

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 4 July 2019

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors:

L.R. Bowen, K.V. Broom, B.W. Jones, D. Jones, G.R. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, B. Thomas, E.G. Thomas, D.T. Williams, and S.M. Allen (In place of I.W. Davies)

Co-opted Members:

J Davies - Parent Governor
V. Kenny - Roman Catholic Church Representative
M. Jones - Parent Governor

The following Officers were in attendance:

J. Morgan, Director of Community Services
S. Davies, Head of Access to Education
A. Morgan, Head of Education Services
A. Rees, Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing
S. Smith, Head of Children's Services
S. Sauro, Performance, Analysis & Systems Manager
L. Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP - 10.00 - 11.40 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from I.W Davies, J. Jenkins, G. Cornock-Evans, S. Najmi and D. Richards.

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Mrs M Mothobi, an Education Officer from Lesotho, to the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
V. Kenny	4	A relative works in Social Services
G. Jones	5	Spouse works in the Education Department
D. Jones	5	Relatives work in the Education Department

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the draft Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the Performance of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2018/19. Members were informed that there was a statutory requirement for the Director of Social Services to report annually on delivery and performance, as well as plans for the improvement of the whole range of social services.

The report detailed the progress made on areas identified for improvement in last year's report and highlighted those areas to be developed in the current year. It examined each service area within Social Care and showed how service strategies, actions, targets and service risks will be addressed and delivered operationally by the service this year, based on the approved budget. The report outlined how the service performed in 2018/19 together with an assessment on the future, together with strategic priorities for 2019/20. It linked closely with the Business Plans for the Directorates of Community Services and Education & Children's Services.

At the request of the Director of Community Services, members gave feedback on the content and format of the report, and identified areas within the report that required further development. The Chair thanked the Director of Community Services for the work undertaken over the last year, and on the preparation of the report.

The following observations/questions were raised on the information contained within the report:

Members sought clarification with regards to target setting and performance measurement within the service. The Director of Community Services advised that different areas measure success in different ways, for instance a reduction in intervention is considered a measure of success in some areas, whereas in other areas it was possible to measure positive performance through a percentage increase or reduction.

Members asked for further information on what was being done to develop specialist provision for complex needs. The Head of Children's Services advised that there was a possibility that a residential complex-needs resource would be developed. It was noted that some local authorities in South Wales are placing complex needs children in residential settings in Scotland, and there is a clear need across the area to develop the type of service locally.

Members referenced a graph on page 24 of the report which gave a snapshot of the number of children on the Child Protection Register as at the 31st March 2019, and asked whether children were at risk of coming back on to the register. The Director of Community Services advised that there could be a small number, however re-registration is tracked and that it would be possible to contain the information within the report. The section of the report under discussion also contained reference to the care and support satisfaction rate of 84.6%, and members asked what measures were in place to track the 15.4% who were not satisfied with the care and support received. The Director of Community Services advised that comparative data from previous years was available and an overview of themes could be identified from the data.

In answer to a question on safeguarding children electing to be home educated, the Director of Community Services advised that there was a small but significant number of children who may be at risk. The Director emphasised that the vast majority thrive under home education and have very good outcomes. However, there has been a case in the national press in recent years of a home educated child experiencing neglect, who died as a result of a lack of intervention. He noted that beyond registering the birth of a child, children are not tracked outside of the education system, and there was very little requirement, above advising the local authority of intent, in order to home educate a child. He advised that there were proposals underway for a statutory register for home educated children, which would require a child to be visited annually. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that the local authority had a responsibility to ensure that children receive an education, and steps were in place to strengthen exiting arrangements for home educated children via a National Stakeholder Group.

Members reviewed the Welsh language levels on page 70 of the report and asked for an update on the current situation, and the pilot recruitment exercise. The Director of Community Services advised that having trained staff at level five was key in delivering an active offer in a professional context; undertaking a Child Protection Assessment was a level five skill which required more than just proficiency in the language. The current pilot was underway but there was little data to report at this stage. He acknowledged that the recruitment and retention of Social Workers generally was an ongoing issue.

In answer to a question on the relatively low take up of the Childcare offer, the Head of Children's Services advised that the scheme was doing well comparatively. Take up was increasing steadily and that increase was likely to continue, he also advised that it was unlikely that all eligible individuals would take up the offer.

Members noted the reference on page 26 to an increase from 8.8% to 10.4% in children having moved three or more times. The Director of Community Services advised that children who experienced multiple moves are often likely to be the most challenging. He further advised that multiple moves did not necessarily result in a bad outcome, and looking at the qualitative stories would be a better measure. The Head of Children's Services noted that a range of outcomes are included within this measure, and illustrated that a child moved from their home to foster care, then to pre-adoptive placement before permanent adoption would count as four placements, and would be considered a good outcome.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK & FINISH GROUP 2019/20 -DRAFT PLANNING AND SCOPING DOCUMENT

The Committee considered a report which detailed the scope of the next Task and Finish investigation.

RESOLVED:

- 5.1 that the Task and Finish Scoping Document be received;**
- 5.2 that the aims and scope of the work of the Task and Finish Group be endorsed;**

5.3 that the membership of the Task and Finish Group be as follows:-

- **Councillor Kim Broom**
- **Mr James Davies**
- **Councillor Gary Jones**
- **Councillor Shahana Najmi/John Jenkins**
- **Councillor Darren Price (Chair)**
- **Councillor Edward Thomas (Vice Chair)**
- **Councillor Dorian Williams**

6. 2019/20 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME DRAFT TIMETABLE

The Committee reviewed the Forward Work Programme Timetable. Members were advised that there would be additional site visits and workshops held during the year and a One Day Investigative Scrutiny Review on 'Federating Schools in Carmarthenshire' on the 6th November 2019.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received

7. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting, be agreed.

8. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the reasons for the non-submission of the following report:-

- Digital Schools Strategy Update
- Actions and Referrals

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

8.1 the Digital Schools Strategy Update should be circulated to members outside of the committee process;

8.2 the Actions a Referrals Report should be submitted at the next meeting

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 24TH APRIL 2019

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 24th April 2019 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE