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FRIDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2021

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION & CHILDREN
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**I HEREBY SUMMON YOU TO ATTEND A VIRTUAL MEETING
OF THE EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WHICH WILL BE HELD AT 10.00 A.M. ON THURSDAY, 23RD
DECEMBER, 2021 FOR THE TRANSACTION OF THE
BUSINESS OUTLINED ON THE ATTACHED AGENDA.**

Wendy Walters

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Democratic Officer:	Michelle Evans Thomas
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Wendy Walters Prif Weithredwr, *Chief Executive*,
Neuadd y Sir, Caerfyrddin. SA31 1JP
County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**14 COUNCIL MEMBERS, 2 NON-ELECTED VOTING MEMBERS AND 3
ELECTED VOTING PARENT GOVERNOR MEMBERS**

PLAID CYMRU GROUP – 7 MEMBERS

- | | | |
|----|------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Councillor | Liam Bowen |
| 2. | Councillor | Kim Broom |
| 3. | Councillor | Betsan Jones |
| 4. | Councillor | Jean Lewis |
| 5. | Councillor | Darren Price (Chair) |
| 6. | Councillor | Emlyn Schiavone |
| 7. | Councillor | Dorian Williams |

LABOUR GROUP – 3 MEMBERS

- | | | |
|----|------------|------------|
| 1. | Councillor | Rob James |
| 2. | Councillor | Dot Jones |
| 3. | Councillor | Gary Jones |

INDEPENDENT GROUP – 2 MEMBERS

- | | | |
|----|------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | Councillor | Sue Allen |
| 2. | Councillor | Edward Thomas (Vice-Chair) |

NEW INDEPENDENT GROUP – 1 MEMBER

- | | | |
|----|------------|---------------|
| 1. | Councillor | Sharen Davies |
|----|------------|---------------|

UNAFFILIATED – 1 MEMBER

- | | | |
|----|------------|--------------|
| 1. | Councillor | John Jenkins |
|----|------------|--------------|

NON ELECTED VOTING MEMBERS (2)

- | | | |
|----|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | Mrs V. Kenny | Roman Catholic Church Representative |
| 2. | Rev. D. Richards | Church in Wales Representative |

ELECTED VOTING PARENT GOVERNOR MEMBERS (3)

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Vacancy | Area 1 – Dinefwr |
| 2. | Mr A. Enoch | Area 2 – Carmarthen |
| 3. | Mrs Felicity Healey-
Benson | Area 3 - Llanelli |

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.
2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.
3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED).
4. WORKING WITH THOSE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (NEET). 5 - 26
5. FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES: EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SERVICES. 27 - 50
6. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK & FINISH GROUP DRAFT FINAL REPORT 2020/21: SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION PROCESS. 51 - 72
7. FORTHCOMING ITEMS. 73 - 84
8. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 30TH NOVEMBER 2021. 85 - 92

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Agenda Item 4

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23/12/21

WORKING WITH THOSE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (NEET)

Purpose: To provide an overview and update on this area of service delivery which includes:

- Welsh Government and UK objectives in this area of work
- Locally determined objectives, partnership working and performance
- Regional developments
- Risks and challenges

To consider and comment on the following issues:

Recent and future developments alluding to:

- UK and Welsh Government objectives in this area of work as well as the local implementation of objectives around NEET prevention and engagement.
- Funding arrangements, including the ending of European Social Fund NEET programmes
- The contribution of the Youth Support Service to NEET prevention and engagement work
- Performance data
- Future challenges and actions to be taken to mitigate risk of future delivery of this work

Reasons:

For the Committee to properly exercise its scrutiny function on areas of particular interest to Elected Members. Scrutiny Committee can also assist in identifying improvements in service delivery.

To be referred to the Cabinet / Council for decision: NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER: - Cllr Glynog Davies Cabinet Member for Education and Children

Directorate: Education and Children's Services

Director: Gareth Morgans

Report Author: Gill Adams

Designations:

Director

Youth Support Service Principal Manager

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23/12/21

Subject: Working with those Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET)

Purpose:

To provide an overview and update on this area of service delivery which includes:

- Welsh Government and UK objectives in this area of work
- Locally determined objectives, partnership working and performance
- Regional developments
- Risks and challenges

1. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT.

The Council's commitment to reduce the number of pupils becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is set out within **Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire: the next 5 years (2018-2023)**.

Within its range of service delivery, the Youth Support Service has a lead role in delivering NEET prevention and engagement work in school and community settings. The Service brings together youth work and youth justice statutory provision under an integrated service which allows for an holistic approach to the delivery of youth support services across Carmarthenshire. Targeted work includes supporting children/young people presenting with a range of needs and complexities including those linked with education, training and employment.

The service's contribution to this work draws in contributions across all teams, but is significantly linked with the following strands of delivery:

- Welsh Government Youth Engagement and Progression Framework
- The Children and Community Grant - which supports 2 Families First projects within the service
- European Social Funded Projects targeting NEET- Cam Nesa (which ended in May 2021) and Cynnydd.

The report attached will give an overview of national and WG objectives; NEET prevention and engagement work being undertaken by the Youth Support; funding arrangements for the delivery of this work; performance data and some regional partnership work highlights. An outline of risks and challenges in terms of future delivery is included for consideration and comment.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: 

Director of Education and Children's Services

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: 

Director of Education and Children's Services

1. Local Member(s)

Non-applicable

2. Community / Town Council

Non-applicable

3. Relevant Partners

Non-applicable

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Non-applicable

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED

YES

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

THERE ARE NONE

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Youth Support Service Report

Work to in relation to those not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

The Council's commitment to reduce the number of pupils becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is set out within **Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire: the next 5 years (2018-2023)** within the objectives outlined below:

34. Through the Swansea Bay City Deal ensure the Council aligns its educational curriculum with a menu of vocational opportunities to address local skills for work and routes to employability as well as developing learning pathways with Coleg Sir Gâr and University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

37. Continue to develop support to prevent young people not being in employment, education or training (NEET).

The strategy was updated in April 2021 (see Appendix 1: Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire. The Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-2023); this led to the amalgamation of Wellbeing Objectives 3: *Support and improve progress and achievement for all learners*, with Wellbeing Objective 4: *Ensure all young people are in Education, Employment or Training (EET) and are following productive learning and career pathways*.

Wellbeing Objective 3 from April 2021:

Support and improve progress, achievement and outcomes for all learners, with a specific focus for 2021/2022:

- *Ensure Learners are supported to re-engage in learning and regain any learning lost due to covid*
- *Ensure that those in examination group are well supported in order that they can follow their chosen pathway*

The Council's steps to improve this are:

- *F. As part of the Carmarthenshire Curriculum development, we will focus on skills demands and employability of new and existing labour market entrants to ensure that local and regional demands are met.*
- *G. We will implement the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework to support vulnerable learners.*
- *H. We will ensure continuation of planning and delivery for externally funded projects.*

One of the success criteria against WBO 3 is: Year 11 & 13 leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) measure. Data relating to this measure can be found on page 8 of this report.

The Actions below have been formulated within the Curriculum and Wellbeing Business Plan 2021-2022 to deliver against corporate commitments. Actions highlighted in red are owned by the Youth Support Service.

ID	WBO/MF5 Ref	Description
15016	WBO3-F / MF5-34	We will continue with the design of the Carmarthenshire Curriculum in partnership with schools and other providers, framed within the national context. We will pursue opportunities to link corporate and economic strategy with the design of the new curriculum.
15017	WBO3-F / MF5-37	We will dovetail local opportunities for curriculum enrichment and extension with the national architecture with a view towards developing a Carmarthenshire Learner Offer.
15022	WBO3-F / MF5-37	We will continue to extend and develop the Seren More able and Talented Programme to pre-16 learners.
14837	WBO3-G / MF5-37	We will continue to reconfigure services in support of vulnerable learners and consider the impact of COVID-19 on them, within the remit of the designated 3rd Tier Manager as part of a more coherent structure.
15018	WBO3-G / MF5-37	We will continue to develop and deliver the six elements of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework - together with the Vulnerability Assessment Profile as a means of effectively engaging those children and young people that are NEET/at risk of NEET.
15019*	WBO3-G / MF5-37	We will implement the Actions identified in the self-assessment of the Youth Support Services against the National Participation Standards to Increase participation which will contribute to improved service outcomes in terms of more effectively engaging those children and young people that are NEET
15024	WBO3-G / MF5-37	We will work to divert children and young people away from the criminal justice system.
15025	WBO3-G / MF5-37	We will work to prevent offending and re-offending of children and young people.
15020*	WBO3-H / MF5-37	We will ensure continuation of planning and delivery of the local elements of the European Social Fund (ESF) projects.
15023	WBO3-H / MF5-37	We will continue to develop flexible learning opportunities, including on-line and blended learning, to meet the needs of learners not currently engaging Essential Skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision.

*Actions 15019 and 15020 are also included in the Economic Recovery Plan

Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service

Within its range of service delivery, the Youth Support Service has a lead role in delivering NEET prevention and engagement work in school and community settings.

The Youth Support Service comprises of 4 Teams, namely:

- The Universal Support Team
- Targeted Youth Support Team (10-18)
- Targeted Youth Support Team (16-25 years)
- Youth Justice Team (Targeted)

Working together, the 4 teams engage with children and young people from 8 - 25 years of age. Targeted work includes supporting children/young people presenting

with a range of needs and complexities including those linked with education, training and employment. The service's contribution to this work draws in contributions across all teams, but is significantly linked with the following strands of delivery:

- Welsh Government Youth Engagement and Progression Framework;
- The Children and Community Grant - which supports 2 Families First projects within the service;
- European Social Funded Projects targeting NEET- Cam Nesa (which ended in May 2021) and Cynnydd.

Welsh Government Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, established in 2013, aims to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework has six components, which are considered to be effective at increasing youth engagement and progression when implemented together as part of a strategy.

These are:

- Early identification;
- Better brokerage and coordination of support;
- Stronger tracking and transition of young people;
- Ensuring provision meets the needs of young people;
- A focus on employability skills and opportunities for employment among young people;
- Greater accountability.

Local Authorities are charged with the role of leading implementation of the Framework, working closely with Careers Wales, youth support services, schools, providers of post-16 education and training, the voluntary sector and other partners.

Welsh Government is currently reviewing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and advises that the publication of the new framework will be sometime in the new year of 2022. Welsh Government has indicated that the Framework will be extended to include mental health and wellbeing and prevention of youth homelessness.

Linked with this review is the **Young Person's Guarantee (YPG)** which was announced by Welsh Government in June 2021. Welsh Government will set out how the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the Young Person's Guarantee dovetail. We are advised that no progress has been made with this initiative due to WG internal resource issues. See Appendix 1 of this report for further information on the Youth Person's Guarantee and Working Wales.

The delivery of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework is supported by WG Youth Support Grant in each Local Authority. The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework related actions undertaken by the Youth Support Service include:

- Employment of the Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator (EPC) - a key role in bringing together the six elements of the Framework;
- Implementation of a Vulnerability Assessment Profile (VAP) profile to identify all young people in secondary schools and EOTAS settings at risk of becoming NEET at 16;
- Use of information gained from the VAP to identify pupils in need of support in schools and supporting the post 16 transition of young people likely to become NEET;
- Use of monthly NEET data from Careers Wales to follow up and support young people aged 16-19 who are known to be NEET.

It is important to note that the success of NEET prevention and engagement is strengthened by good partnership working to remove barriers and enhance access. There are excellent links with schools, Team Around the Family, Young Carers and Children's/Adults Services Teams as well as with external partners such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service/Adult Mental Health Services, Iechyd Da, Careers Wales, education and training providers.

Vulnerability Assessment Profile

In Carmarthenshire, the Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator works with secondary Schools to arrange termly Vulnerability Assessment Profile Meetings. The Vulnerability Assessment tool identifies children in need of additional support, which is then provided by a combination of mainstream and or specialist services including Families First projects in line the Team Around the Family approach; Cynnydd; health and wellbeing etc and youth work support. The following criteria are used by secondary schools in the county to identify pupils who are vulnerable to becoming NEET:

Attendance	Attendance %; Unauthorised Abs %
Exclusions	Number of Days lost
Access to Learning	Stage; Need
Additional Pupil Information	Free School Meals; Child Looked After; English as an additional Language; School Moves

The following criteria have been added locally to assist in the identification of those pupils who may benefit from referral into the ESF Cynnydd project:

Bereavement
Domestic Violence
Emotional Health
Substance Misuse
Family Issues
Young Carer
Behavioural Issues

Health Issue
Housing/Poverty Issues
Open to other agencies- Social Services; Team Around the Family; School Safeguarding and Attendance Team; Youth Justice Team
Secondary Teaching and Learning Centre/Rhyd Y Gors/Youth Access Referral - Successful or Not?
Poor Previous Level of Engagement
Failed Intervention
Gender and Identity Matters
Relationships/Social Skills Issues
Other Concerns

Post 16 Support into Education, Employment and Training (SEET)

As part of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, the Youth Support Service provides tracking support and brokerage for 16–18-year-olds via Support into Education, Employment and Training (SEET) Meetings. SEET meetings are held monthly and are well represented by various partner agencies. The function of the meeting is to identify key workers best placed to provide appropriate support to young people of Tier 1 status (unknown EET status) and Tier 2 status (not ready to engage in EET) and to feedback progress in relation to identified cases.

Each month, data is extracted from Careers Wales Data and a spreadsheet is produced by the Youth Support Service with details of new and previous Tier 1 and 2 cases. Tracking of children/young people can be a challenge as the addresses and phone numbers gathered by Careers Wales when the child/young person was at school are liable to change. Having contacted the children and young people through telephone contact, visits etc, the Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator then updates records to show the following, as appropriate:

- support received or declined
- incorrect information
- consent declined
- no longer tracking
- not available
- movement between tiers.

The meetings also share knowledge in relation to new services or projects available to children/young people, along with networking opportunities for partners. Relevant updates are uploaded by Careers Wales on to their database in readiness to produce the monthly snapshot (example shown below):

Carmarthenshire Post 16 Careers Wales IO Database Information (for 16–18-year-olds) – Oct 2021

Cohort / Age	Tier 0	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5	Total
Will leave Year 11 in 2022	2	2	0	0	0	1	5
15	2	2	0	0	0	1	5
Left Year 11 in 2021	430	10	17	10	137	1439	2043
16	345	10	15	8	113	1176	1667
17	85	0	2	2	24	263	376
Left Year 11 in 2020	1	28	62	9	57	1809	1966
17	0	22	49	7	49	1509	1636
18	1	6	13	2	8	300	330
Total	433	40	79	19	194	3249	4014

Tier 0 – young people unable to enter education and training (have moved out of area or are privately educated)

Tier 1 – young people whose status is unknown to Careers Wales

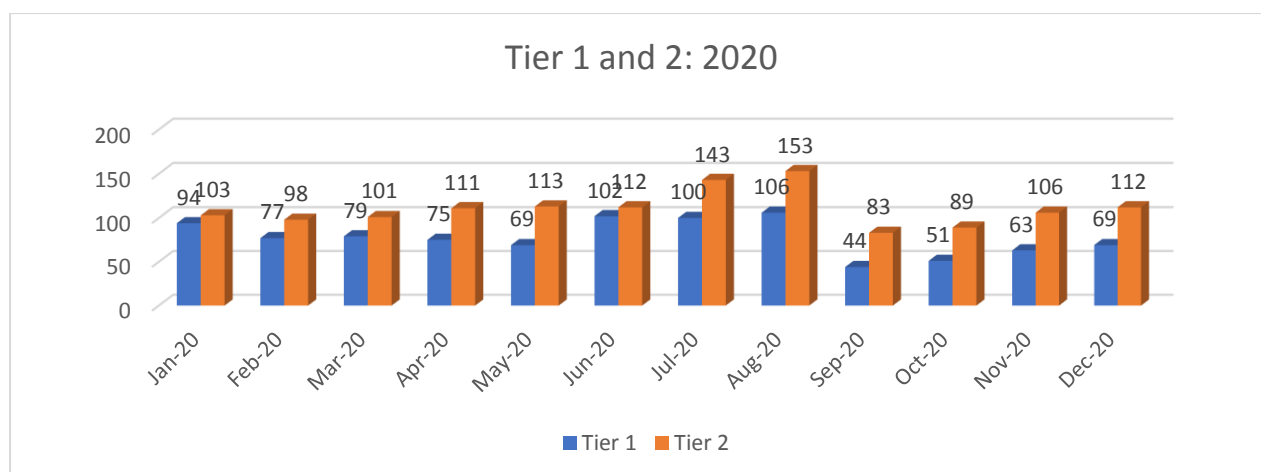
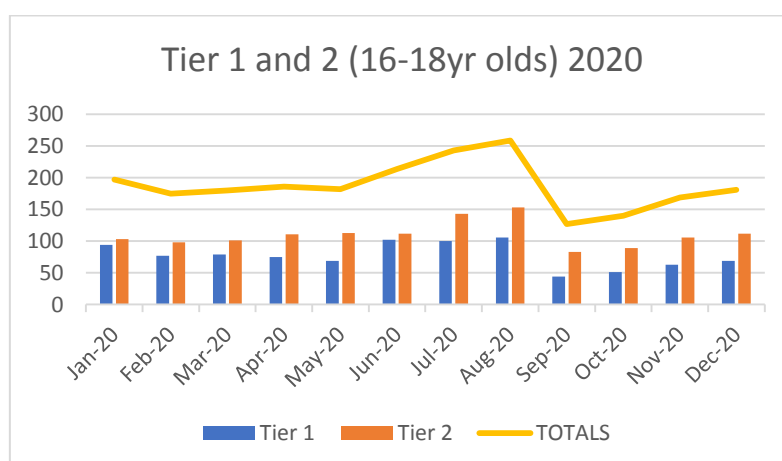
Tier 2 – young people ‘unavailable’ or with significant/multiple barriers

Tier 3 – young people engaged with Careers Wales or actively seeking EET

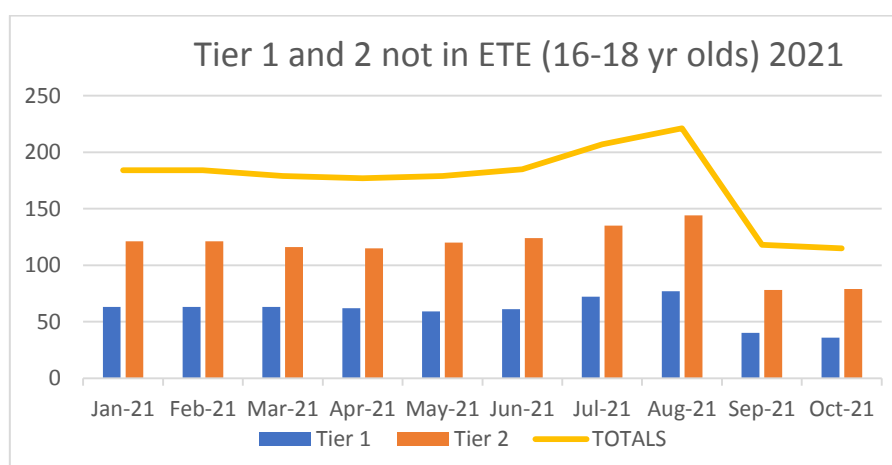
Tier 4 – young people engaged in less than 16 hours or identified as at risk of disengaging

Tier 5 – young people sustaining EET

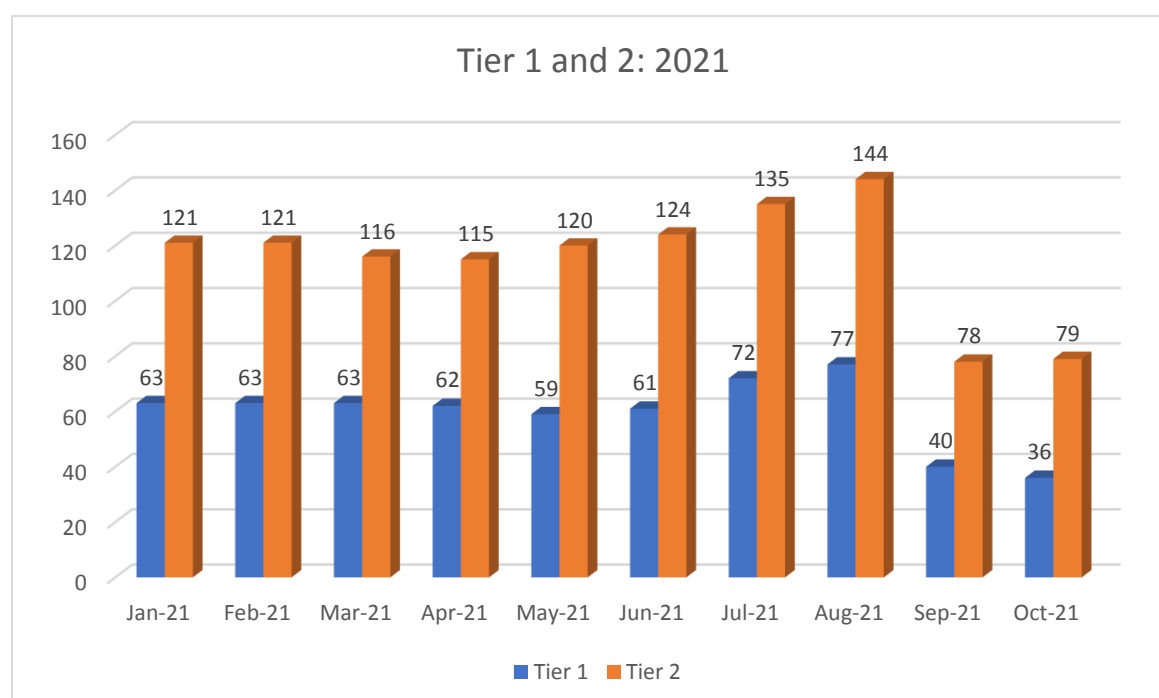
Carmarthenshire Tier 1 and 2 figures to Dec 2020



Carmarthenshire Tier 1 and 2 to October 2021



Tier 1 and 2 cases numbers peak in July and August each year in line with the end of the summer term. Tracking functions assist in the provision of a more accurate picture of the cohort. In comparing 2020 with 2021, we can see a similar trend and despite the pandemic, the data reflects a slight reduction in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cases. It is important to note that the exactness of this data is dependent upon the accuracy of information shared between schools and Careers Wales in addition to its further interrogation by the Youth Support Service.

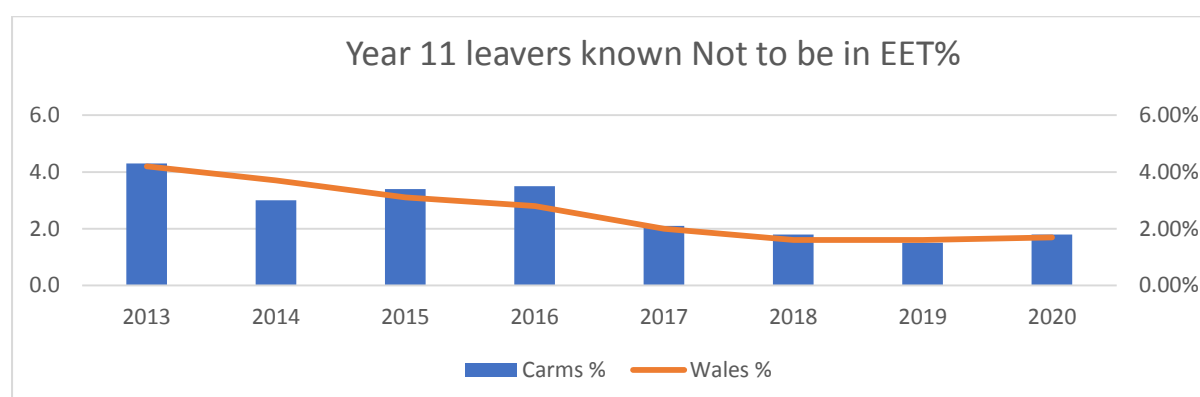


Each year, the Youth Support Service works with Coleg Sir Gar to provide taster programmes for children/young people at risk of becoming NEET. This provides support and encouragement to explore suitable education and training pathways for individuals in transitioning from school to college. Youth Workers also provide one to one support to assist in settling into a college course, a training placement etc. This is especially important at the beginning of term, when a child/young person may be feeling anxious about attending college for the first time. Staff also work with college

and training providers to re-engage children/young people who are not regularly attending. This can involve picking up the child/young person from their home and driving them to the education/training setting over a few days; helping the child young person to access transport; mediating between the child/young person and the college etc.

The Youth Support Service college-based youth worker is central to the delivery of the Coleg Sir Gar Youth Access programme for Year 11 pupils who are educated both at college and at school.

Year 11 leavers who are NEET 2013-2020



The graph above shows Carmarthenshire NEET figures for the Year 11 leavers' cohort over 8 years to 2020. For 2020, we can see that 1.8% of Year 11 leavers (32 out of 1818) were categorised as NEET with the all Wales average being 1.7%. Carmarthenshire is ranked 7th highest in Wales.

For year 13 leavers, the NEET figure for Carmarthenshire for 2020 is 3.53% (23 out of 652). This is the same as all Wales average. As yet the figures for Year 11 and 13 for 2021 have not been released.

European Social Funding and NEET prevention and engagement

Cam Nesa (delivery ended May 2021)

Cam Nesa operated in the unitary authority areas of Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea, and Neath Port Talbot by a consortium of beneficiaries comprising the local authorities in each area. The lead beneficiary was Pembrokeshire County Council.

Cam Nesa delivery in Carmarthenshire included 4.6 Cam Nesa Support Workers - 3.6 of which were placed within the Youth Support Service and 1 FTE within the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Communities Service. The project offered bespoke one-to-one support to NEET young people aged between 16-25 yrs old. Group activities took place mainly in the YSS drop-in centres. Various 'soft-touch' well-being courses were organised in addition to some accredited courses on demand, meeting the requirements of the qualification outcomes of the project. The operational delivery ended in February 2021 with project closure in May 2021. The Youth Support Service

has been able to maintain a scaled back provision from allocated core funding following the ending of Cam Nesa; this has comprised of 2 fte operational posts (a reduction of 1.6 posts) which are funded until 31/3/22.

What became apparent during the Cam Nesa delivery period was that a great deal of engagement work had to be undertaken with children/ young people to arrive at a stage where they were ready to enter a work placement or training. Therefore, interventions were lengthy due to the range of complexities that presented alongside ETE needs, for example, accommodation issues; mental and emotional health; substance misuse; family relationships etc. Covid also had an impact upon delivery due to lockdown and associated restrictions. This was particularly evident in its impact upon the availability of training provision.

Cynnydd

Cynnydd is one of three regional ESF projects in Wales that supports the most vulnerable secondary school age pupils to prevent them becoming NEET. This partnership approach enables local authorities and colleges to deliver additional, non-statutory interventions, to strengthen transition, improve attendance, attainment, engagement and behaviour in those at the very greatest risk of becoming NEET. Funding began in 2016 and delivery will phase out between 31st July and 30th September 2022; project closure will be complete on 31st December 2022.

The funding is allocated to the following posts:

- **Carmarthenshire Teaching and Learning Centre:** 4 full time staff who support literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, engagement to all pupils on and off site.
- **Cynnydd Emotional Wellbeing (EW)** is 0.4fte and is delivered peripatetically by an Educational Psychologist seconded to Cynnydd.
- **The Youth Support Service School Engagement Team:** 6.2fte staff who work peripatetically across all secondary schools delivering interventions on a voluntary participation basis. Work can be 1:1, in small groups on or off site, responsive to need and based on the interests of the pupils wherever possible. During this year, 1 Emotional Health Worker post was created to address covid related anxieties with school pupils.
- **The Transition to Adult Communities Team (TAC)** sits in Communities under Sharon Frewin. This is 2fte staff who adopt the same approach as the School Engagement Team but work specifically with year 11 and older leavers who have a disability or a work limiting health condition. Transition to college is a big part and very strong links with college staff have been developed and enhanced to ensure a robust transition.

The Cynnydd Carmarthenshire project management team is 2fte staff comprising of a Project Manager and a Data Officer.

Since the start of the project in 2016, many Cynnydd participants have presented with multiple, complex issues associated with ACEs, trauma and other individual needs. Consequently, for these children, support has been longer term than originally planned, resulting in a slower turnover of participants. Since lockdown in March 2020, Vulnerability Assessment Profile Meetings have consistently highlighted significant increases in anxiety, disengagement, isolation and mental health, at a time when schools have faced incredible disruption.

There has been exploration of whether the region could seek a no cost extension to Cynnydd which would push operational delivery on another 3 months from the current end date. However, this was not deemed to be viable at the regional Cynnydd Meeting in November; however, the meeting agreed to consider this again in January 2022.

NEET funding post ESF

All EU funding programmes are expected to be completed by the end of 2023. Given the termination of Cam Nesa and the imminent ending of Cynnydd in 2022, concerns about the delivery of NEET related work into the future are being voiced across Local Authorities.

The UK government made a recent announcement regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which is designed to replace current EU funding. The fund is set to be worth more than £2.6bn over the next three years, with £560m of the funding to be spent on a new programme to boost adults' numeracy skills to improve their employment prospects. Senior members of the Local Government Association have been consulted in recent months over the rollout of the fund, which will be worth £0.4bn in 2022-23, £0.7bn in 2023-24 and £1.5bn in 2024-25.

Local Authorities were invited to bid for Community Renewal Fund projects as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund Pilot. Carmarthenshire have 12 projects approved which must be completed by the end of March 2022 (see Appendix 4). Following on from the pilot, there is likely to be a call for future projects. There are no further details available as yet, however the Youth Support Service is monitoring developments. See Appendix for details of the Carmarthenshire Projects.

There is a need for relevant departments to collaborate closely going forward in the shaping of bids for programmes of work which ensure that outcomes are improved for those at risk of NEET/NEET.

WG Children and Communities Grant

Welsh Government Children and Communities Grant programmes seek to address the support needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention, and support mechanisms. The CCG brings together seven programmes:

- Childcare and Play
- Communities for Work Plus

- **Families First**
- Flying Start
- Legacy Fund
- St David's Day Fund
- Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People

The Youth Support Service oversees the delivery of 2 of the Families First programmes within Carmarthenshire:

1. **Post 16 youth work within the Targeted Youth Support Team (16-25)**
Families First funds 50% of 6 youth workers, with Housing Support Grant funding the remaining 50%. 2021/2022 is a transition year regarding Families First and Housing Support Grant funding for this project; there is wider work being led by Housing and Children's Services in relation to 16-25 Housing which may well influence NEET delivery post April 2022.
2. **School and college-based youth work provided by the Targeter Youth Support Team (10-18).** This project is currently under review as a part of a wide scale review of all Families First Funded projects. Currently the project comprises of youth workers based in secondary school and college provision within the county.

WG Youth Support Grant and Families First Funding is announced annually, and therefore there is some uncertainty year on year as to future allocation. Families First funding has been subject to reductions or standstill budgets over the last 6 years or so and this has meant a reduction in Youth Support Service staffing supported by the funding against a context for increased demand on youth work in the county.

In addition to the work of the Youth Support Service there are regional programmes led in-county by the **Regional Engagement Team and Regional Learning and Skills Partnership**. This includes:

- New funding to support Health and Social Care Level 2; this is predominantly to support people to return to work in the sector.
- The Kickstart programme has been extended with final applications for placements on the 17th of December 2021 which will mean a delivery of a placement opportunity until potentially September 2022.
- The Skills and Talent programme of the City Deal has been approved and the Regional Engagement Team will be supporting the development of new skills to support the 8 City Deal projects, this will include upskilling as well as training and apprenticeship opportunities. There will also be a considerable amount of work within the schools to develop the new curriculum and tie in opportunities with the City Deal projects in relation to jobs and training.
- The Fusion programme and the Legacy Fund are planning to deliver a project called *Insight into the World of Work*; this project will target young people in local secondary schools who are at risk of becoming NEET. The main aim of the project is to expose young people to different careers, especially within

the field of art, culture, and heritage in the hope that it will inspire them to think about different or alternative career routes.

- The Regional Engagement Team hopes to roll out the main project after Spring half term, targeting up to 20 young people in local schools who are risk of becoming NEET.

Risks and Challenges

It is anticipated that ongoing impact of Covid 19 will further increase the demand for Youth Support Service support in relation to NEET issues as well as other complexities. We are aware that transitions from school to college/work have certainly been made more challenging due to the pandemic and youth work caseloads have increased.

The Cynnydd Project will cease next year and there are concerns regarding future funding for this type of intervention. There is no capacity to retain the Cynnydd staffing (even in a reduced capacity) with existing YSS funding levels when the project ends. This matter has been discussed in detail at a previous DMT.

The arrangements put in place to continue some elements of Cam Nesa type delivery come to an end on 31/3/21. Statutory agencies no longer have access to the level of support that the Cam Nesa project offered, and this exerts additional pressure in terms of wider service delivery across Education and Children's Services and Adult Services.

There is uncertainty about the Shared Prosperity Fund and what will emerge in relation to targeted NEET work with children and young people within the county. There is a need therefore for join up between services/departments to seek to mitigate the impact of the loss of the project. A meeting has been arranged with Rhian Phillips, Jane Lewis, and key Youth Support Service staff on 12/1/22 to explore partnership working around NEET work going forward.

The WG Youth Support Grant along with other WG funding is announced year on year and this impinges upon long term planning and causes staff uncertainty.

There has been a significant rise in youth homelessness within the county and this impacts on a child/young person's availability, preparedness or readiness to engage in education, training and employment. Housing task groups have been established as part of the 16-25 Housing Support Pathway to be responsive to need within the county.

The Youth Support Service awaits the YEPF review alongside further developments in relation to the Youth Guarantee. The service will need to be responsive to any strategic changes and review service delivery as appropriate.

Appendix 1

Young Person's Guarantee

Economy Minister, Vaughan Gething announced on 21/6/21:

Welsh Government is determined that there will be no lost generation in Wales as a result of the pandemic. That's why our Programme for Government commits us to delivering our Young Person's Guarantee, an ambitious programme that will aim to provide everyone under 25 in Wales with the offer of work, education, training, or self-employment.

The Young Person's Guarantee is at the core of our efforts to help young people get the best possible start in the world of work. We want to give young people the support they need for a brighter future when leaving school, college, university or even facing redundancy.

We need to ensure young people have the skills and experience they need for the jobs of today and the future. This is a key element of our strategy to prevent youth unemployment and ensure young people are not held back nor left behind.

Working Wales will become the gateway into the Guarantee, building on its already strong and successful model of delivering careers guidance and signposting support. They will also trial a new Job Matching service, to assist young people with securing employment and help employers to fill vacancies.

The Young People's Guarantee will be developed to meet the needs of young people, including those at risk of long-term unemployment. It will not discriminate in relation to socio-economic factors, the promotion and use of the Welsh language or on the grounds of protected characteristics.

In addition, the dialogue and collaboration between the Welsh Government, education, the training sector, employers and public authorities will be strengthened through the expansion of our Regional Skills Partnerships. National and regional employment and skills providers across Wales will be invited to connect with Working Wales so projects can form part of the offer.

Working Wales is working with WG on the finer details and opportunities to incrementally build processes to track 18 – 25-year-olds in alignment with the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework refresh.

Appendix 2:

Cynnydd Project Case Study

Cynnydd Case Study 2

CMC 449 a pupil at CSTLC

M was referred to the Cynnydd project after she had moved to a new foster placement after being removed from her traveller family in Cardiff. M was subjected to severe neglect and abuse and had not attended education since the age of 8. M had several barriers including low literacy, numeracy and social skills.

M's needs were identified via multi agency meetings, baseline assessment and self-efficacy assessments.

M received weekly individual therapeutic session with my-self and participated in weekly groups that target her social development. M additionally had support with CV writing, college applications, visits and interviews. I accompanied M to Swansea Military Prep College and attending the interview process with her. Additionally, M participated in numerous outdoor activities and volunteered in our social enterprise projects.

M attended Swansea Military Prep College and then progressed to attend Harrogate and join the Army. M has passed out this year and was awarded an award for her achievement this year as one of the best intakes this year. M has now chosen to train as a driver and mechanic in the Army.

M has now passed out and is now training to be a driver and mechanic in the Army.

"I can't thank the staff enough who helped me at the centre, I would never be where I am without them and can't wait to visit again." CMC 449

'JS P has been one of our hardest working and eager recruits so far. She is determined to make something of this career choice and is on track to leave the college in a good position to do so. Both myself and her Platoon Sergeant find JS P a breath of fresh air given her background and how keen she is to do well.'

Lt R B Trant 1IG | OC 19 Platoon | Burma Company | Army Foundation College (Harrogate)

Families First Case Study

The child engaged with a youth worker over Summer 2021 when she was out of education and was able to access support when needed. The youth worker identified safeguarding concerns within the initial contact session and submitted a Multi-Agency Risk Form outlining concerns which included homelessness. The youth worker linked the child with Housing Options and Children's Services and

liaised with the safeguarding staff in school. The child has an allocated youth worker and this involves regular face to face/virtual support in a safe environment close to her school to work on her housing/ emotional wellbeing needs.

Work undertaken with the child:

- Relationship building sessions.
- Referral to Children's Services- on her request.
- Referral to Housing Options Team to register at risk of homelessness.
- Joint work with Social Worker to introduce YP to new allocated SW.
- Access to regular appointments in Youth Drop In.
- Improved access to education via request to SW for funds for bus pass/shared lifts.
- Consultation engagement child is going to participate in a focus group for a new housing service for YSS.
- Healthy Relationship intervention – STAR set up within school via SBYW

Outcomes:

- Child has a robust multiagency plan to safeguard her and strengthen positive factors in her life.
- Child has been prevented from becoming NEET.
- Child is on the Youth Accommodation Panel listing and is awaiting an offer of supported housing, she is also awaiting a pre- tenancy course via YSS/Housing officer.
- Child advocacy support/ regular communication with her youth worker which she values.
- Child is working to address financial needs/skills.

Appendix 3:

Community Renewal Fund Projects operating within Carmarthenshire.

Project Name	Project Activities
Enterprise Carmarthenshire	The Carmarthenshire pilot supports people into self-employment, building skills/confidence. It will invest in digital, employability and entrepreneurial skills, also supporting newly established microbusinesses. Tailored specifically for economically inactive and unemployed individuals it supplements mainstream provision, working closely with community partners.
Rapid Skills Shortage Response	This is a collaborative education and industry led project with the primary objective of addressing immediate and medium-term skills gaps within the hospitality and construction sectors to address the gap in the employment markets for local businesses and communities, supporting unemployed people into employment and up-skilling people to realise their potential.
Carmarthenshire's Old Towns - Their Past, Present and Potential	A suite of pilot activities delivered to develop and support Carmarthenshire's 10 rural market towns and 3 primary towns, recover from the pandemic. e.g., a study to look at repurposing town centre spaces, developing the visitor economy, digital interventions to explore SMART towns potential.
Revitalise Rhydaman	Proposal builds upon Ammanford's recovery plan to deliver 4 projects that will enable the town to harness close to home solutions to build a stronger, locally focussed and more resilient town. The project will be complemented by other activity including place marketing initiatives, meanwhile use, cultural events, business support and third -party business and property grants.
Supporting the Welsh language in business and communities	Three key activities will be delivered to encourage businesses and community organisations to utilise the Welsh language: grant of £3k to support businesses develop and raise profile of the language in their organisations, workshops highlighting economic impact to the organisations, marketing to show benefits of raising the profile of the language within organisations.
Dreigiau CYCA Dragons Y cyfle i fynnu - the opportunity to thrive	This pilot will help beneficiaries with business ideas. A panel of judges will convene monthly to hear business pitches from entrants; four finalists and two winners will be selected each month and given a start-up package of investment and tailored support. Individuals not ready for self-employment will have access to training and mentoring.
Regenerating Llanelli	This application complements key projects and enhances the regeneration of the Llanelli area through planning and mapping out a suite of ambitious, innovative, and transformational projects. Elements included are key to creating a sense of place in Llanelli through regenerating historic buildings to create community facilities to improving transport infrastructure and accessibility.
Carmarthenshire Towns Recovery & growth pilot	A suite of pilot activities delivered to develop and support Carmarthenshire's 10 rural market towns and 3 primary towns, recover from the pandemic which includes a study to look at repurposing town centre spaces, developing the visitor economy, digital interventions to explore SMART towns potential.
Banc Sgiliau Busnes Sir Gar/ Business Skills Bank Sir Gar (BSB Sir Gar)	The project offers self-employed and micro enterprises the opportunity to develop an entrepreneurial, innovative culture by supporting them to access specialist skills, increase their performance and become more resilient and competitive in their marketplace. There are two main delivery elements: mentoring service led by a business expert, and/or an opportunity to offer a paid graduate placement or work taster.

THE LIFE YOU WANT	This pilot will support individuals to learning new skills, update existing skills, or find a new direction. Three elements of delivery will be available: A new online learning Moodle portal, delivery in the classroom or a blend of both. The project will also offer in-depth support with job searches and living skills.
Llanelli Town Centre Ambassador and Delivery Service Project	This pilot project will appoint ambassadors to welcome and signpost visitors and residents to services and attractions across the Town Centre. An electric cargo bike product delivery scheme will also be piloted with local businesses. A community fund will be available for emerging initiatives.

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23.12.21

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES : EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SERVICES

Purpose: To provide the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of how the Education and Children Services Department is delivering preventative support for families across our County.

To consider and comment on the following issues:

To consider the findings of the report and to challenge and support the strategic direction of the department in moving forwards.

Reasons:

To inform the scrutiny committee of the challenges facing the preventative services and to share how these are being addressed.

To inform the scrutiny committee of the emerging needs of families, demands on the services from a family support/preventative service perspective so that the council may respond in a supportive manner to the broad context that impacts the wellbeing of children and families within Carmarthenshire.

To be referred to the Cabinet / Council for decision: NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Cllr Glynog Davies - Education and Children

Directorate		
Education & Children	Designations:	Tel Nos.
Name of Head of Service:		
Stefan Smith	Head of Children Services	<u>SJSmith@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</u>
Report Author:		
Noeline Thomas	Early Years and Prevention Manager	<u>nothomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</u>
Janine Patrick	Children and Communities Grant Commissioning manager	<u>JPatrick@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</u>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23.12.21

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES : EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SERVICES

Purpose: To provide the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of how the Education and Children Services Department is delivering preventative support for families across our County.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT

An overview of the range of Family Support Services provided for families within Carmarthenshire is set out in the Family Support Strategy (2018-2023) which provides the context, overall strategic direction and vision of the service.

The report focuses on how the main preventative programmes of Families First, Flying Start and the Early Years Integration Programmes continue to support families in Carmarthenshire throughout the pandemic.

The service has met many challenges to delivery over the lock down periods of the pandemic. The trends in demand will be explored together with the emerging early impact on children and families and how we aim to meet this demand will be considered.

The report will contain an account of the additional WG funding to mitigate the impact of COVID on children, young people and families and also cover the associated challenges and innovations experienced.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED ?

YES

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: **Stefan Smith** **Head of Children's Services**

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NONE	NONE	YES	NONE	NONE	YES	NONE

Finance

Additional Funding has been provided by WG to mitigate the effect of COVID on children, young people and families.

We ensure that this funding is utilised in line with the Ts&Cs of this funding.

Staffing Implications

Workforce matters in terms of recruitment and availability of staff with the relevant experience and skills has been and continues to be challenging.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: **Stefan Smith** **Head of Children's Services**

1. Local Member(s) N/A

2. Community / Town Council N/A

3. Relevant Partners N/A

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations N/A

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S)
AWARE/CONSULTED**

YES – briefing arranged for 22/12/21

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

THERE ARE NONE

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Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee 23.12.21

Support for Families In Carmarthenshire

Introduction

The Family Support Strategy 2018-23 ([Cymraeg](#) / [English](#)) sets out the context and strategic vision of 'how we support families in Carmarthenshire'. The Strategy sets out the purpose, aims and guiding principles of the work, covers a description of the broad range of services available across the different levels of need and finally covers how we seek to achieve our aims by ensuring that the various services work to complement one another in order to meet the needs of families in the County.

This report will focus on the main preventative programmes of Families First, Flying Start and the Early Years Integration work, and cover the following:

- Details of current services being delivered
- Trends – current compared to previous demands
- Information regarding WG additional funding and implications
- Challenges faced
- Future delivery/innovation

Other linked key areas of work

Whilst the focus of this report is the tackling poverty, preventative programmes it is important to highlight the close links and inter dependent working relationship with the Childcare, Play and Family Information work within the Service Area. Staff work collaboratively across the Programmes and this has been particularly evident in managing the additional pressures during Covid. The following are examples of the interdependency across services;

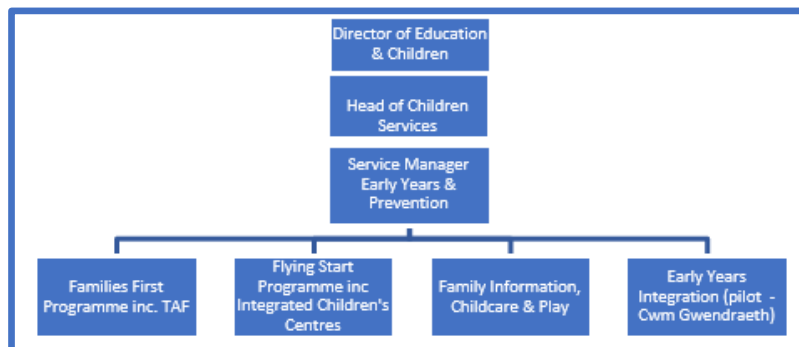
Family Information Service - will be used extensively by all Programmes and services to communicate with the target population and publicise services

Play work- the additional £639,156 WG covid funding – 'Summer of Fun' & 'Winter of Wellbeing' will have targeted disadvantaged children and young people via the preventative programmes.

