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WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2022

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 AM ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2022** FOR THE TRANSACTION OF THE BUSINESS OUTLINED ON THE ATTACHED AGENDA.

Wendy Walters

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Democratic Officer:	Julie Owens
Telephone (Direct Line):	01267224088
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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)

Term of office expires on the 31/03/2022

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Vacancy | Area 1 – Dinefwr |
| 2. | Mr A. Enoch | Area 2 – Carmarthen |
| 3. | 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. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT SESSION 5 - 8
5. UPDATE ON PARTNERIAETH 9 - 30
6. CONTACTS & REFERRALS TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES 31 - 44
7. SCRUTINY ACTIONS UPDATE 45 - 50
8. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 28 JANUARY 2022 51 - 58

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Agenda Item 4

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16TH MARCH 2022

Subject: School Engagement Session

Purpose:

- To allow members of scrutiny to engage directly with the school community.
- To be provided with first-hand evidence of school preparedness for, and the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act.

To consider and comment on the following issues:

- How schools have been preparing for the implementation of the new Code from September 2021
- How the Education Service have been supporting schools
Current issues arising from early implementation

Reasons:

- Current limitations mean that scrutiny visits to schools are not possible. Education Services have therefore provided a new structure to allow scrutiny to ensure that evaluation and improvement is functioning effectively.
- The sessions will help scrutiny members to oversee the quality of delivery by the local authority and, in doing so, to fulfil their democratic accountability functions.
- Scrutiny members wish to understand the impact of the new ALN act on schools.

To be referred to the Cabinet / Council for decision:

No

Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder:-

Cllr Glynog Davies

Directorate:

Education and Children Services

Name of Head of Service:

Aneirin Thomas

Report Authors:

Aneirin Thomas

Rebecca Williams / Elinor Williams

Designations:

Head of Education Services and Inclusion

Head of Education Services and Inclusion
ALN Managers

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EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH MARCH 2022

Subject: School Engagement Session

Purpose:

- To allow members of scrutiny to engage directly with the school community.
- To be provided with first-hand evidence of school preparedness for, and the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act.

The ALN system in Carmarthenshire

We are determined to deliver a fully inclusive education system for learners in Carmarthenshire, a system where needs are identified early and addressed quickly, and where all learners are supported to reach their potential.

To prepare for the implementation of the ALN system officers have been working, together with ALNCo to increase the skills and understanding of school staff to improve outcomes for children and young people with ALN.

We want to make sure that:

- children, their parents and young people's views, wishes and feelings are listened to when decisions are being made about how to help children and young people;
- the right support is put in place quickly to help children and young people with ALN
- everyone works together to help children and young people with ALN, including education and health services;
- most children and young people with ALN are able to go to their local nursery, school, PRU or college, if it is right for them;
- children and their families are able to access learning support even before they start school or nursery;
- children, their parents and young people understand the additional learning provision (ALP) being offered;
- if children, their parents or young people are not happy with decisions about statements, there are rights in law to help them do something about it;
- children and young people with ALN get help in Welsh wherever possible if they need it.

To this end we have engaged with schools to ensure that schools have:

- An organisational culture that affirms 'ALN is everyone's business'.
- A sound universal understanding of high-quality differentiated teaching amongst the workforce.
- Embedded inclusive practice which makes appropriate reasonable adjustments to enable access to the school environment, curriculum and facilities and a culture the encourages a sense of belonging;
- Good leadership and management that reflects an understanding of the Act and embeds ALN within the school development plan and the capacity building activity of the school.
- An Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) with a recognised strategic role who influences school policy and the curriculum offer as well as encouraging person-centred approaches in the culture of the school.
- A person-centred approach to meeting the needs of learners that shows evidence that participation in decision making has been encouraged and the views, wishes and feelings of the child and their parents/carers and the young person have been seriously considered.
- Sound arrangements and assessment for identifying ALN early.
- Arrangements to provide targeted support and intervention using person centred tools and approaches.
- Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing progress and the effectiveness of interventions including clarity around how delegated funding is used to promote progress for learners with ALN (value-added). Roll out of provision mapping tool to support progress monitoring.
- Arrangements for avoiding or resolving disagreements or disputes early and avoiding escalation of needs and provision.
-

**DETAILED REPORT
ATTACHED ?**

School Presentation.

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: **Aneirin Thomas**

Head of Education and Inclusion

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

Not Applicable

(Please specify the outcomes of consultations undertaken where they arise against the following headings)

1. Local Member(s)

Not Applicable

2. Community / Town Council

Not Applicable

3. Relevant Partners

Not Applicable

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Not Applicable.

**CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S)
AWARE/CONSULTED**
NO

Include any observations here

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

There are none.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 16TH MARCH, 2022

Subject: Update on PARTNERIAETH

Purpose- To update Education and Children Scrutiny Committee Members on PARTNERIAETH, the new regional consortia serving Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Swansea's schools.

To consider and comment on the following issues:

To consider the report and presentation from the Partnership Lead Officer noting-

- Any comments/suggestions regarding the role and structure of the new consortia.
- Any comments/suggestions regarding the way of working/supporting Carmarthenshire schools.

Reasons:

To ensure that Carmarthenshire schools receive a high quality service that meets their requirements.

To be referred to the Cabinet / Council for decision:

No.

Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder:-

Cllr. Glynog Davies, Education and Children

Directorate: Education and Children's Services	Designations:	E Mail Addresses:
Name of Head of Service: Gareth Morgans		
Report Author(s): Gareth Morgans	Director of Education and Children's Services	EDGMorgans@sirgar.gov.uk
Ian Altman	Partneriaeth Lead Officer	ian.altman@partneriaeth.cymru

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH MARCH, 2022

Subject: Update on PARTNERIAETH

The attached report provides the Education and Children Scrutiny Committee with information in regard to-

1. Background to regional collaboration.
2. ERW Consortium
3. Establishing of a new consortium- PARTNERIAETH
4. Staffing structure, priorities, functions and funding.
5. New ways of working.

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: Gareth Morgans

Director of Education and Children's Services

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

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

The model is based on a vision of regional school improvement consortia working on behalf of local authorities to lead, orchestrate and co-ordinate the improvement in the performance of schools and education of young people. The prime mission and purpose of regional consortia is to help those who educate our children and young people. Local authorities retain the statutory responsibility for schools and school improvement. Being part of the PARTNERIAETH will support the Director of Education and Children's Services deliver the County Council's statutory duties in regard to school improvement and statutory accountability for school performance together with the responsibility for the exercise of statutory powers of intervention and organisation of schools.

Legal

A legal agreement for PARTNERIAETH has been developed and agreed by each partner. The agreement dissolves the existing Joint Committee for ERW and establishes a new Joint Committee for PARTNERIAETH.

Finance

Engagement at a political level through Cabinet, existing ERW Joint Committee and a shadow Joint Committee has been undertaken in respect of the size and diversity of the ERW footprint and the need to consider a smaller entity, value for money, transparency, stronger governance on decision making and high quality professional learning. The new PARTNERIAETH will be funded in the same way as ERW via Local Authority contributions and Welsh Government funding.

Risk Management Issues

If we did not engage in PARTNERIAETH there would be a risk in us being unable to deliver on our school improvement and professional development priorities. Joining PARTNERIAETH addresses key corporate risk in relation to delivering a high quality education to Carmarthenshire's learners and our ability to recruit and retain high quality and resilient school workforce who can respond to and deal with the transformation of education in Wales.

Staffing Implications

The new PARTNERIAETH will be a key delivery partner to each constituent Council's school improvement service and will deliver education improvement functions. Integration and close collaboration between PARTNERIAETH's central team and our local team is essential. The functions of PARTNERIAETH are predominately professional learning to improve education practitioner standards and leadership development.

The proposal is to scale down the size of the ERW central team and re-setting the functions PARTNERIAETH will deliver. Following a formal consultation a new structure was approved by the Shadow Joint Committee and is now being implemented.

Physical Assets- Y Llwyfan will be the base for the regional service and all costs associated with the lease will be the responsibility of PARTNERIAETH

CONSULTATIONS

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

Signed: Gareth Morgans

Director of Education and Children's Services

1. Local Member(s) - Not relevant

2. Community / Town Council- Not relevant

3. Relevant Partners- Schools and Governing Bodies have been kept updated on changes

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations- Trade Unions have been consulted on the remodelling of the consortium and transition from ERW to Partneriaeth.

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

Cllr. Emlyn Dole Chairs the Partneriaeth Joint Committee and Cllr. Glynog Davies is a member of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee. They have both been involved in the development of Partneriaeth.

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

THERE ARE NONE

Background to Regional Collaboration

The Welsh Government's National Model for Regional Working was initially developed in autumn 2013 in order to accelerate changes already underway. It signalled a deeper commitment to regional working and emphasised a model of school improvement, based on mutual support that was largely new across most of Wales.

Regional Consortia have therefore been in being for nearly a decade. They were formed as a direct result of Welsh Government's direction in their '**National model for regional working**'. WG states in the document- *The National model for regional working outlines our vision of regional school improvement consortia as well as the relative roles of each tier (schools, local authorities, and regional consortia) within the education system.*

In the south west and mid Wales region six local authorities, namely Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys and Swansea, came together to create a model to address the national requirements. The original service was called starting with SWAMWAC (South West and Mid Wales Consortium).

ERW (Education through Regional Working) Consortium

In 2015 further guidance was developed by Welsh Government and Regional Consortia were established to provide school improvement services. Although there was national guidance, various versions of a regional consortia were developed across Wales;

- *The EAS is a not for profit limited company that is owned by the five local authorities in South East Wales.*
- *GWE and the Central South Consortium employ all school improvement staff centrally and provide services to a group of LAs.*
- *In ERW all LAs retained the school improvement function and the regional consortia delivered on national programmes.*

In the inspection of the region in 2016 Estyn described the consortium as follows- *ERW is an effective alliance of the six local authorities in south-west Wales. Many of the staff working for ERW, including all challenge advisers, are employed by individual local authorities rather than as part of a central ERW team. Most headteachers and local authority staff within the region understand this approach, which is distinctive compared to the other three regional consortia.*

Regional Consortia are managed by Joint Committees and in ERW this comprised of the Leaders of each Council supported by Legal, Financial and HR Officers. ERW also had a Lead Chief Executive and a Lead Director to support the Chair. The Core Team was led by a Managing Director and a senior team of officers. ERW at its peak had around 50 officers supporting the 6 partner Local Authorities.

The regional consortia were funded directly by Welsh Government and through core contributions from each partner Local Authority. The main grant is the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RC-SIG) which includes a list of funding streams which reflect Welsh Government's priorities at the time. Large proportions of this funding were forwarded to Local Authorities to address costs such as Foundation Phase staffing ratios and Professional Development. However, as a grant condition and a legacy of the grant structure pre RC-SIG we are required to provide considerable match funding.

As to some a forced development, the considerable size of the region and seen by some as Welsh Government working directly via 4 Managing Directors rather than through the 22 Local Authorities there was dissatisfaction in ERW from the start. Funding came directly to ERW from Welsh Government and was often by-passed directly to schools without any involvement from the Local Authorities nor reflection of local challenges and priorities.

There were attempts to review and remodel the consortium to make it more effective and responsive but there wasn't the will from all partners to make it work. Ultimately the statutory responsibility for the outcomes and success of school still lies with each respective Local Authority. The issues of value for money and impact were regular topics of discussion and dispute.

Unresolved issues eventually led to Neath Port Talbot withdrawing from the Consortium and Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion issuing 'Withdrawal Notices' in line with the requirements of the Legal Agreement. After Neath Port Talbot left, their element of the RC-SIG was calculated by Welsh Government, and given directly to them. Neath Port Talbot however continue to buy some services from the consortium.

Due to the fact the Joint Committee agreed to dissolve ERW and develop a new entity Carmarthenshire decided to withdraw the 'Withdrawal Notice' and stay in the partnership. However, Ceredigion withdrew in March 2021 leaving 4 partners- Powys, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Carmarthenshire.

Establishing of a new consortium- PARTNERIAETH

Having reflected on previous challenges Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Carmarthenshire decided to create a new entity. This also reflect on the fact that the three partners are already part of the City Deal footprint. Key principles were agreed namely-

- *a requirement to secure value for money*
- *delegation of more funding directly to schools*
- *a reduced central team*
- *a clear role for the central team and*
- *direct management by Local Authorities.*

Over an extended period due to Covid, PARTNERIAETH under a new Legal Agreement was developed and has by now been approved by each Cabinet. The Legal Agreement outlines clear governance arrangements (Appendix 1), and a revised staffing structure led by the PARTNERIAETH Lead Officer.

As from the 1st of September 2021 PARTNERIAETH commenced informally. The three partners realise the value of working collaboratively and our new approach is based on a vision of a partnership working on behalf of our local authorities and contributing to the improvement in the performance of our schools and the education of our children and young people. The Partnership will be planned as a regional collaborative arrangement designed to promote excellence in all of our schools.

The three partners have committed to working together providing our schools with a high-quality service complementing what is being provided by each local authority. The new

partnership will deliver Welsh Government funded programmes as well as meeting the bespoke needs of each partner. The partnership's staff will be seen as a key component of our local provision focusing on professional development, innovation and improvement. There will be a strong focus on identifying and gathering examples of effective practice in order to further develop our school to school projects.

The Joint Committee have agreed a new staffing and leadership structure, and finalising a revised legal agreement and new governance arrangements. Our ambition is to create an agile and responsive team of Advisors and Project Leads who can address current challenges and evolve to meet future demands. The Partnership will help us as Education Directors fulfil our statutory responsibilities as Local Authorities hold the statutory responsibility for schools and school improvement. The planned functions for the immediate future will include (Appendix 2)-

- *Curriculum design and support*
- *Equity and Wellbeing*
- *School to School Support and collaborative Learning*
- *National Leadership Programmes e.g. NPQH, HLTA*
- *Strategic and operational support for Welsh*
- *Links with Higher Education Institutions and Research*

Staffing structure, priorities, functions and funding.

Below is how the number of officers employed in the central core team has changed due to remodelling, retirements, appointment to other posts and voluntary retirement.

2018/19	ERW Original Structure servicing 6 LAs	54 fte posts
April 2021	ERW Servicing 4 LAs	38.46 fte posts
September 2021	Informal new consortia servicing 3 LAs	31.8 fte posts
April 2022	Revised staffing structure for PARTNERIAETH	26.8 fte posts

In order to deliver a service to the schools in the three local authorities, a core team of officers, under the leadership of the Partneriaeth Lead Officer, is required to supplement the work of the local authority teams. There will be three Senior Strategic Advisers responsible for a core area of practice and being the key link with a named Local Authority.

Once complete, the new Partneriaeth staffing structure will employ 22 officers to deliver the agreed Business Plan supported by a team of 4.6 operational support officers- Administration (2), Human Resources (0,.8) and Finance (2).

Structure of Partneriaeth



New ways of working- working in collaboration with colleagues from across the Partneriaeth region.

As we move to a new model of regional partnership working, we will ensure that the needs of our schools are met, and local authority priorities are addressed.

There are now regular meetings between senior Partneriaeth officers and senior Educational Advisers from across the region which are leading to an improvement understanding of the needs of our schools and on the roles and responsibilities of all partners; for example, robust discussions regarding the RC-SIG have ensured more targeted support for schools.

Partneriaeth officers are increasingly attending our Strategic Focus Groups, aligning the regional business plan with the needs of learners and their schools in Carmarthenshire.

Partneriaeth continues to offer a range of Professional Learning opportunities for our schools linked to Wellbeing of pupils as well as Curriculum development. Approaches continue to be amended to ensure the needs of all are met.

Educational Support Adviser conversations with schools, along with our Headteacher Survey, have highlighted the need for improved support for schools on Curriculum development. As a result, there have been regular meetings to ensure that the Partneriaeth learning offer meets the needs of schools. Curriculum clusters have been established, attended by Partneriaeth and Carmarthenshire officers, providing opportunities for schools to request support directly from the Partneriaeth. Capacity remains an issue; further progress is required.

Plans are in place for focussed discussions linked to the staffing structure at Partneriaeth and how this can complement staffing structures within the partner Local Authorities. The aim is for these discussions to influence the regional business plan 2022-2023.

A Senior Strategic Adviser has been assigned to each partner aiming to further support links between Partneriaeth and local teams. The Senior Strategic Adviser will attend a wide range of Local Authority meetings, providing updates and ensuring a co-constructed model of professional learning. The Senior Strategic Advisers will also work across the Local Authorities to ensure that their skills are fully utilised in an agile and effective way as well as providing strategic direction at Senior Leadership Team level.

Independent links continue to strengthen across the partners. For example, regular meetings share effective practice such as staffing structures, assessment platforms, coaching approaches and a Governing Body conference coordinated by Pembrokeshire will be attended by Carmarthenshire and Swansea governors and participating schools also.

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1	PARTNERIAETH: Proposed Governance Structure
Appendix 2	PARTNERIAETH: Values and Principles, Organisation and Services
Appendix 3	Educational Support Adviser
Appendix 4	PARTNERIAETH: Context of the Local Authorities
Appendix 5	Regional Consortia Funding
Appendix 6	ESTYN Reports in regard to ERW

Appendix 1: PARTNERIAETH Proposed Governance Structure

PARTNERIAETH Joint Committee (quarterly)

- 3 Leaders- voting member.
- 3 Cabinet Members for Education- these will be non-voting members.
- 3 Chief Executives with a Lead Chief Executive- non-voting.
- 3 Directors of Education with a Lead Director- non-voting.
- Lead Officer PARTNERIAETH- non-voting.
- S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, as required.
- External observers and advisers, on request- Estyn, WG, Audit Wales.
- Chair of scrutiny Councillors' group, as non-voting observer- TBC

PARTNERIAETH Scrutiny Councillor Group (quarterly)

- 3 Education Scrutiny Chairs
- 3 Education Scrutiny Vice-Chairs
- 3 Directors of Education to attend together at least once per annum
- Lead Officer PARTNERIAETH
- Chair of Joint Committee to attend at least once per annum
- External observers and advisers, on request

PARTNERIAETH Strategic Group (fortnightly)- delegated responsibilities from Joint Committee for planning, performance, resource and risk monitoring. This is the group that sees spending plans and makes decisions on distribution of funding streams from WG. Section 151 officer and accountant of PARTNERIAETH to be invited to this group. Section 151 officer produces budget reports for Joint Committee.

- 3 Directors of Education
- Lead Officer PARTNERIAETH
- 3 PARTNERIAETH Strategic Advisers

PARTNERIAETH Operations Group (fortnightly)- this is the group that knows about the operational delivery of work streams. Each strategic adviser will have a costed plan and budget. Cannot go above budget without Directors' approval.

- 3 Local Authority Lead School Improvement Officers
- Lead Officer PARTNERIAETH
- PARTNERIAETH Strategic Advisers, as required according to business plan priorities

PARTNERIAETH Stakeholder Group (quarterly)

- Lead Officer PARTNERIAETH
- 3 PARTNERIAETH Senior Strategic Advisers linked to each local authority
- 12 headteachers covering primary, secondary, special and pupil referral unit sectors

Appendix 2: PARTNERIAETH: Values and Principles, Organisation and Services

Part 1: Values and Principles

Effective partnerships and collaboration only become truly effective when they are underpinned and enclosed by shared values and principles. They allow trust and mutual understanding to develop within a safe environment.

- **Inclusivity-** PARTNERIAETH needs to ensure that all Councils are involved and included in the decision making, accountability and performance management process of regional working.
- **Accountability-** Robust quality assurance and accountability processes must be established. This should include a value for money element. Accountability is the responsibility of all partners and processes should ensure that every Director is equally involved – this leads to collective responsibility and should secure high quality provision.
- **Open and honest, Transparency, agility, subsidiarity**
- **Mutual trust-** not unravelled by individuals or groups of individuals.

Equity and Fairness

- Equity and excellence go hand in hand. Location, deprivation or childhood experiences will not prevent learners from reaching their maximum potential
- Learners in the Region will be resilient, imaginative, compassionate and ambitious – they will aim high and achieve their goals
- The PARTNERIAETH will take pride in the job that it does and is ambitious for all of the schools and pupils in the region
- The PARTNERIAETH is committed to ensuring effective learning and that all pupils reach their potential

Support

- PARTNERIAETH celebrates and shares success
- PARTNERIAETH leads by example and inspires confidence in others
- PARTNERIAETH leads by example and drives continuous improvement, by asking how could this be done better
- PARTNERIAETH focuses on longer-term outcomes rather than short-term goals
- Barriers and challenges are resolved promptly, and success is celebrated

Innovation

- PARTNERIAETH inspires others and continuously seeks innovative solutions.
- PARTNERIAETH effectively plans and anticipates change.
- PARTNERIAETH acts on opportunities.
- PARTNERIAETH recognises problems and implements solutions

Collaboration

- Within PARTNERIAETH, transparency, trust and honesty are a professional obligation
- PARTNERIAETH listens, reflects and prepares well and questions.
- PARTNERIAETH engages and supports each other by working together and developing a shared focus.

- PARTNERIAETH builds effective relationships with all stakeholders and partners.
- PARTNERIAETH recognises people's contributions and achievements
- PARTNERIAETH focuses on sustainable progress and growth

Integrity

- All involved work together with each partner feeling valued, motivated, responsible and having the opportunity to contribute to the collective outcomes of the process;
- The PARTNERIAETH is trustworthy and reliable
- The PARTNERIAETH is able to adapt to changing priorities and seeks to create a positive and healthy working environment.
- The PARTNERIAETH stands by difficult decisions and openly acknowledges errors.
- The PARTNERIAETH challenges and confronts poor performance.

Key Principles

1. Deliver a genuine partnership with other local authorities and the region to build capacity
2. Share learning across the region to better support schools using consistent school improvement methodologies.
3. Deliver on a small number of priorities (the priorities will be agreed and reviewed annually by effective co-construction, collaboration and partnership working)
4. Maximise devolved funding to schools ensuring transparency on funding issues
5. Needs of all learners and schools in the collaboration are known and understood by partners and is at the centre of the work of the partnership
6. the strong relationship between the school and the Local Authority should be the basis of an integrated approach to school improvement.
7. exceptional quality, innovation and rigour in the delivery of agreed support services
8. good value for money
9. to work towards providing a fully bilingual service
10. a service led by the needs of schools and Local Authority priorities
11. Local employment and deployment of a school improvement team
12. Provide a secure central service which can encourage excellent people to commit to it, enabling funding to be delegated purposefully and provide higher levels of funding to reach schools as our key partners.
13. Be an acknowledged hub of excellence, led by securely employed, high level specialists, who are able to provide leadership and support for local, hub or other sub-regional groupings.
14. Be a partnership enabling the best use of intelligence about schools and the resources available to support improvement
15. Share learning across the region to better support schools using consistent school improvement methodologies.
16. Establish a consistent regional approach to reduce duplication, ensure fairness and equity for all schools and to demonstrate value for money.
17. Have a secure and effective model of governance to underpin a more responsive and innovative regional service which supports accountabilities that are shared between the regional and the local.
18. Develop a regionally formulated and agreed school improvement strategy to be delivered locally to ensure the best possible provision of school improvement to further improve learner outcomes

Part 2: Organisation

Staffing Structure

The PARTNERIAETH will assign a dedicated strategic lead/senior adviser to link with each lead school improvement officer in each of the Councils to aid communication and integration.

Retention of central powers

The PARTNERIAETH will ensure that there is sufficient expertise in the Central Team to manage the following matters effectively:

- a) progress of schools within the Region
- b) strategic planning and coordination of the professional learning service and performance management of its effectiveness in delivering the Objects
- c) strategic leadership of key themes of work such as leadership development, curriculum support, support for Welsh and any other function determined by the Joint Committee.
- d) in conjunction with the Councils, business planning including management of financial resources, risk management, human resource management of PARTNERIAETH staff and the procuring of services

Part 3: Services Provided by the PARTNERIAETH to the Councils

a) Functions of the PARTNERIAETH will include

- Leadership programmes and professional learning on all levels throughout the workforce
- Support for Schools Causing Concern/schools at risk of causing concern if required / Improving quality in our Schools
- Implement and support Welsh Government Strategies and develop regionally formulated strategies to implement these
- Develop regionally formulated and agreed strategies
- Cymraeg including Cymraeg 2050
- Enable schools to become effective learning organisations
- Support for Digital learning
- Professional learning for blended learning.
- Equity and Wellbeing
- Research and links with Higher Education Institutions
- Provide good quality advice and guidance for the world of work
- Secondary Support
- Qualifications
- Pedagogy
- Collaborative Learning
- Additional Literacy and Numeracy
- Regional support for Modern foreign languages (Global Futures/Primary)
- Links with LA officers
- Facilitate School to School support
- Education Workforce Council links

Supporting the development of school leadership at all levels including affording opportunities for emerging and senior leaders to develop their experience and expertise through assignment and secondment to other schools, and commissioning and co-ordinating the provision of professional learning and development programmes

Ensuring the effective delivery in all schools and pupil referral units of national frameworks to support Welsh Government policy and strategy frameworks and co-ordinating and quality assuring the provision of professional learning and development to achieve this

Aligning Welsh Government and local strategies across the partnership to raise standards and ensuring the provision of high quality professional development offering relevant professional learning for practitioners

Working with the Authorities to ensure that their plans develop ensuring the alignment of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) across each Council to achieve consistency in the development of excellence in education in both the Welsh-medium and bilingual sectors and also in the delivery of Welsh as a second language

Providing and enabling strategic vision, focused leadership at a regional level and guidance, advice and focus to work supporting all aspects of school improvement.

APPENDIX 3- Educational Support Adviser

Main Purpose of Job

The purpose of the Educational Support Adviser's (ESA) role is to support school leaders, brokering support where required to ensure that schools achieve their improvement priorities. The ESA supports schools' self-evaluation processes, collaboratively monitoring school performance and supporting the school to develop as a self-improving learning organisation. In addition, the ESA ensures that schools are accessing all relevant Professional Learning opportunities in order to support the progression and wellbeing of all staff and pupils.

The Adviser acts as an agent of change, facilitating the development of school leadership capacity in order to improve outcomes for learners.

The role of Educational Support Adviser includes the following broad areas of school improvement within Carmarthenshire, working in collaboration with our schools, PRUS and specialist settings and with the Partneriaeth Region as appropriate:

1. Collaboratively developing schools' capacity for self-evaluation, ensuring that improvement planning impacts effectively on pupils' wellbeing and progression.
2. Ensuring relevant Professional Learning opportunities for all school staff and governors in relation to national and local priorities e.g. The Curriculum for Wales, Cymraeg 2050; evaluating the impact of the Professional learning on the progress achieved by learners and on the provision delivered by our schools, PRUs and specialist settings.
3. Ensuring the Wellbeing of all school-based practitioners.
4. Ensuring that schools access appropriate support in relation to business matters to include staffing, finance, HR.
5. Development, implementation and evaluation of the Education and Children's services Departmental strategies; responding to the needs of our schools, PRUs and specialist settings.
6. Leading strategies and associated teams in line with the departmental business plan.
7. Advising the 'Partneriaeth' Region, Local Authority, Governing Bodies, Headteachers and Teachers as required in line with National and local priorities.
8. Undertaking the inspection and review of school alongside Estyn; supporting our schools in addressing Estyn recommendations and in building capacity.
9. Performance management of headteachers.

Each Educational Support Adviser is assigned a group of schools and may have specific subject or phase responsibilities.

Educational Support Advisers have specific leadership, management and whole team roles within the School Improvement Service in Carmarthenshire. Advisers work alongside 'Partneriaeth' officers supporting regional development as required. In addition, ESAs may have direct Line management responsibilities for other officers within the team.

Specific duties and the emphasis of the role may vary in accordance with the changing structure, needs and responsibilities of the local authority and region.

Key tasks/responsibilities

1. Collaboratively developing schools' capacity for self-evaluation, ensuring that improvement planning impacts effectively on pupils' wellbeing and progression.
2. Ensuring relevant Professional Learning opportunities for all school staff and governors in relation to national and local priorities e.g. The Curriculum for Wales, Cymraeg 2050; evaluating the impact of the Professional learning on the progress achieved by learners and on the provision delivered by our schools, PRUs and specialist settings.
3. Ensuring the Wellbeing of all school-based practitioners.
4. Ensuring that schools access appropriate support in relation to business matters to include staffing, finance, HR.
5. Development, implementation and evaluation of the Education and Children's services Departmental strategies; responding to the needs of our schools, PRUs and specialist settings.
6. Leading strategies and associated teams in line with the departmental business plan.
7. Advising the 'Partneriaeth' Region, Local Authority, Governing Bodies, Headteachers and Teachers as required in line with National and local priorities.
8. Undertaking the inspection and review of school alongside Estyn; supporting our schools in addressing Estyn recommendations and in building capacity.
9. Performance management of headteachers.
10. To contribute to the formulation and development of policy and strategic plans; prepare reports; represent and/or support the Head of School Effectiveness Service or Principal Challenge Adviser at meetings of working groups, courses or conferences; take corrective action when necessary and respond to changing needs, in particular to implement the priorities within the Carmarthenshire and Partneriaeth business plans.

