support.
- Review meetings and working with parents.
- Support families from the above groups at school events and relevant meetings.
- Mentoring and advocacy as well as monitoring learner performance.
- Training for SMT/Teachers/Teaching/Assistants/NQTs/Governors and Councillors.
- Community Cohesion events.
- Working with and supporting schools to recognise cultural events as well as celebrate Language and International days.

Financial Impacts:

No implications

Integrated Impact Assessment:

‘There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes’.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce Impacts:

No implications

Legal Impacts:

No implications

Consultation:

‘There is no requirement for external consultation on this item’

Recommendations:

Matter for information – no recommendations required.

Implementation of Decision:

Matter for information – no recommendations required.

Appendices:

No Appendices are attached to this report

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