Childcare - whilst Universal in terms of access, it is an extremely important service for tackling poverty and disadvantage - supporting families both in terms of those in work and those not in work.

The service area covers a broad range of Family Support services from Universal, right up to the threshold where statutory Social Workers become involved. Indeed one of the main reasons for the existence of the whole service is to prevent the need for statutory social care involvement in the lives of children, young people and families wherever and whenever this is possible and safe to do so.

Structure



Levels of Support- the Windscreen



This diagram sets out levels of support across the spectrum from Universal to Protective support. The early intervention, prevention programmes work primarily within the Enhanced and Targeted support tiers of the spectrum. The statutory services provide support at the Assessment for Care and Support and the Protective end of the spectrum. We have clear step up/down policies and processes that cover this important interface and staff have developed close working relationships to ensure that families receive the right help in a timely manner by the appropriate service.

It is acknowledged that families will naturally move back and forth across the spectrum at different times and stages according to life challenges. This highlights the importance of good communication across the spectrum and that information sharing and collaborative working is key. The regular multi agency project manager and alignment group meetings, support this objective.

A regional Cysur threshold document 'Right Help, Right Time' ([Cymraeg](#) / [English](#)) sets out the model and illustrates the types of support services available at the various levels of need.

Families First Programme

Families First is a Welsh Government programme funded via the annual Children and Communities Grant.

Grant received for 20/21 - £1.9 million.

The programme is aimed at providing early, preventative support to children, families and young people across the county who require help, advice, and support below the statutory threshold.

The programme is comprised of three key elements:

1. Team Around the Family model and implementation of the Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF)
2. Commissioned projects i) Parenting Support ii) Support for young people
3. Disability Support

Team Around the Family

Team Around the Family (TAF) and the Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF) underpin Families First. TAF is a collaborative way of working that brings a number of agencies together to deliver a plan of support to a family, child or young person. A TAF Key Worker will take the lead role in working with families to ensure that services are coordinated and meet the family's needs.

The JAFF is an assessment tool used with families to identify their strengths and plan what needs to happen to help families meet their identified needs.

Commissioned projects

There are ten Families First projects in total, five are delivered by the Local Authority, four by third sector projects and one by the Health Board. They provide support on a variety of needs including, parenting support to manage children's behaviour, support parents and child/young person's emotional/mental health needs and support to better manage conflicts in relationships.

Projects are currently offering virtual and face to face support in a variety of settings families home (based on need), in offices, schools and outdoors. Projects are looking to secure larger community venues in order to support more families as some of the Families Centres are limited for space and outdoor sessions are not possible during the winter months for families with babies and younger children.

Project	Services offered
1. Family Centres (3 rd Sector) £86,691 p.a	Network of eight Family Centres and two groups across the County to support families with children aged 0-11 with the challenges of family life, by increasing parents' confidence and skills in providing positive learning opportunities and encouraging parents to play with their child to support their cognitive, social and language development.
2. Integrated Children's Centres (CCC) £75,156 p.a	Integrated Children's Centres in Morfa, Felinfoel and Llwynhendy. Early Years activities for families with children aged 0-3 years including Stay & Play sessions, Language & Play, baby massage, after school play clubs for children aged 4- 11years, open access play and family play sessions and healthy lifestyle activities such as health eating, cooking on a budget, confidence building and parenting courses.
3. Action For Children (3 rd Sector) £220,000 p.a	Evidence based Parenting Programmes in a group setting or 1:1 (e.g. Handling Children's Behaviour, Family Links Nurture Programme (3-11 years), TAKE 3 (13-16 years). Family Therapist offers support individual family members and whole families. Play Therapist works with children aged 3-11 years and provides a developmentally appropriate way for a child to process their experiences and feelings.
4. Home-Start Cymru (3 rd Sector) £137,500 p.a	Recruits, trains, supports and supervises volunteers with parenting experience who provide practical and emotional support to families with children aged 0-16 to promote positive relationships and attachments, increase parenting skills and confidence e.g establishing routines, encouraging play/homework.
5. Domestic Abuse Stops Here (3 rd Sector) £50,000 p.a	Support for children and young people aged 0-16 affected by domestic abuse through 1:1 or group sessions via CDAS (Carmarthen), Threshold (Llanelli) and Calan (Amman Valley). Help for children and young people around understanding emotions, self - esteem, safety planning and healthy relationships.
6. Youth Health Team (HDUHB)	Direct early intervention support for young people aged 11-25 identified through JAFF assessments or who are vulnerable i.e. those not in mainstream education or who are NEET.

£58,755	Support for young people and their families with specific health needs e.g. anxiety, depression, self-harm, negative or unhelpful thinking patterns, sexually inappropriate and harmful behaviour.
7. Family Support in Schools (CCC) £190,545 p.a	Works with the Central TAF Team. Family Support in Schools support school staff and families with children aged 3-11, identified by the Central TAF team by providing early advice and support to families related to their needs e.g. behaviour, parenting, bereavement, positive play, attendance.
8. Tim Camau Bach (CCC) £220,000 p.a	Supports families with a disabled child aged 0- 16 years through home based support e.g. sleep, continence, behaviour, diet, play, child development and sibling support, group parenting learning and groups for young people (10-16 years) with high functioning autism, Asperger's, ADHD, social /communication difficulties.
9. School Based Youth Work (CCC) £422,333 p.a	Supports vulnerable young people aged 10 – 18 and their parents/carers with issues around: Behaviour through parenting courses, Talking Teens and Take 3 parenting, relationships support via the STAR programme and support regarding transition periods, peer pressure, health/sexual health and education. The youth workers are based in secondary schools across the County.
10. Post 16 Youth Work (CCC) £122,070 p.a	Supports vulnerable young people aged 16-25 and their families who may require a TAF to help build resilience and promote education, employment, training & volunteering opportunities

Trend Data for the Families First programme:

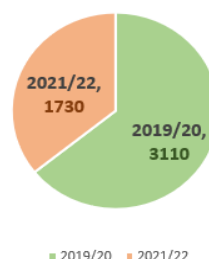
Covid guidance to limit social interaction has had a significant impact on the delivery of the service, particularly limiting activities that involved group delivery. In general, we have seen a reduction in activity across the Families First programme . There are several reasons for this reduction; it took time to establish the new, 'virtual' way of working, parents declining virtual support until face-to-face support could be offered, staff sickness/vacant posts. Group support ended and families/young people were being supported on a one-to-one basis. Project Managers reported that of the families that did access the service, their needs have become more complex requiring longer periods of support. Interestingly, there has been an overall improvement in outcomes for those families, as reported via the distance travelled tool from 75% positive forward movement to 83% during the period.

Referrals into Families First
2019/20 - 3110 referrals
2020/21 - 1730 referrals.

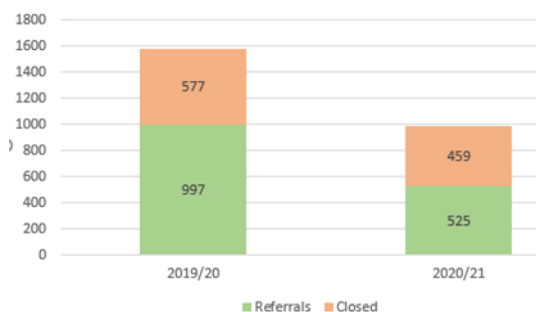
44% reduction in referrals.

The main source were self-made referrals consistent with previous years.

Families First Referrals



Families First - Single Agency Jaff Assessments



JAFF Assessments

JAFFs undertaken 20/21 - 525

JAFFs undertaken 19/20 - 997

53% reduction in the number of assessments however, there was a positive increase in the distance travelled scores:

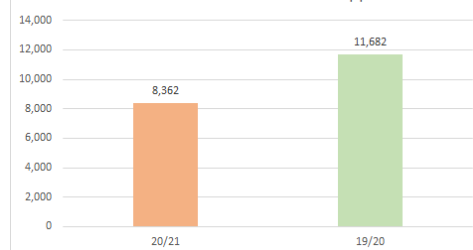
Cases Closed 20/21 - 459 (83% forward movement)

Closed cases 19-20 - 577 (75% forward movement)

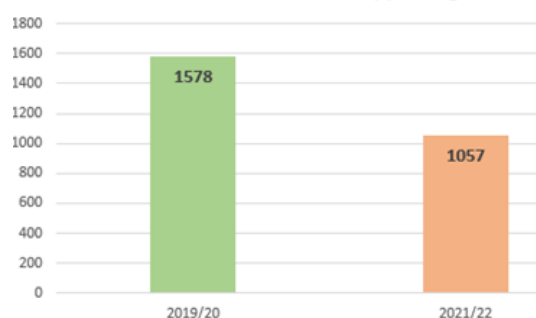
No of individuals supported
20/21 - 8,362
19/20 - 11,682

28% reduction, group support stopped during lockdown so we were unable to reach the same numbers of individuals.

Families First: No. of Individuals Supported



Families First Referrals to Support Agencies



Referrals to other Agencies

2020-21 - 1057 referrals made

2019-20 - 1578 referrals made

A 33% reduction, projects mainly referred families to foodbanks and other third sector organisations for on-going, consistent with previous years

Cases stepped up to Children's Services
20/21 - 23
19/20 - 18
Increase of 22%

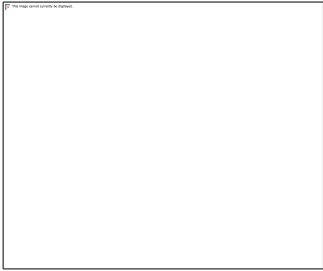




Cases stepped down to Families First from Children's Services
20/21 - 66
19/20 - 82
decrease of 22%



The number cases stepped up and down from children's services are low which is expected and appropriate. This data has been scrutinised in detail and both statutory and preventative service managers are satisfied that the transfer of cases was appropriate.

Trend Data for Team Around the Family (TAF)

	<p>Referrals to TAF Allocation</p> <p>2020/21 - 399 referrals into TAF allocation 2019/20 - 646 referrals into TAF allocation</p> <p>reduction of 38%.</p> <p>In 2020/21 primary schools were the main referral from source, consistent with previous years.</p>
<p>Presenting Needs</p> <p>2019/20 the highest presenting needs were</p> <p>Challenging children's behaviour</p> <p>mental health of the child</p> <p>mental health of the adult, this was consistent in 2020/21</p>	
	<p>Referrals made to Other Agencies</p> <p>2020/21 - 304 referrals to other agencies 2019/20 - 508 referrals to other agencies</p> <p>reduction of 40%</p> <p>TAF mainly referred on to Families First projects for support consistent in previous years</p>

Families First: Impact and challenges of Covid-19 pandemic

- Offices closed, staff were instructed to work from home, open access community-based venues closed, drop-ins' sessions, home visits stopped.

- Covid guidelines had to be adhere to, which not only generated its own challenges it also commanded a new way of working using virtual support. Some staff required additional IT equipment.
- Staff and families having to acquire a greater skill and understanding of how to operate virtual platforms. Projects quickly adapted to providing support via telephone, Teams and used a variety of platforms such as Facebook messenger and WhatsApp to provide support to families/young people.
- Staff developed a variety of innovative methods to engage families during lockdown such as creating and delivering activity packs, dropping off food parcels for on-line cooking courses, developing their own pre-recorded videos for families to access.
- Difficult to assess the full needs of a family virtually.
- For some family's preference being face to face support (feedback via our Families First on-line snap survey questionnaire)
- Staff and families contracting Covid, self-isolating, shielding.
- Education establishments closing, and school closures for those families with disabled children
- Staffing capacity within the Families First projects, vacant posts and challenges recruiting to them.
- Staff were re-directed to support with the school hub arrangements and childcare (C-CAS) arrangements for vulnerable families and Key Workers.
- Projects reported that families are facing economic struggles, poor emotional and mental health, poor relationships and require support with managing children's behaviour. During lockdown, families identified that they were missing support from their communities, friends, and relatives. Young children have experienced setbacks in their development particularly regarding their speech language and communication skills.
- Families First saw an increased in demand for two projects, Tim Camau Bach (Disability support) and DASH (Domestic Abuse Support). The Post 16 youth workers experienced a significant increase in referrals at the end of the Summer Term for support for Year 11 leavers. The School Based Youth Workers have reported that they have received referrals for new students and schools with part time youth workers have requested more youth work time. There is also more demand for therapeutic support to support more complex cases.

Positives taken from the global Covid-19 pandemic:

- The Families First programmes have adapted well, introduced new processes and systems and are now delivering a blended service, to meet the need of their service users.
- Support can be offered to a greater number of families if delivered virtually because staff do not have to spend time travelling.
- Utilising a plethora of virtual methods to deliver support, training, workshops and pre-recorded videos to families.

Flying Start Programme

Flying Start was introduced in 2007 and is regarded by the Welsh Government as one of its flagship programmes. It is a multi-agency programme and received a sum of £3.8 million for 20/21 via the annual Children and Communities Grant. It is an Early Years, targeted programme for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.

Flying Start is delivered within defined postcodes, across 18 geographical areas of Carmarthenshire:

- Llanelli: Bigyn, Morfa, Lakefield, Felinfoel, Dafen, Llwynhendy and Pwll,
- Outer Llanelli: Pembrey, Bury Port, Carway and Trimsaran,
- Ammanford: Betws, Ammanford Town, Pantyffynnon, Garnant and Glanamman,
- Carmarthen: Richmond Park and Carmarthen Town.

The core elements of the programme are drawn from a range of options that have been shown to influence positive outcomes for children and their families to include:

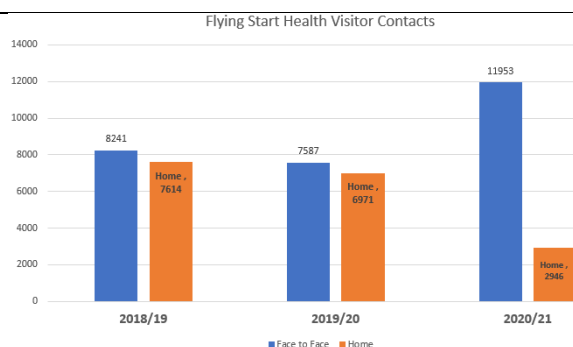
- Funded, quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds;
- An enhanced health visiting service;
- Access to parenting support; and
- Speech language and communication

Flying Start Service Strand	Services delivered in Flying Start
1. Funded, quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds	The provision of high quality, part-time childcare for 2–3-year-olds is integral to the Flying Start programme. Quality childcare contributes to the acquisition of skills such as socialisation and the ability to play and concentrate. Childcare is fully operational in 26 settings providing 12½ hours, which is delivered over 5 days. Children with additional needs are provided with one-to-one support in the settings when required. Flying Start are also utilising additional monies for children under 2 years of age with developmental delays to access childcare for 2 x 5 hours per week.
2. An enhanced health visiting service	<p>The Flying Start health programme is central to the delivery of a progressive, universal service, offering a range of preventative and early interventions. Health visiting has returned to home visits for all families and have also set up clinics in some of the areas in Integrated Children's Centres.</p> <p>The midwifery team provide specialist intensive support to antenatal/postnatal parents, with additional complex health and social needs. They are delivering courses virtually as the parents are engaging more and also some are being supported individually, face to face.</p> <p>The social care team support all services, ensuring that the most vulnerable families have access to bespoke packages of care and support on identified needs within the family. They will work in collaboration with the health visitors in promoting resilience and independence.</p>

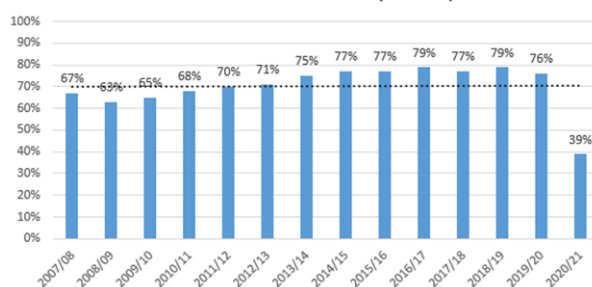
3. Access to parenting support	<p>The parenting service deliver a range of formal and informal structured parenting courses along with bespoke packages of care. The parenting team have moved their services to hybrid delivery to ensure families are accessing group parenting support and some face-to-face contact where required.</p> <p>Support officers delivering Come & Cook courses, with staff taking healthy meal ingredient boxes to families and then providing live video sessions for families to join and utilise the ingredients to create healthy family meals.</p>
4. Speech language & communication	<p>The speech and language therapy team support the needs of children and their families they work within a tiered service delivery model of universal, targeted and specialist provision. Services are designed to be in alignment with the aims of the Welsh Government Talk with Me: Speech, Language and Communication Plan 2020-2022.</p> <p>Language and play are delivering courses with face-to-face sessions in smaller groups, this is mainly due to venue capacity.</p>
<p>The Flying Start APP has been integral to the service over Covid. It is currently being utilised to inform parents of what is being delivered and what is accessible to the families in the eligible areas. It provides notifications, key messages for health, speech and language, disseminating information at the touch of a button. It is also being utilised to signpost families to other support services.</p>	

FLYING START TRENDS

Flying Start health visitors report face to face contacts. During Covid the types of contacts reported changed to incorporate agreed alternative contact methods such as telephone, email and video conferencing. This has increased the contacts by 66% but the home contacts have reduced by 40%.



Flying Start Carmarthenshire
Overall Childcare Attendance 2007/08 - 2020/21



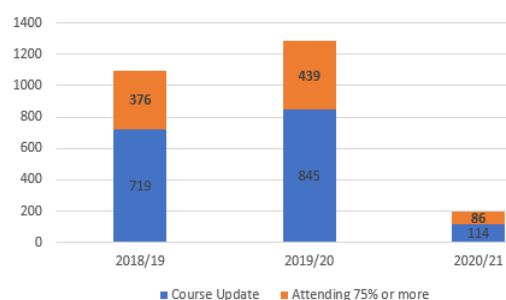
Flying Start Childcare continued through Covid in most settings across the 18 areas.

There is a significant drop identified in overall attendance during 2020/21. With a previous average of 73% we witnessed a drop to 39% attendance in 2020/21. Early indications in the first seven months show good recovery with attendance at 73% for the period.

Flying Start moved the delivery of parenting courses virtually during covid. Parenting courses were delivered on a one-to-one basis for the main part of the year and smaller virtual groups were established at a later stage. groups were held.

Although there were few courses delivered attendance of 75% of the course improved from 52% to 75%.

Flying Start Course Take up & Attendance



Flying Start: Impact and challenges of Covid-19 pandemic

- IT equipment, sourcing, training to ensure all staff up and running
- Working from home and managing children at home
- Multi-disciplinary team, varied organisational covid guidance/restrictions
- Limited numbers able to work from the offices
- Staff missing office conversations/discussions regarding families which can generate referrals within FS/partner agencies.
- The health visitors struggling with new electronic health recording system, WCCIS
- Childcare, keeping staffing ratios to enable continued delivery
- Retaining staffing levels, recruiting into childcare sector particularly difficult
- Maintaining childcare attendance levels
- Venue capacity with social distancing in place, difficult to deliver face-to-face

Positives of delivery during Covid-19 pandemic:

- Team now fully digitalised to provide seamless services
- Childcare service providers all trained and able to utilise Microsoft Teams
- The Flying Start App – providing vital information and key messages to families
- Working with different partners e.g., undertook delivery of activity boxes to families with Dyfed Powys Police
- Services now delivering hybrid courses across Flying Start where appropriate
- Health visitor clinics operational with online booking system
- Childcare- introduction of homework packs when children unable to attend
- Childcare- incentives to promote attendance
- Childcare -uploading activity videos for families
- Come & Cook, delivering ingredients boxes, then providing live video sessions
- Ed. psychologist advice and support to health visitors and childcare
- Speech & Language team supporting and upskilling childcare staff

Early Years Transformation

Carmarthenshire County Council are working in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDUHB), Ceredigion County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council in response to Welsh Government's Early Years Integration Transformation Programme. This programme focuses on the need for a 'joined up and responsive early years service to ensure that every child has the best start in life'.

➤ Cwm Gwendraeth Early Years Team

As part of the transformation programme, we are required to test and pilot innovative ways of working and as a result in Carmarthenshire we have worked closely with HDUHB in developing a pilot Early Years Integrated Team in Cwm Gwendraeth. This is a multi-disciplinary team of:

- Health professionals (Midwives, Health Visitors and Speech and Language Therapists)
- Local Authority professionals (Family Support Officers and a Community Connector).
- The team is led by an Early Years Integration Co-ordinator and the systems for the team are developed and monitored by a Performance and Finance officer, of which both are HDUHB employees.

The team has been developed utilising the good practice learnt from the delivery of the multi agency national Flying Start Programme.

➤ The work of the team:

The work of the team centres around the emerging needs within the community and applies a strengths-based model of working with families and the wider community. The Team actively seek out and work with third sector organisations to create, enhance and increase family support services in direct response to the needs of families.

How are needs identified?

- Parental insight work via external consultancy (Arad)
- Ongoing conversations with families and professionals
- Population indicators/data

The needs of parents in Cwm Gwendraeth:

- Improved access to information about services
- Improved access into services (to include physical access due to rurality and lack of transport)
- Access to Welsh language/ bilingual services
- The right support at the right time
- Smooth transitions through services

- 'We only want to tell our story once'
- Effective information sharing across services

Emerging needs as a result of COVID-19:

- Feelings of isolation
- Anxiety
- New mums are feeling they have missed out on important opportunities to meet other new mums - peer support and relationships
- Child development – Speech, language and communication; Fine and Gross motor skill development; social and emotional development

Responding to these needs:

- Scoped and mapped the Cwm Gwendraeth area to identify service provision for families and developed programmes to address the gaps in partnership with third sector partners
- Developed a webpage that sits within the Family Information Service website and includes local information, opportunities to book onto groups, hints and tips, timetables of clinics etc
- Working with Save the Children to test innovative ways of parental engagement in the transition into school process. 10 schools participating in the pilot, three of which in Cwm Gwendraeth.
- Working with education, childcare settings and health services to pilot a new transition form for school entry for all children, with an extra section for children with additional learning needs
- During lockdown the team facilitated outside walking groups (between 8 and 15 families), virtual singing groups (12-24 parents at any one time), Birth – 6 months and 6 months on virtual cuppa group (between 6-10 per group).
- Currently the team is working with third sector organisations in increasing their capacity and introducing them to the Cwm Gwendraeth area such as Employment support in Cefneithin and Pontyates; mental health support via MIND and the local Social Prescribers.
- Time to Shine Projects and Music and Movement Groups to address the developmental delay in children in partnership with Menter Iaith, Actif and Homestart.
- Pre- school settings received support from the Speech and Language therapist to ensure the settings are effectively addressing the speech, language and communication needs of the children
- Speech and Language Therapist delivered 'Launch into Language' sessions supported by Family Support Workers and local Family Center who supplied childcare while the parents attended the sessions.
- Health Visitors are identifying families in need of support and referring to the Family Support Workers – 16 individual families are currently receiving this support
- Midwives are starting to identify and refer families in need of support

- Home Safety sessions offered to all pregnant women at 25 weeks
- Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing - 168, 0-5years children benefitted from Summer of Fun. Currently a rolling programme of Winter of Wonder with first cohort of 15 children completed a 6 week programme and a second cohort of 15 signed up for January 2022.
- Early Years Integration Team co-delivering several groups. Work extensively with the only Family Centre in the area to keep it open and to support its revival. Now open five days per week.

Early Years: Impact and challenges of Covid-19 pandemic

- The Early Years Team became fully operational in October 2020, 6 months into the global pandemic and therefore faced a monumental barrier of setting up a place-based way of working during a time of strict restrictions.
- Quickly all the team had to change working practices of 'how to' engage with families, the wider community and other partners and key stakeholders.
- Engagement via virtual platforms and courses and programmes of support were delivered via Zoom calls or TEAMS. Whilst families engaged with this form of intervention it emerged that the positive impact of face-to-face delivery was immeasurable in meeting the needs of these families. Whilst virtual sessions allowed further reach and became accessible to those living furthest away, success was fully reliant on connectivity and adequate IT equipment.
- Online delivery was particularly hard for parents of pre-school children. Parents report that whilst virtual delivery was beneficial in some instances it was not their preferred choice of accessing programmes, groups, and support.
- Many babies and young children have not mixed with others as a result of the pandemic and the associated restrictions and therefore are finding it difficult to socialise and interact with peers which makes face to face delivery of services essential.
- The Team responded to this need by undertaking risk assessment and ongoing individual risk assessments, and were able very early on in the pandemic to deliver face to face support at home for individual families that were most in need.

Operational :

- Capacity of the team to respond to the needs of the population
- Lack of control/influence over how third sector partners operate during the pandemic
- COVID-19 uncertainty and fear affecting staff and parents of babies and young children
- The small size of the team affects capacity to deliver service when there is sickness or absence
- Annual nature of funding for the pilot

Strategic :

- Varying IT systems being used across services and the differing ways of collecting and storing information about children and their families.
- Cultural norms of organisations, service capacity and years of silo working are challenges that are being addressed and changed over time and with sensitivity by embracing the integration agenda for the early years.
- Work is underway in developing a Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy setting out an agreed vision, objectives and priorities for all services working within the Early Years sector across HDUHB, Local Authority and third sector organisations. Alongside the strategy a regional Maternity and Early Years Outcomes framework is in development to ensure that all services and interventions are designed in line with the population needs and are having a positive influence on outcomes for children and their families across the HDUHB region.

Additional WG Grants

The service area has received a substantial amount of additional funding from Welsh Government within this financial year. The table below illustrates the grant, date received, its purpose and how the funding has been utilised.

Date Received	Grant & Purpose	Project Plan	£
25/5/21	Child Development Fund (REV) 1st round To support families with preschool children who may have fallen behind in their development because of the pandemic. Improving outcomes in relations to: Speech, Language & Communication (SLC), fine and gross motor skills and social and emotional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of language and play virtual sessions and activity pack • Childcare for identified children via HV, TAF, CS, disability services. • SLC – funded SLT time to support childcare settings in utilising Wellcomm . Elklan training for childcare staff 	£201,066
28/10/21	Child Development Fund- (REV) 2nd round (As above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/carer and child sessions via family centres and community services to promote child development. • Childcare for identified children via HV, TAF, CS, disability services. • Promotion Speech language and Communication – communication boards in targeted parks 	£256,179

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for early years staff to promote fine and gross motor skills • Support for families with disabled pre-school children • Resources for Ti a fi and Parent & Toddler Play Groups 	
17/09/21	CCG – Additional (REV) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding for sustainability grants to help support childcare settings recover from the impact of Covid 2. Funding towards the cost of preparing the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessments 3. Funding to supplement Flying Start, Families First existing to drive down waiting lists and provide support as early as possible. 	3. Funding to supplement Flying Start, Families First included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for all CCG staff including, Resilience, Winston's Wish, Decider Skills, Parental conflict and Relationship, Systemic, Trauma. • Flying Start: Additional hours for Parenting Officer, SLT, Childcare staff, Family Links Nurture Programme training, ROSPA (home safety,) impact of neglect training, Forest School training, ALN support in FS childcare settings. • Families First: additional hours for existing staff, specifically for ALN/Disability staff and Domestic Abuse staff, Dad's Matters Pilot, therapeutic support, SLT support, • Legacy: Training courses and venue hire 	£531,934
23/09/21	Flying Start additional Capital grant (CAP)	Covid recovery funding to improve FS childcare setting, repairs, maintenance and adaptations across LA owned settings, including childcare settings situated in primary schools.	£311,500
Pending	Parenting Grant (REV) Funding towards developing the parenting workforce, innovative community projects and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training including; Family Links, Magic Behaviour Management - Schools 	£51,771

		<p>and Services Behaviour Support for All, Work with Parents National Occupational Standards, Baby Massage, Gro Brain, Writing Therapeutic Narratives, Life Story.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community project: Creative Conversational Family Play, Activities based in community spaces. Nine creative play session for families living in the Tyisha Ward (Children's First area) to develop creative play skills. • One Plus One, How to Argue Better Resources and Train the Trainer Training. 	
		Total	£1,352,450

Issues associated with the Covid Grants

- In year notification -some very late -short term, one off grants- to be spent by end financial year- no run in, planning time
- Specific Terms & Conditions limiting spend
- CDF : 2 terms of 6 month periods.
- Significant sums requiring additional services but no possibility of recruiting in the timescales given and no further commitment
- Capacity to deliver very challenging due to staffing issues across the board including in all other external agencies normally commissioned to deliver services
- Additional strain on small 'Infrastructure' Team to Plan, Deliver, Monitor, Evaluate: submit bids, progress reports, finance reports and comply with all Regs and Audit requirements.
- Positive use made of additional grants- many innovations to delivery but not possible to develop longer term until clarity of commitment of the resources

SUMMARY

Overall Family Support Programmes Challenges and Strengths

- Covid restrictions has had a significant detrimental impact on the delivery of preventative family support services in the County. The guidance for limiting social interaction has reduced all early intervention, promotional, drop-in, group activities to planned, targeted sessions only. This has had a big impact on numbers of people with which the service has been engaged. However, projects report higher needs in the families worked with and evidence of good engagement, families have reported better outcomes, on the distance travelled tool.
- Grant funded annual basis - impact of temporary contracts- Senior Manager agreement in progress - working to address this by accepting established grants as long term funding. This will enable recruiting to positions within main grant funded Programmes on a permanent basis and help with recruitment.
- High level of additional short-term grants- compromised staff capacity to manage. Need commitment to build and maintain a reasonable level of infrastructure staff.
- Tired workforce- managing significant change to delivery and additional delivery whilst also adapting to working from home arrangements. Staff voice important to hear and a priority for meaningful ongoing wellbeing and support agenda of the LA.
- Recruitment of suitably qualified and skilled staff has been and continues to be extremely challenging. Developing skilled staff is long term not a quick fix- short term grants do not support this objective.
- Service delivered by range of orgs, results in variation in Covid response.
- Public engagement affected by Covid messages-more difficult to engage targeted population: re-starts, re launch and much promotional work will be required for some elements of the Programmes to reach previous position of engagement in communities.
- Staff have adapted to being able to deliver many elements of the service on a virtual basis.
- Exceptional innovation and motivation shown to alternative service delivery during lockdowns: cooking sessions, delivery of thousands of play boxes for home virtual sessions, virtual parent /toddler singing sessions, walking groups etc etc
- Current and future delivery plans- services now positively embrace hybrid delivery as appropriate, to task and family preference.
- Confirmed the importance and impact of social media/communication channels with families.
- Opportunities have been taken to work with many different partners on planning for the additional funding.