Qualifications/ Vocational training / Professional Memberships

- Educated to degree level or equivalent
- Qualified Teacher Status
- Substantial teaching experience

Job Related Skills/Competencies

- Must have excellent interpersonal, communication, data analysis and ICT skills.
- Must have the ability to work both independently and to collaborate effectively with colleagues in team activities.
- Must demonstrate energy, enthusiasm, commitment and confidence in delivering outcomes

Knowledge

- An understanding and experience of how to implement school improvement.
- Must have knowledge and experience of current national strategies and priorities in education at national and regional level.
- Must demonstrate an in-depth understanding of planning and delivery of the curriculum and leadership within schools to bring about school improvement

Experience

- Recent successful experience as a member of the senior management team of a school, education setting or school improvement/effectiveness services.

- Recent experience of working and teaching alongside teachers in the classroom to bring about improvement

Personal qualities

- Energy
- Enthusiasm
- Commitment and
- Confidence

Appendix 4: Context of the Partneriaeth Local Authorities

Number of maintained schools by local authority, April 2021

	Nursery	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Special	Total
Pembrokeshire	.	52	2	6	1	61
Carmarthenshire	1	94	.	12	2	109
Swansea	.	77	.	14	2	93
	1	223	2	32	5	263

Pupil numbers by local authority, April 2021

(Age as at 31 August 2020)

	All pupils					
	Nursery	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Special	Total
Pembrokeshire	.	10,090	1,251	6,005	158	17,504
Carmarthenshire	111	16,296	.	11,451	141	27,999
Swansea	.	21,838	.	14,112	204	36,154
	111	48224	1251	31568	503	81657

Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or transitionally protected, April 2021

	All pupils					
	Primary & Nursery	Middle	Secondary	Special	Total	
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Pembrokeshire	20.7	12.1	19.8	39.2	3,491	19.9
Carmarthenshire	21.7	.	18.9	61.7	5,810	20.8
Swansea	25.4	.	25.2	43.1	9,183	25.4

Full-time equivalent qualified teachers by local authority, April 2021

	Nursery	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Special	Total
Pembrokeshire	.	422	66	340	19	846
Carmarthenshire	5	729	.	671	26	1,431
Swansea	.	874	.	807	31	1,712

Full-time equivalent support staff by local authority, April 2021

	Nursery	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Special	Total
Pembrokeshire	.	599	51	266	83	1,000
Carmarthenshire	6	885	.	492	79	1,462
Swansea	.	1,276	.	628	102	2,006

Welsh medium schools and pupils by local authority, April 2021

	Primary (a)		Middle (b)		Secondary (b)		Total	
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils
Pembrokeshire	18	2,563	1	638	1	795	20	3,996
Carmarthenshire	67	10,782	.	.	5	5,806	72	16,588
Swansea	10	3,244	.	.	2	1,984	12	5,228

Appendix 5- Regional Consortia Funding

a. Carmarthenshire Contributions to ERW/Partneriaeth

2021-22	£51,666	April to August 2021 - budgeted an extra £72,332 to March 2022
2020-21	£123,998	Received £43,448.22 RRRALP funding- this was for additionality, and we only managed to release £1800 core funds as unable to use ESA/AESA team. Some other funding was received but this was for projects with schools.
2019-20	£53,178	Efficiency saving - £55k (The value of LA contributions to be secured from Welsh Government grant by ERW prior to delegating to schools/LAs)
2018-19	£52,810	-
2017-18	£52,500	-
2016-17	£52,500	-
2015-16	£52,250	-

b. Funding devolved to schools from ERW/Partneriaeth

Funding devolved directly to schools by ERW:	
2017/18	588,288.10
2018/19	301,910.00
2019/20	158,400.00
2020/21	10,760.00
2021/22	3,000.00
Funding devolved to schools from ERW via us as a Local Authority:	
<u>2017/18</u>	
Starter Iaith	55,000.00
Language Audit	8,400.00
Leaders of Assessment	17,280.00
	80,680.00
<u>2018/19</u>	
Professional Learning	539,420.33
ERW Schools as Learning Organisations	82,080.00
ERW Welsh Resource Funding	57,435.05
Digital	10,080.00
	689,015.38
<u>2019/20</u>	
Professional Learning was allocated directly to Local Authorities	0.00
Sir Gar Pilot	4,000.00
SLO	16,500.00
Additional SLO	13,200.00
	33,700.00
<u>2020/21</u>	
Professional Learning	417,848.00
ERW Centre Determined Grades	11,765.00
PDG	10,000.00
	439,613.00

2021/22	
Coaching and Mentoring (£11,500 given directly to schools, £500 L&D Leadership MBTI licences for school staff)	12,000.00
	3,560,374.86

c. Funding allocated to schools from Carmarthenshire Education Improvement Grant

Project	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Triads	47,816	0	0	0	0
Interventions	65,565	67,051	47,500	0	0
Curriculum Projects				24,301	15,455
14/19	190,000	0	0	0	0
Foundation Phase	4,981,241	4,872,241	5,176,385	4,957,637	4,866,300
Small Schools	297,000	386,000	0	0	0
School Allocation	925,155	898,881	986,395	1,331,188	1,562,700
Total	6,506,777	6,224,173	6,210,280	6,313,126	6,444,455

Triads/Interventions/Small School- Local Authority Projects
Foundation Phase- funding to ensure suitable learner: staff ratio

Appendix 6: ESTYN Reports in regard to ERW

A report on the quality of the school improvement services provided by the ERW Consortium- June 2016

- Support for School Improvement: **Good**
- Leadership: **Good**
- Improving quality: **Adequate**
- Partnership working: **Good**
- Resource management: **Good**

Recommendations

1. Ensure that school improvement services address the performance of schools causing concern, particularly in the secondary sector
2. Ensure that planning for education improvement clearly integrates local and regional priorities, so that ERW and local authority plans are complementary and contain actions that are specific and measurable, with appropriate milestones for delivery
3. Ensure that the work of the main boards and working groups is recorded carefully and consistently, so that concerns, decisions and actions are clear, auditable and fully costed, and that they enable leaders to monitor progress
4. Refine the framework for assessing value for money so that all relevant costs across the six authorities are taken into account fully when set against outcomes

Report following the monitoring of ERW consortium- November 2017

1	Ensure that school improvement services address the performance of schools causing concern, particularly in the secondary sector	Limited progress in addressing the recommendation
2	Ensure that planning for education improvement clearly integrates local and regional priorities, so that ERW and local authority plans are complementary and contain actions that are specific and measurable, with appropriate milestones for delivery	Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation
3	Ensure that the work of the main boards and working groups is recorded carefully and consistently, so that concerns, decisions and actions are clear, auditable and fully costed, and that they enable leaders to monitor progress	Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation
4	Refine the framework for assessing value for money so that all relevant costs across the six authorities are taken into account fully when set against outcomes	Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Recommendation: ERW needs to continue to address the inspection recommendations identified by the inspection team.

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EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH MARCH 2022

Subject: Contacts & Referrals to Children’s Services

Purpose: To look at the increase in contacts and referrals, pressures and demands within Children’s Services.

To consider and comment on the following issues:

Increase in the volume of work within the service; the challenges faced and the potential need for additional resourcing during this period and beyond with the impact should the increased levels of referrals continue.

Reasons:

To provide Scrutiny Committee with an update regarding the elevated levels of activity within the service and the implications should this pattern continue.

To be referred to the Cabinet / Council for decision:

No

Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder:

Cllr. Glynog Davies, Education and Children’s Services

Directorate: Education & Children	Designations:	Tel Nos. / E Mail Addresses:
Name of Head of Service: Stefan Smith	Head of Children’s Services	01267 246530 SJSmith@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
Report Authors: Noreen Jackman	Service Manager	01267 24653 NJackman@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
Stefan Smith	Head of Children’s Services	01267 246530 SJSmith@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH MARCH 2022

Subject: – Contacts & Referrals to Children’s Services

1. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT.

The number of Contacts & Referrals received by Children’s Services increased significantly during the pandemic in addition to experiencing a local recruitment issue reflected in a nationwide crisis in not being able to recruit social workers to vacant posts.

The report attempts to illustrate the position and the impact of this on the service; the nature of those referrals and the implications for the service should the situation continue.

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	NONE	NONE	YES	YES	NONE

5. Risk Management Issues

If the service continues to experience an increasing level of referrals and child protection cases, there is a risk that we will see more children coming into the statutory service with the implication being a likelihood of increased child protection cases and more children coming into care.

6. Staffing Implications

If the service continues to experience increased levels of referrals and vacancies continue there is a concern this will impact on staff emotional and physical wellbeing

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

None

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

YES via Cabinet Member briefing

Include any observations here

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

THERE ARE NONE

Demand and pressures on Children's Services

January 2022

carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council



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Background

The Central Referral Team (CRT) based at Ty Elwyn, Llanelli, covers the whole of Carmarthenshire providing a single point of contact for anyone who has concerns over a child's welfare. The Team deal with all new contacts and referrals into Children's Services which has provided a more consistent approach to decision-making. Contacts are all requests for information and or support. Referrals are those cases that are deemed as crossing the threshold (i.e. more concerning) for assessment within our statutory social work service. As well as responding to concerns, the team also provides information, advice and support to children, families, members of the public, professionals and other agencies.

The team comprises of 1 Team Manager, 1 Assistant Team Manager and 6 FTE Duty Officers. However, during the last 20 months the team has been short-staffed due to secondment, vacancies, sickness and leave which has meant the team has frequently been functioning with only 2-3 Duty Officers out of a possible 6.

If a decision is made that a child/young person needs a further assessment, these cases are allocated to one of two assessment teams that cover the county or if the child/young person has a disability then the case is allocated to the 0-25 Team. Over the past year there have been significant vacancies due to long term sickness (3 staff have finished after significant periods of time absent), and internal staff movement.

Following an Assessment for Care and Support if it is felt that ongoing support is required, the case will be transferred to one of 4 Child Care Teams, 2 based in Llanelli, 1 in Carmarthen and 1 in Ammanford. These teams have also experienced vacancies, often operating with 2-3 vacant posts.

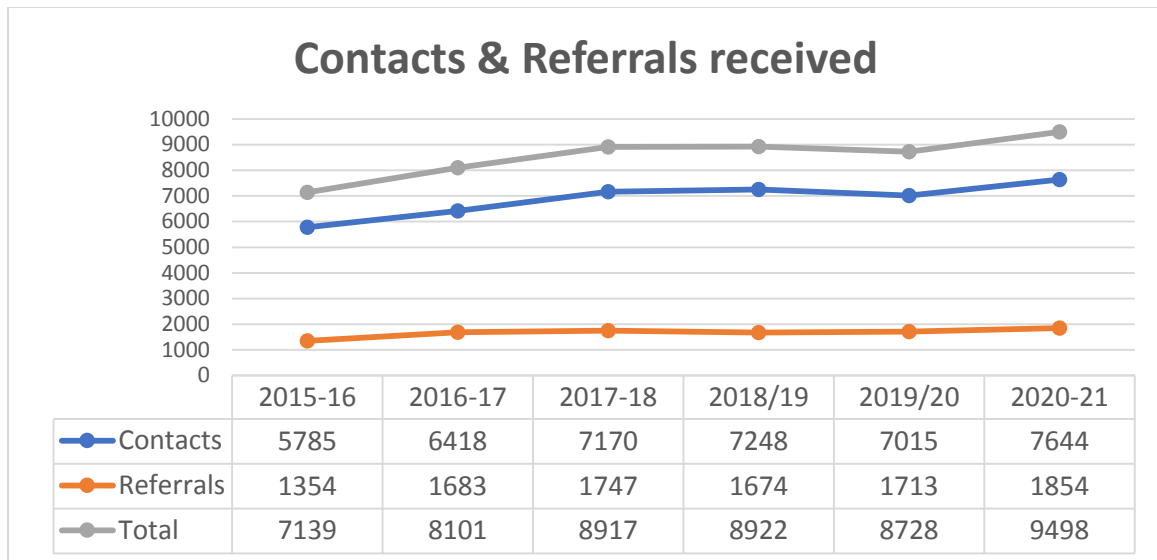
If it is felt that statutory involvement is not required but the family would benefit from support then the case can be signposted to one of the many preventative services such as Team Around the Family, Family Intervention Service, Flying Start, Youth Preventative Services.