Concluding Comments

Staff have worked hard to deliver support services throughout the pandemic. The numbers of families receiving a service has reduced significantly over this period for a number of reasons, as outlined within the report.

Preventative services work on the basis of positive engagement with the targeted population ie families voluntarily access the services often within their own communities. Covid prevented many of these services from running in their usual form, therefore many families did not have access to their usual networks of support.

We know that referrals to statutory children's services have been extremely high during the pandemic and that this level of demand is continuing. Whilst we cannot prove the correlation, we feel that it is reasonable to consider the link between the low availability of the usual family support services, and the high level of referrals further up the spectrum of need, at the level of statutory children's social care. We know that well supported parents, better parent their children.

'If we want to make a difference to children's lives, we must empower the people who care for them' Dr. Jack P Shankoff, Harvard Centre on the Developing Child.

Whilst group-based services will continue to be affected by Covid placing limitations on social mixing, our alternative methods of delivering support services to families has now had an opportunity to become established. We believe that we are now in a far stronger position than at the beginning of the pandemic, to continue to deliver the support most clearly needed by children, young people and families in the County and re-establish the important preventative nature of the service.

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EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23RD DECEMBER 2021

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK & FINISH GROUP DRAFT FINAL REPORT 2020/21:

SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION PROCESS

Recommendations / key decisions required:

- To endorse the report and recommendations for further consideration by the Cabinet.

Reasons:

- At its meeting held on the 21st April, 2021 the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to undertake a review of the current consultation process for school organisation changes, including changes in linguistic provision and closure of schools.
- The recommendations contained within the report have been formulated by the Task & Finish Group following the consideration of a range of evidence over a series of meetings held between May and November 2021.

To be referred to the Cabinet for decision: YES

Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Glynog Davies (Education & Children)

Chair of the Task & Finish Group:

Cllr. Darren Price

Designations:

Chair of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23RD DECEMBER 2021

Education & Children Scrutiny Committee
Task & Finish Group
Draft Final Report 2020/21:

School Organisation Consultation Process

At its meeting held on the 21st April, 2021 the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to undertake a review of the current consultation process for school organisation changes, including changes in linguistic provision and closure of schools

As a result of the discussions and evidence considered at the first three meetings and having regard to the fact that the Education & Children Department was in the process of revising its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and Modernising Education Programme (MEP), with public consultation envisaged within the next year, the Task & Finish Group agreed to formulate interim recommendations for consideration by Cabinet. The Interim Recommendations Report was considered and endorsed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 27th September, 2021 when it was unanimously resolved to endorse the report.

The Task and Finish Group met on a further three occasions and following further discussions and consideration of further evidence, formulated the following recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet:-

Recommendations

- (1) The Council should call on the Welsh Government to review the school organisation code with a view to streamlining the process and re-evaluating which proposals should fall under the scope of the Code. Welsh Government should also ensure that members of the public are encouraged to express their support as well as inviting 'objections' to any proposal as part of the Code.
- (2) Following a decision by Pre-Cabinet to consult informally on any proposal, the local member, School Head and Chair of Governors should be informed, followed by school staff and the full Governing Body. These discussions should take place prior to any public announcement or publication of any Council documentation on the proposal.

- (3) The Council should build on the experience of recent school organisation proposals and ensure that consultation events are held in the affected communities, in person and online during the informal consultation stage. These consultation events should provide as much information as possible with regards to the reason for the proposal, methodology and any appraisals (including site selection options in new build proposals).
- (4) The Council should agree a one-page information sheet for parents, community members and other stakeholders explaining the consultation stages and ensure that this is available permanently on the Council's website and shared with parents of affected schools at the beginning of the consultation process.
- (5) The Council should ensure that a specific Communications Plan is developed for any school organisation proposal – ensuring that stakeholders are encouraged to respond to the consultation either online or via email and that paper copies of feedback forms are available throughout the consultation period and made available at any community consultation events.
- (6) When moving a school along the Welsh language continuum, the Council should build on the experiences of recent school organisation proposals and ensure that parents and other stakeholders are provided with materials which outline the benefits of bilingualism and advice on the support available to non-Welsh speaking parents. These materials should be made available online and shared in the community engagement events.
- (7) Once the Council has agreed to formally implement a school organisation proposal it should establish a Project Stakeholder Forum in order to keep schools, staff and other community stakeholders such as Town and Community Councils informed of progress. The Forum would also provide stakeholders with a regular means of raising queries with Council Officers and for problem solving ahead of formal implementation of the proposal.
- (8) The School Organisation Code, WESP and MEP should be included in the introductory and ongoing training provided to School Governors, School Staff and elected members and this training should also be available online to be accessed on demand.
- (9) The Council's WESP Strategy, including specific targets and actions relating to the provision of Welsh medium education and the promotion of the Welsh language within individual schools, should be a standing item on the School Governing Body agenda.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	YES – Draft Final Report of the Task & Finish Group
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Signed: Linda Rees-Jones

Head of Administration & Law

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

If these recommendations are supported by the Cabinet there will be changes to Carmarthenshire's related policies.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Linda Rees-Jones

Head of Administration & Law

1. Local Member(s) – N/A

2. Community / Town Council – N/A

3. Relevant Partners – N/A

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations – Officers from the Education & Children Department contributed to and supported the work of the Task & Finish Group.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER AWARE CONSULTED

YES

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Title of Document	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Welsh in Education Strategic Plan	Education & Children Department
Modernising Education Programme	Education & Children Department
School Organisation Code	Education & Children Department

Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish 2020/21

School Organisation Consultation Process

Scrutiny

in Carmarthenshire

scrutiny@carmarthenshire.gov.uk



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Foreword

I am pleased to present the report of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group which was established to review the current consultation process for school organisation changes in Carmarthenshire.

Members felt that it was timely to review the process by which the Council engaged with schools, staff and the public, particularly in terms of proposed changes in linguistic provision and closure of schools.

In addition to reviewing the consultation process for individual school changes, the Task and Finish Group also set out to review how the Authority engaged and developed its Strategic Plans such as the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and the Modernising Education Programme (MEP). Interim recommendations relating to that element of the review have already been presented to the Cabinet.

As part of the review we received evidence from local authority officers and Welsh Government officials. We also undertook a survey of schools, local members and Town and Community Councils who had been involved in school organisation changes over recent years, and asked for their views in terms of what worked well and any areas for improvement.

I hope that the recommendations that we have made will deliver further improvements to the consultation process within Carmarthenshire.

I am very grateful to my fellow members of this group for their input and commitment during this review.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the officers who have provided specialist advice and support throughout.

Councillor Darren Price
Chair of the Task & Finish Group

Background

At its meeting held on the 21st April, 2021 the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to review the current consultation process for school organisation changes, including changes in linguistic provision and closure of schools.

In selecting this topic for review, members identified that:-

- the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee has a key role to play in monitoring services, development of key policies and strategies, as well as identifying areas for improvement or development within their remit;
- many Elected Members and School Governors have raised the school organisation consultation process as an area of concern.

Main Scope and Aims of the Review

The main scope and aims of the Task & Finish review were agreed as follows:-

- To review the current process of engaging and consulting with schools, pupils, parents and the public in terms of any proposed school changes;
- To identify national and international best practice on consultation and engagement;
- To review the way in which the Council's Strategic Objectives are communicated, consulted upon and understood by schools, pupils, parents and residents e.g. the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and the Modernising Education Programme (MEP);
- To formulate recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet.

Membership of the Task & Finish Group

At the meeting of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee held on 21st April, 2021, it was agreed that the membership of the Task & Finish Group comprise 6 Elected Members. The Group was appointed to reflect the political balance of the Council as a whole, as far as possible:-

- Plaid Cymru – Councillors Darren Price, Kim Broom & Jean Lewis
- Independent Group – Councillor Edward Thomas
- Labour Group – Councillor Dot Jones
- New Independent Group – Councillor Shahana Najmi
- Co-opted Member – Mr Anthony Enoch



Cllr. Darren Price
(Chair)
Gorslas
Plaid Cymru



Cllr. Kim Broom
Trimsaran
Plaid Cymru



Cllr. Dot Jones
Llannon
Labour



Cllr. Jean Lewis
Trelech
Plaid Cymru



Cllr. Edward Thomas
Llandeilo
Independent



Mr Anthony Enoch
Parent Governor
Member
Carmarthen Area

Attendance at Meetings

Attendance by members of the Task & Finish Group is shown in the table below. A total of 6 meetings were held during the 2021/22 municipal year.

Scrutiny Committee Member	Meetings Attended	%
Cllr. Darren Price (Chair)	6	100
Cllr. Kim Broom	6	100
Cllr. Dot Jones	6	100
Cllr. Jean Lewis	6	100
Cllr. Shahana Najmi	0	0
Cllr. Edward Thomas	4	66%
Mr Anthony Enoch	6	100

Overview

The group convened on six occasions. Three meetings were held prior to the formulation of the Interim Recommendations Report, as follows:-

Meeting 1 - 13th May 2021

The Group considered the review's scoping document and agreed to split the review into two parts:-

- How the Authority engages and consults in developing its strategic plans (WESP, MEP etc.)
- How the Authority engages and consults on specific school organisation proposals

PART (A) OF THE REVIEW – HOW THE AUTHORITY ENGAGES AND CONSULTS IN DEVELOPING ITS STRATEGIC PLANS (WESP, MEP ETC.)

The Group agreed to focus on point (a) initially as the department was in the process of revising its WESP and MEP plans, with public consultation envisaged within the next year. The Group were therefore keen to feed into that process.

Meeting 2 - 17th June 2021

Members met with Welsh Government officials, namely Bethan Webb, Deputy Director and Siwan Jones, Head of Welsh in Education Planning to discuss the following:-

- Welsh Government's expectation of Councils in relation to consultation when developing Strategic Plans;

- The requirements of the School Organisation Code in this regard and any plans to amend the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013;
- The proposed new school categorisation system for Wales.

Meeting 3 - 24th June 2021

Members met with more Welsh Government (WG) officials, namely Neal O'Leary, Programme Director, 21st Century Schools & Colleges Programme, Jacqui Moyle, Head of School Organisation & Admissions and Rachel De Benedictis, School Reorganisation Manager, 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme, to consider the following:-

- What are the WG's expectations of Councils in relation to consulting with schools, staff and communities on their Strategic Plans;
- School Organisation Code and how Councils deal with particular proposals e.g. school closures, WESP etc.
- Use of funding within 21st Century Schools and the ability to refurbish schools and open and close schools.

Members also received a presentation by the Authority's Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing and the Head of Access to Education on how officers intend to involve and consult with different stakeholders as part of the development of the WESP and MEP over the next year.

As a result of the discussions and evidence considered at the above meetings and having regard to the fact that the Education & Children Department was in the process of revising its WESP and MEP plans, with public consultation envisaged within the next year, the Group agreed to formulate interim recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.

Interim Recommendations Report

At its meeting held on the 8th July, 2021 the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee considered an Interim Recommendations Report prepared by the Task & Finish Group in order to feed into the Education & Children Department's plans.

The following interim recommendations were endorsed by the Committee for consideration by Cabinet:-

1. That the Education Department Officers continue to develop a clear Communication Plan for the revised MEP and WESP which as well as including elected members, schools and public also includes a variety of stakeholders such as the Youth Service, Mudiad Meithrin, Flying Start and School Councils, and that the process be refined as more information becomes available;
2. That a range of both on-line and in person techniques are employed where possible in consulting on the strategic plans;

3. That officers discuss any school organisation proposals which form part of the revised MEP with schools directly before any documentation is made public, and outline the nature of the proposal i.e. Investment Programme/Rationalisation Programme;
4. That the Authority writes to the Welsh Government urging clarity as soon as possible with regards to the new school categorisation system;
5. That the Authority writes to the Welsh Government calling on them to ensure that the process of changing a school's language category falls within the WESP instead of the School Organisation Code, to reflect the fact that a school's journey along the continuum is a process and not an event;
6. That the Authority writes to the Welsh Government seeking information on how many small schools have benefited from 21st century funding, to determine whether evidence shows that the 5 case business model fails to deliver funding to small schools.

The report was subsequently considered by Cabinet on 27th September, 2021 when it was unanimously resolved that the report and recommendations be endorsed.

Cabinet noted that the Group had split the review into two parts:-

- (a) How the Authority engages and consults in developing its strategic plans (WESP, MEP etc.)
- (b) How the Authority engages and consults on specific school organisation proposals

and that the Interim report, incorporating the above six recommendations, concentrated on part (a) of the review.

PART (B) OF THE REVIEW – HOW THE AUTHORITY ENGAGES AND CONSULTS ON SPECIFIC SCHOOL ORGANISATION PROPOSALS

The Group met on a further three occasions:-

Meeting 4 - 23rd September 2021

The Group received the following presentations:-

- Moving Schools Along the Language Continuum by the Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing;
- Public Consultation on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) by the Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing;
- School Organisation Process by the Head of Access to Education and the Modernisation Team Manager.

Meeting 5 - 21st October 2021

The Group considered the following evidence:-

- Guidance for Stakeholders on the Statutory Consultation Process
- Feedback on Recently Held Consultations
- Feedback from Schools that have been through the Statutory Consultation Process

Meeting 6 - 4th November 2021

The Group considered all the evidence received to date.

As a result of the discussions and evidence considered at the above meetings, the Group agreed the additional recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet.

Conclusion

Following consideration of a range of evidence in relation to part (b) of the review – How the Authority engages and consults on specific school organisation proposals, the Task & Finish Group agreed the following additional recommendations, which had been structured on a thematic basis, with four main themes identified:-

Theme 1 - School Organisation Code

The Group felt that the School Organisation Code is very cumbersome and rigid in the way that it is set out. The Group also noted that there were perceived inconsistencies in terms of which proposals currently fall within the scope of the Code.

For example, a proposal to federate a number of schools over a relatively large geographical area does not currently fall within the scope of the Code, and these proposals are only subject to one public consultation period of up to 6 weeks. However, if an authority wants to build a new school to replace a building which is in a poor state of repair, it is subject to the Code – a formal consultation period, a statutory objection period and a number of other expectations which must be met.

The Group also questioned why there was a need for both a formal consultation process, which is reported to Cabinet/ Council for decision, and a statutory objection period, which provides a second opportunity to object and further extends the process. The Group felt that the Welsh Government should look to streamline the process - ensuring that stakeholders had sufficient opportunity to comment on proposals, but also ensuring that there was no unnecessary duplication or inefficient use of resources.

Furthermore, it was noted that the Code currently prescribes a pretty adversarial process. It talks of inviting 'objections' in the statutory objection period. The Group felt that supportive comments should also be invited throughout the process so as to ensure a fair representation of opinion.

The Group noted that some school organisation proposals, such as extending a school's age range from 4-11 years to 3-11 years for example, may have universal

support within the community, yet the Authority must follow the School Organisation Code, and invite 'objections' at the Statutory Objection stage.

As part of its Interim Recommendations under Part 1 of the review the Group has already asked the Council to write to the Welsh Government calling on them to ensure that the process of changing a school's language category falls within the WESP instead of the School Organisation Code, to reflect the fact that a school's journey along the continuum is a process and not an event.

It was felt by the Group that the School Organisation Code should only apply where an authority proposes to close a school.

Recommendation 1

The Council should call on the Welsh Government to review the school organisation code with a view to streamlining the process and re-evaluating which proposals should fall under the scope of the Code. Welsh Government should also ensure that members of the public are encouraged to express their support as well as inviting 'objections' to any proposal as part of the Code.

Theme 2 - Engagement and Consultation

The Group felt that a period of informal consultation with key stakeholders, prior to any formal decision to proceed, is vitally important. This is a practice that has developed across the County over recent years. The Group heard that it had worked well in a number of instances where key stakeholders were involved early on in discussions on a school organisation proposal. There is a need to ensure that this happens in every instance.

The Group therefore felt that discussions with the Local Member, Head and Chair of Governors firstly, and then with the full Governing Body and staff at the school, should all happen before any public announcement or publication of any Council documentation on any school organisation proposal.

The Group felt that Informal consultation 'drop-in' events should be held in the affected communities as a matter of course, and online if necessary – building on some of the good work that has been undertaken in recent years.

As much information as possible should be provided as part of the informal consultation process, particularly on the methodology and reasons for the proposal. In new build proposals, the site selection process should also be included at the informal stage.

The Group found that the school organisation process is a long and potentially confusing process, and members felt that a simple one-page information sheet should be prepared for parents which outlines the process in layman's terms, particularly explaining when and how people can share their views. This resource should be shared with local stakeholders as soon as a specific school organisation proposal emerges and should be available online permanently.

In addition to the public consultation process, the Group noted that elected members retain the ability to call-in any particular school organisation proposal, and that

members of the Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee can call for a report on any proposal when formulating the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

Recommendation 2

Following a decision by Pre-Cabinet to consult informally on any proposal, the local member, School Head and Chair of Governors should be informed, followed by school staff and the full Governing Body. These discussions should take place prior to any public announcement or publication of any Council documentation on the proposal.

Recommendation 3

The Council should build on the experience of recent school organisation proposals and ensure that consultation events are held in the affected communities, in person and online during the informal consultation stage. These consultation events should provide as much information as possible with regards to the reason for the proposal, methodology and any appraisals (including site selection options in new build proposals).

Recommendation 4

The Council should agree a one-page information sheet for parents, community members and other stakeholders explaining the consultation stages and ensure that this is available permanently on the Council's website and shared with parents of affected schools at the beginning of the consultation process.

Recommendation 5

The Council should ensure that a specific Communications Plan is developed for any school organisation proposal – ensuring that stakeholders are encouraged to respond to the consultation either online or via email and that paper copies of feedback forms are available throughout the consultation period and made available at any community consultation events.

Recommendation 6

When moving a school along the Welsh language continuum, the Council should build on the experiences of recent school organisation proposals and ensure that parents and other stakeholders are provided with materials which outline the benefits of bilingualism and advice on the support available to non-Welsh speaking parents. These materials should be made available online and shared in the community engagement events.

Theme 3 - Project Engagement

The Group felt that once a school organisation proposal was agreed, ongoing project engagement and regular dialogue between the authority and key stakeholders was important and needed to be formalised.

The Group felt that there was a need for this to happen in every instance and therefore make the following recommendation.

Recommendation 7

Once the Council has agreed to formally implement a school organisation proposal it should establish a Project Stakeholder Forum in order to keep schools, staff and other community stakeholders such as Town and Community Councils informed of progress. The Forum would also provide stakeholders with a regular means of raising queries with Council Officers and for problem solving ahead of formal implementation of the proposal.

Theme 4 - Information and Training

The Group noted that not all Governors and school staff were aware of the Council's overarching educational strategic plans such as the MEP or WESP. The Group therefore felt that these plans, as well as the School Organisation Code, should form part of the introductory and ongoing training schedule.

The Group noted that every school is on the Welsh language continuum, and that there was a need for schools to regularly assess what progress they were making in moving along the continuum, in order to support the Welsh Government and local authority's objective of increasing the number of Welsh speakers. It was also noted that even in designated Welsh medium schools or schools that are on the higher end of the continuum, that it would be useful for the school to regularly assess how it promotes and normalises the use of Welsh within the school grounds in line with Welsh Government and Local Authority objectives.

Recommendation 8

The School Organisation Code, WESP and MEP should be included in the introductory and ongoing training provided to School Governors, School Staff and elected members and this training should also be available online to be accessed on demand.

Recommendation 9

The Council's WESP Strategy, including specific targets and actions relating to the provision of Welsh medium education and the promotion of the Welsh language within individual schools, should be a standing item on the School Governing Body agenda.

Further Recommendations for Consideration by the Cabinet

The Task & Finish Group agreed that the following additional recommendations be presented to the Cabinet for consideration:-

- (1) The Council should call on the Welsh Government to review the school organisation code with a view to streamlining the process and re-evaluating which proposals should fall under the scope of the Code. Welsh Government should also ensure that members of the public are encouraged to express their support as well as inviting 'objections' to any proposal as part of the Code.
- (2) Following a decision by Pre-Cabinet to consult informally on any proposal, the local member, School Head and Chair of Governors should be informed, followed by school staff and the full Governing Body. These discussions should take place prior to any public announcement or publication of any Council documentation on the proposal.
- (3) The Council should build on the experience of recent school organisation proposals and ensure that consultation events are held in the affected communities, in person and online during the informal consultation stage. These consultation events should provide as much information as possible with regards to the reason for the proposal, methodology and any appraisals (including site selection options in new build proposals).
- (4) The Council should agree a one-page information sheet for parents, community members and other stakeholders explaining the consultation stages and ensure that this is available permanently on the Council's website and shared with parents of affected schools at the beginning of the consultation process.
- (5) The Council should ensure that a specific Communications Plan is developed for any school organisation proposal – ensuring that stakeholders are encouraged to respond to the consultation either online or via email and that paper copies of feedback forms are available throughout the consultation period and made available at any community consultation events.
- (6) When moving a school along the Welsh language continuum, the Council should build on the experiences of recent school organisation proposals and ensure that parents and other stakeholders are provided with materials which outline the benefits of bilingualism and advice on the support available to non-Welsh speaking parents. These materials should be made available online and shared in the community engagement events.
- (7) Once the Council has agreed to formally implement a school organisation proposal it should establish a Project Stakeholder Forum in order to keep schools, staff and other community stakeholders such as Town and Community Councils informed of progress. The Forum would also provide

stakeholders with a regular means of raising queries with Council Officers and for problem solving ahead of formal implementation of the proposal.

- (8) The School Organisation Code, WESP and MEP should be included in the introductory and ongoing training provided to School Governors, School Staff and elected members and this training should also be available online to be accessed on demand.
- (9) The Council's WESP Strategy, including specific targets and actions relating to the provision of Welsh medium education and the promotion of the Welsh language within individual schools, should be a standing item on the School Governing Body agenda.

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APPENDIX 1

Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Group 2021/22

School Organisation Consultation Process

INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

SUMMARY

The Education and Children Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 21st April 2021 agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to review the current consultation process for school organisation changes.

The main aims of the review were agreed as follows:

1. Review the current process of engaging and consulting with schools, pupils, parents and the public in terms of any proposed school changes
2. Identify national and international best practice on consultation and engagement
3. Review the way in which the Council's Strategic Objectives is communicated, consulted upon and understood by schools, pupils, parents and residents eg WESP and MEP
4. To formulate recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board.

The Planning and Scoping Document included the following:

- Context for the review
- Advisors / Support Officers
- Aims / scope of the review
- How it will contribute to achieving corporate/community objectives and well-being objectives
- Initial list of key stakeholders
- Information / documents required to inform the work of the study
- Timescale for completion of the review

At the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group held on 13th May, 2021 it was decided to split the review into 2 parts.

- (a) How the authority engages and consults in developing its strategic plans (WESP, MEP etc.), and
- (b) How the authority engages and consults on specific school organisation proposals

The Group agreed to focus on point (a) initially as the Department was in the process of revising its WESP and MEP, with public consultation envisaged within the next year. The Group were therefore keen to feed into that process.

During the meeting held on the 17th June, 2021 members met with Welsh Government officials, namely Bethan Webb, Deputy Director and Siwan Jones, Head of Welsh in Education Planning to consider the following:

- Welsh Government's expectation of Councils on consultation when developing Strategic Plans
- The requirements of the school organisation code in this regard, and any plans to amend the Act
- The proposed new school categorisation system for Wales

During the meeting held on 24th June, 2021 members met with further Welsh Government officials namely Neal O'Leary, Programme Director, 21st Century Schools & Colleges Programme, Jacqui Moyle, Head of School Organisation and Admissions and Rachel De Benedictis, School Reorganisation Manager, 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme to consider the following:

- What are the expectations of WG of Councils when it comes to consulting with Schools, Staff and Communities on their Strategic Plans
- School Organisation Code – wider discussion on School Organisation Code and how Councils deal with particular proposals, i.e. schools closures, wesp etc.
- Use of funding within 21st Century Schools and ability to refurbish schools and open and close schools.

During the meeting held on 24th June, 2021 members were also presented with an outline by the Authority's Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing and Head of Access to Education on how officers intended to involve and consult different stakeholders as part of the development of the WESP and MEP over the next year.

During these meetings members discussed a number of issues. As a result of those discussions and in line with the desire to feed into the process of consultation around those Strategic Plans, the following interim recommendations were proposed:-

INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS

7. That officers in the Education & Children's Services Department continue to develop a clear Communication Plan for the revised MEP and WESP which as well as including elected members, schools and public also includes a variety of stakeholders such as

the Youth Service, Mudiad Meithrin, Flying Start and School Councils and that the process be refined as more information becomes available;

8. That a range of both on-line and in person techniques are employed where possible in consulting on the strategic plans;
9. That officers discuss any school organisation proposals which form part of the revised MEP with schools directly before any documentation is made public, and outline the nature of the proposal i.e. Investment Programme/ Rationalisation Programme;
10. That the Authority writes to the Welsh Government urging clarity as soon as possible with regards to the new school categorisation system;
11. That the Authority writes to the Welsh Government calling on them to ensure that the process of changing a school's language category falls within the WESP instead of the School Organisation Code, to reflect the fact that a school's journey along the continuum is a process and not an event;
12. That the Authority writes to the Welsh Government seeking information on how many small schools have benefited from 21st Century funding, to determine whether evidence shows that the 5 case business model fails to deliver funding to small schools.

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EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23RD DECEMBER 2021

FORTHCOMING ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING TO BE HELD ON 27TH JANUARY 2022

Agenda Item	Background	Reason for report
Covid Recovery (inc. scrutiny liaison with schools) [schools to be invited to participate in the meeting]	Currently members of the Scrutiny Committee are unable to visit schools. Therefore, a principle of School Engagement Sessions has been agreed with members. For the meeting in January, a school will be invited to share information about how it is responding to the Covid Pandemic. This will be in the form of a presentation followed by a Q&A session.	To provide members with first-hand evidence of the impact of the pandemic, and how schools are focusing on pupils' wellbeing and key skills.
Budget Consultation	The objective of the report is to allow members to consider the corporate budget strategy for the financial years 2022/23 to 2024/25 to consider the service delivery impact and options for the forthcoming years.	To consider and comment on the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members consider and comment on the budget strategy proposals • Members consider and comment on the proposals for delivery of efficiency savings for their service area identified in Appendix A(i) • Members are also invited to bring forward any other proposals for efficiency savings • Members examine the Departmental Budgets • Members endorse the Charging Digests
Departmental Business Plan	The full business plan includes a self-assessment of performance during 2021-22 and outlines the priorities for the department during 2022/23 – 2025 and how the Services support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy. The document also accompanies the Revenue Budget Consultation as an integration of financial and business planning (this was also a proposal for improvement by Audit Office).	To give members an opportunity to review the Department's draft business plan.

Items circulated to the Committee under separate cover since the last meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 (as at 31st August 2021)• 2021/22 Quarter 2 - Performance Report (1st April to 30th September 2021)
Items attached for information
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The latest version of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2021/222. The latest version of the Cabinet's Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Education & Children Scrutiny Committee – Forward Work Programme 2021/22

25th May 2021 moved to 11 th June 2021	8 th July 2021	6th October, 2021 cancelled	30 th November 2021	23 rd December 2021	27 th January 2022	16 th March 2022	21 st April 2022
Children's Services (increased referral rates)	Attendance - Education Recovery Plan (catch up)	Wellbeing and Mental health / COVID19	Arrangements for School Engagement Sessions (scrutiny liaison with schools)	Effectiveness of new ERW Model	Covid Recovery (inc scrutiny liaison with schools) [schools to be invited to participate in the meeting]	New Regional Collaboration Model	TIC Programme Update
Youth Support Services	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan	Tackling NEETs and funding challenges	MEP	Tackling NEETs and Funding Challenges	Team Around the Family	Demand on Children's Services	Elective Home Education
ALN Transformation Action Plan	Children's Services (increased referral rates)		Education Dept 10 Year Strategy	Support for Families	Budget Consultation		
School Engagement Sessions (Previously Scrutiny School Visits)			Mental health and wellbeing / COVID19 – staff and pupils (to include update on CO2 monitoring and ventilation in schools)	Task & Finish Group Final Report – School Organisation Consultation Process	Departmental Business Plans		

The following “for information/update” reports are circulated to the Committee via e-mail throughout the year:-

- Budget Monitoring
- Annual Performance Report (Half Yearly)

Additional reports requested by the Committee:-

- Increasing costs of building materials and impact on MEP (circulated electronically)

Workshops to be arranged during the year:-

- Vocational Courses (possibly in conjunction with Social Care Scrutiny Committee?)

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CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22
–as at 23/09/2021 (For the period September 21 – September 22)

Introduction

This plan is published to encourage and enable greater understanding between the Cabinet, all Councillors, the public and other stakeholders. It assists the Scrutiny Committees in planning their contribution to policy development and holding the Cabinet to account.

The plan gives the public and stakeholders a chance to see the forthcoming major decisions to be made by the Cabinet over the next 12 months. It is reviewed and published quarterly to take account of changes and additional key decisions.

WORKING DRAFT

CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22
–as at 23/09/2021 (For the period September 21 – September 22)

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject area and brief description of nature of report	Responsible Officer	Cabinet Portfolio	Scrutiny Committee to be consulted	Date of expected decision by Cabinet
ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLANS (TOWN CENTRES)	Jason Jones, Head of Regeneration	Resources	Community	25.10.21
CITY DEAL – PROCUREMENT UPDATE	Wendy Walters, Chief Executive	Leader	Community	31.01.22
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY TASK & FINISH GROUP	Wendy Walters, Executive	Communities & Rural Affairs		8.11.22
WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS	Wendy Walters Executive	Deputy Leader	If applicable	As and when requirede
REVIEW OF COMMUNITY COUNCIL BOUNDARIES & ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	Wendy Walters, Chief Executive	Resources		As and when required
REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION (LEGISLATION CHANGES) - CRWG	Linda Rees Jones Head of Administration & Law	N/A CRWG - FEB	N/A	As And When Required
CITY DEAL UPDATE (INCLUDING PENTRE AWEL)	Wendy Walters Chief Executive	Leader		As & When Required

CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22
–as at 23/09/2021 (For the period September 21 – September 22)

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Subject area and brief description of nature of report	Responsible Officer	Executive Portfolio	Scrutiny Committee to be consulted	Date of expected decision by Cabinet
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22	Jake Morgan – Director of Communities/Silvana Sauro	Social Care & Health	07/07/21 & 08/07/21	13/09/2021
DOG BREEDERS LICENCE UPDATE (Change of Policy / Legislation – awaiting WG confirmation)	Jonathan Morgan – Head of Homes and Safer Communities/ Roger Edmunds	Public Protection		TBC
PROVIDING ADDITIONAL PITCHES FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS IN THE LLANELLI AREA	Jonathan Morgan – Head of Homes and Safer Communities/Rachel Davies	Housing	TBC	18/10/2021
HRA BUDGET SERVICES CHARGES AND RENT SETTING 2022/23	Jonathan Morgan – Head of Homes and Safer Communities/Rachel Davies	Housing		January 22
CHS+ DELIVERING WHAT MATTERS BUSINESS PLAN	Jonathan Morgan – Head of Homes and Safer Communities/ Rachel Davies/ Gareth Williams	Housing	February 2022	February 2022 (Budget)

CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22
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CORPORATE SERVICES

Subject area and brief description of nature of report	Responsible Officer	Executive Portfolio	Scrutiny Committee to be consulted	Date of expected decision by Cabinet
BI-MONTHLY REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	N/A	SEPT NOV JAN MARCH
QUARTERLY TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	N/A	SEPT/OCT JAN APR
ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT & PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	N/A	JULY
BUDGET OUTLOOK	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	N/A	JULY
5 YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	ALL JAN/ FEB	JAN
COUNCIL TAX BASE	Chris Moore / Helen Pugh	Resources	N/A	DEC
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Chris Moore / Helen Pugh	Resources	N/A	FEB
BUDGET STRATEGY (Revenue and Capital)	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	ALL JAN/ FEB	JAN
HIGH STREET RATE RELIEF	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services /Helen Pugh	Resources	N/A	March
CORPORATE RISK REGISTER	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services / Helen Pugh	Resources	– Audit Committee March & SEPT	
TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	N/A	FEBRUARY – BUDGET MEETING
FINAL BUDGET Revenue & Capital	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	N/A	FEBRUARY – BUDGET MEETING
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING REPORT	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	HOUSING	FEBRUARY BUDGET MEETING
BUDGET STRATEGY	Chris Moore Director of Corporate Services	Resources	N/A	NOV

CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22
–as at 23/09/2021 (For the period September 21 – September 22)

WORKING DRAFT

CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22
–as at 23/09/2021 (For the period September 21 – September 22)

EDUCATION & CHILDREN

Subject area and brief description of nature of report	Responsible Officer	Executive Portfolio	Scrutiny Committee to be consulted	Date of expected decision by Cabinet
MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME – MUTUAL INVESTMENT MODEL -DEED OF ADHERENCE	Simon Davies – Head of Access to Education	Education & Children		27/09/2021

WORKING DRAFT

CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22
–as at 23/09/2021 (For the period September 21 – September 22)

ENVIRONMENT

Subject area and brief description of nature of report	Responsible Officer	Executive Portfolio	Scrutiny <i>Committee to be consulted</i>	Date of expected decision by Cabinet
HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE MANUAL	Steve Pilliner - Head of Transportation & Highways/ Chris Nelson/ Richard Waters	Environment	EPP 4/10/21	25/10/21
LEQ	Ainsley Williams	Environment	EPP 4/10/21	25/10/21
FUTURE WASTE STRATEGY	Ainsley Williams / Dan John	Environment	4/10/21	25/10/21
EQUESTRIAN STRATEGY	Steve Pilliner - Head of Transportation & Highways /Caroline Ferguson	Environment	EPP 12/11/21	22/11/21
ELECTRIC VEHICLE STRATEGY	Steve Pilliner / Simon Charles	Environment	EPP 12/11/21	6/12/21
PUBLIC CONVENIENCES	Ainsley Williams. Head of Waste & Environmental Services Rhys Davies	Environment	EPP 16/12/21	January 22

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EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price [Chair]

Councillors:

S. Allen, L. Bowen, K. Broom, D. Cundy [substitute for G. Jones], R. James, S.M. Allen, L.R. Bowen, K.V. Broom, D.M. Cundy (In place of G.R. Jones), R. James, B.W. Jones, D. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, D.T. Williams, V. Kenny, AEnoch, Healey-Benson and G. Davies

Co-opted Members:

A. Enoch	-	Parent Governor
F. Healey-Benson	-	Parent Governor
V. Kenny	-	Roman Catholic Church Representative

Also in attendance:

Councillor

The following Officers were in attendance:

G. Morgans – Director of Education & Children’s Services
S. Davies – Head of Access to Education
A. Thomas – Head of Education & Inclusion Services
C. Griffiths – Welsh Language Development Manager
E. Forsyth – Interim Head of School Improvement, Curriculum & Wellbeing
S. Rees - Simultaneous Translator
S. Hendy – Member Support Officer [Webcasting]

Virtual Meeting : 10.00 am - 12.30 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Jones and E. Thomas.

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

There were no declarations of personal interest including any party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. WELLBEING: EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Committee considered a report providing an overview of the extensive ways in which the Education and Children’s Services Department is supporting our schools, pupil referral units and specialist settings with regard to the wellbeing of learners and staff.

The department is continuing to work alongside schools responding to the changing needs of learners, families and staff, as it continues to address the COVID pandemic. The wellbeing challenges faces by schools are increasingly pronounced and complex, adding additional pressures on staffing.

The report detailed:-

- what is known about current staff and pupil wellbeing;
- how the School Improvement Team supports the wellbeing of its staff and learners;
- further support initiatives;
- education and Child Psychology Service and Emotional Health Team;
- corporate and other support available.

The report also included an update on CO₂ monitoring and ventilation in schools and what measures are being undertaken to ensure good ventilation to aid in the prevention of the spread of Covid.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- In response to a question as to whether there was any identifiable pattern in the data collected, the Committee was informed that there was no pattern as such, however, families from more disadvantaged backgrounds are perhaps facing more challenges. It was important to note that different challenges are arising in different areas as the challenges are changing over time;
- Asked how Peer to Peer Networks work, the Committee was informed that this is a group forum where headteachers come together to share concerns and experiences. Additionally, if any headteacher requires further assistance then that is arranged and there is also signposting to support available from external organisations;
- Concern was expressed at the increase in suicide ideation and attempts and the fact that due to waiting lists it can take up to 3 weeks before a counsellor can be seen and officers were asked if extra safeguards are put in place if the risk is high. Members were reassured that if a significant need is identified at the beginning of counselling then those children are fast-tracked. When any pupil displays concerns, schools are robustly supported immediately by both the education psychologists and safeguarding teams. Direct support is provided both for the young person and their family;
- Officers were asked about the level of increase. The Committee was informed that 58 cases of suicide or suicide ideation were referred for counselling in 2020/21 which was an increase from 38 in the previous year. This was quite a considerable increase but it was also the national picture;
- Reference was made to the significant unprecedented pressure placed upon parents during the pandemic with regard to home schooling and other associated issues and reference was made to the fact that the report did not refer to parental engagement i.e. helping parents to help their children. The Committee was informed that many schools engaged in the Health & Happiness Programme at the beginning of the pandemic which addressed some issues involved such as routines etc. Also, a pilot Family Engagement

Project was currently being undertaken to further extend some of the support offered to families. The Director pointed out that where children are concerned, there is a crossover between Education and Children's Services so Family Support Services contribute to this agenda as well. Many children will be supported by both departments;

- Reference was made to the added pressure placed on headteachers with regard to consultations and it was felt that this was unnecessary at the moment, given the amount of pressure already on staff. The Committee was informed that consultation on strategies e.g. the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is a statutory requirement and the Authority is obligated to consult and report back to the WG by the end of January;
- With regard to our special schools, officers were asked if they succeeded to keep in close contact with Social Services, physiotherapy and other agencies during the pandemic. Also, did these children have more open air teaching experiences? The Committee was informed that, in line with all the risk assessments, multi-agency working has continued for all learners within all our specialist settings. The leaders have been really creative in their thinking to ensure that learners are accessing the range of learning and support that they need. Regular communication with families to make sure that even during blended learning times, when learners were not able to be in class, rigorous support was in place. Even in the most challenging of situations leaders have been very innovative in the way they have dealt with the most vulnerable learners to ensure that that provision does continue. We heavily endorse outdoor learning for all our learners and some of the projects introduced focussed on getting learners outside, even whilst learning from home, by engaging with parents;
- Concern was expressed over the amount of pressure being placed on headteachers throughout the pandemic and now with the new variant and more pressure and responsibility being placed on headteachers, officers were asked if they were satisfied that adequate support was being provided with regard to transmission of the disease and health and safety. The Director informed the Committee that officers are well aware of the challenges headteachers are facing, via regular contact. Officers produced a Risk Assessment using a corporate template and assistance was provided with completing these. The Health & Safety team have also been in regular contact with schools. He pointed out that it was important to remember the health and wellbeing of officers who have been working non stop throughout the pandemic, being constantly on-call. The cohort of headteachers and officers have worked very well together; it has been a team effort which has worked and continues to work effectively;
- Reference was made to school closure proposals and officers were asked if any support is provided for children in this regard. The Committee was informed that a myriad of different anxieties are being displayed by children at the moment because of how much the world has changed. Officers are robust in supporting schools with any concerns being displayed whether it be in relation to a change in education provision within the area, climate change etc. Staff are considering the wellbeing of children from many different angles and this intelligence is fed through to officers so that they can cater the support accordingly and lessen the pressure;
- Reference was made to staffing problems being experienced in schools in that there are not enough staff available to prepare food at lunchtime. The Committee was informed that there have been staffing challenges

throughout the pandemic mainly due to staff awaiting PCR results etc. Some work is being done around supply staff, the issue has been raised with the WG and some work is being done with Supply Agencies in an attempt to increase the bank of supply staff;

- Concern was expressed with regard to areas of poor ventilation in some schools where CO₂ readings are consistently amber or red and officers were asked how many schools are affected. The Committee was informed that monitors have been distributed to schools and they have been asked to identify rooms which are consistently amber or red. As soon as those results are received officers will consult with colleagues in Property Services to try and address the poor ventilation in those areas with portable ventilation systems or whatever is needed;
- Members noted the tremendous amount of support available to pupils, teachers and headteachers.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

4.1 that the report be received;

4.2 that the Committee receive regular updates on the situation regarding ventilation in our schools.

5. EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S 10 YEAR STRATEGY

The Committee considered the Education & Children's Services Department's 10 Year Strategy which brought together the department's strategic thinking, collective vision, mission statements and priorities over the next 10 years. The department's new proposed vision was "*Making sure every child and young person is valued and valued equally*".

The strategy builds on the improving practice which was already evident within the education service, in order to deliver the same opportunity for all learners with consistently excellent outcomes. It sets out a clear, shared vision for the role that education services plays in the future development of vibrant communities and a prosperous economy in Carmarthenshire. This high-level strategy will be operationalised through departmental and divisional plans and will also be evident in School Development Plans.

The Committee was asked to consider and comment upon the following issues and to formulate views thereon for submission to the Cabinet for consideration:-

1. Does the Strategy meet the aims as noted in the report?
2. Are the 20 Purpose Pieces relevant and do they reflect the County Council's aspirations?
3. Can the Strategy be improved in any way?

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- Asked how officers consulted with schools on the strategy, the Committee was informed that consultation was undertaken on two levels – three workshops were held with headteachers and consultation was also

undertaken with secondary school councils;

- Reference was made to the fact that over the next 10 years a significant cohort of children who have been affected by the pandemic will pass through the school system and the need to ensure that no children slip through the system was stressed. The Director explained that Aspirations 2,4 and 5 within the strategy have been specifically written with that in mind. Many of these high level aspirations have been written bearing in mind that we will be dealing with the repercussions of the pandemic for a long time;
- Reference was made to the fact that the availability of staff with relevant experience and bilingual skills continues to be a challenge for the Authority. With regard to the 10 Year Strategy and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, officers were asked how the Authority is going to address these issues i.e. how will we recruit all the staff with necessary language skills and how will we retain those staff. The Director explained that beneath these strategies sit the departmental business plans which contain the details in relation to how we support the strategies. Lots of staff have engaged in online learning during the pandemic and teaching still remains an attractive occupation with a high number currently undertaking teacher training;
- Asked how the strategy will be linked to measurements which can be monitored such as KPIs and timescales, the Director explained that officers are currently in discussion regarding the best way to measure progress on the 20 high level aspirations;
- With regard to aspiration 3, reference was made to the fact that we need to ensure that children have the right skills to succeed in particular entrepreneurship and innovation. With regard to aspiration 18, the importance of the role of parents and carers was stressed as it was felt that schools need supportive parents and parents need supportive schools;
- If WG is serious about reaching 1m Welsh speakers then the next 10 years are going to be instrumental in that, officers were asked if there will be specific targets in place in relation to the number of children being taught in Welsh streams etc. The Director explained that the WG has set targets for each Local Authority and for Carmarthen the target is that 68%-74% of children in Year 1 will be taught through the medium of Welsh by the end of the WESP. The figure is currently 58% and we have to respond to that challenge.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

- 5.1 that the report be received;**
- 5.2 that reference to parents and carers be included in Aspiration 18 within the strategy;**
- 5.3 that the observations made above be relayed to the Cabinet for consideration.**

6. FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS.

The Committee considered a report outlining proposed arrangements for future engagement with schools during current limitations. School visits were previously undertaken by the Committee, however, the limitations meant that visits were not possible and officers had therefore provided a new structure, in the form of school engagement sessions, which would allow scrutiny to ensure that evaluation and improvement is functioning effectively.

The proposed school engagement sessions will help the Scrutiny Committee to oversee the quality of delivery by the Local Authority and in doing so, fulfil its democratic accountability functions. They will also provide the Scrutiny Committee with an insight into how schools are preparing for significant changes in areas such as the new curriculum and Additional Learning Needs.

Direct and first-hand engagement with schools will provide valuable opportunities for members to better understand the impact that the Local Authority's support has on provision across our school system.

The focus of school engagement sessions should be on the quality and impact of governance and accountability arrangements with regard to schools and the effectiveness of the Local Authority to support schools and learners which should include evaluating the effectiveness of democratic accountability arrangements in supporting schools.

The engagement sessions would take the form of physical visits to schools (when allowed again), virtual/remote meetings or requesting schools to attend meetings in the council chamber (when possible).

Suggested key themes for the remainder of the academic year 2021/22 and for the Autumn term 2022/23 were as follows:-

	Theme	Approach
January 2022	Recovery from covid and wellbeing of staff	Remotely
Spring 2022	Preparedness for ALN transformation	Currently remotely
Summer 2022	Preparedness for Curriculum and WESP	Currently remotely
Autumn 2022	MEP – buildings	School visits

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

- 6.1 that the report be noted;**
- 6.2 that school engagement sessions be arranged as detailed in the report.**

7. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee considered a list of items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the Committee to be held on 23rd December, 2021.

As the budget consultation report has been moved to the January meeting, leaving

only one report for consideration at the next meeting, it was requested that the “Teams Around The Family” report scheduled to be submitted to the January meeting be brought forward to the December meeting. The Director suggested that the report be titled “Support for Families” which would allow for a far wider scope.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next meeting, with the inclusion of the above-mentioned amendment, be noted.

8. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 8TH JULY, 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th July, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

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