Current situation

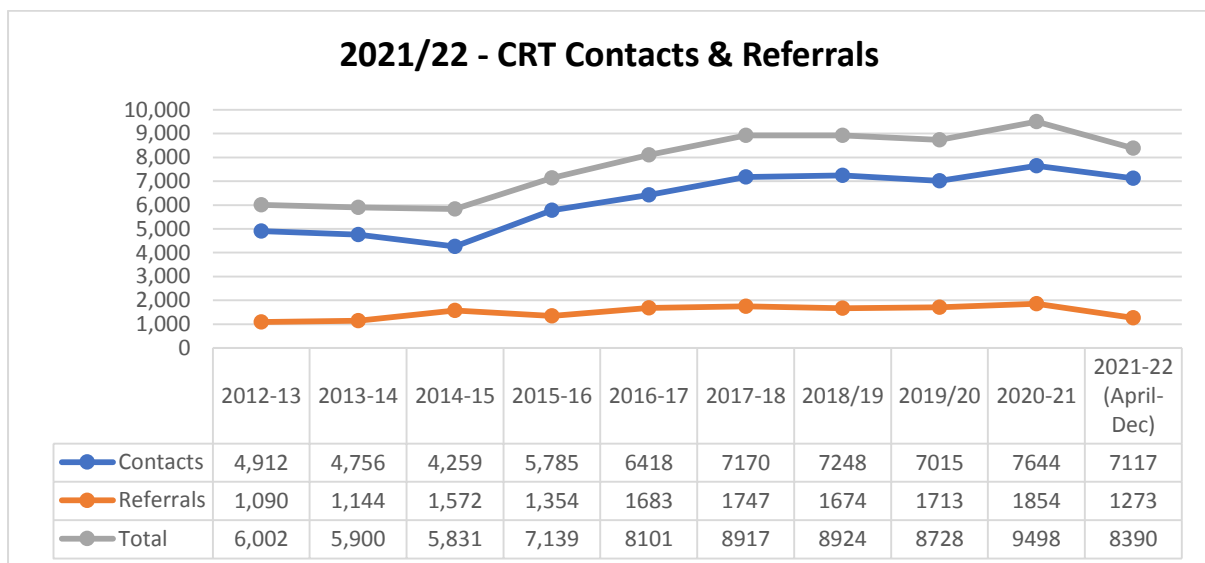
Further to the report shared with Scrutiny Committee in July 2021 below is the current situation within Children's Services:-

Central Referral Team

Since the pandemic contacts and referrals gradually increased throughout the year and as can be seen below as at the end of March 2021, 629 more contacts were received compared to 2020 and 141 more referrals.



There has continued to be an increase in contacts throughout this year, however the number of referrals has decreased. This could well be due to the fact that Preventative Services are now providing face to face support as opposed to virtual support during the pandemic.



All Contacts & Referrals in relation to safeguarding concerns are received by the Central Referral Team via telephone or e-mail, these are then input onto the Care First System. When information is received, a considerable amount of work is undertaken by the Duty Worker as part of this process which may involve speaking to parents, undertaking welfare checks with partner agencies such as health visitors and schools, as well as undertaking duty visits in order to gather more information to ascertain whether the family needs to be allocated to a social worker in one of the Assessment Teams for an Assessment for Care of Support. Duty workers also provide information, advice and assistance in line with the Social Services & Wellbeing Act.

On receipt of a contact or referral the Team Manager/Assistant Team Manager has 24 hours to make a decision on how to proceed with the information received whether this is providing information or advice, referring on to another agency or allocating to the Assessment Teams for an Assessment for Care and Support.

Where allegations of abuse are made the Team Manager/Assistant Team Manager have strategy discussions/meetings with the Police throughout the day to decide whether the matter can be dealt with as a 'Child in Need of Care and Support' or whether it needs to be dealt with as 'Child Protection' which often requires a joint visit to the child/family by the social worker and Police. The cases are then allocated to the two assessment teams that cover the county (one for Llanelli, one for Carmarthen/Dinefwr) or if the child has a disability it will be allocated to the 0-25 Team.

The Police are the highest referrers into the Department – out of the 8390 contacts and referrals received between April – December 2021, 3069 were received from Police, the next being schools/college with 533 and Probation Service with 407.

Domestic Incident reports have increased substantially from 1814 during 19/20 to 2368 during 20/21, 1515 reports have already been received as at 31st December 2021.

At the start of the pandemic, the team worked from home in line with Government guidelines but due to the volume of work coming through and the need for constant communication between all workers the team moved back into the office as the risk was too high for work to be overlooked which could have resulted in a child being placed at risk.

During the last 20 months staffing levels within the Central Referral Team have been at their lowest for a variety of reasons, including vacancies, sickness and leave which has often left 2-3 Duty Officers covering the workload. Two of the temporary staff have now been offered permanent posts within the team through vacant posts. A third new worker did start in July, however due to the high volume of work and demanding nature of the role she did not feel able to continue and therefore made the decision to finish.

At the time of the last report due to staff shortages, the team were experiencing a backlog of work which was unprecedented for the team. Decisions continued to be made within the statutory timescale of 24 hours and work was prioritised in terms of child protection but there was a backlog in inputting data on to the computer system.

In an attempt to catch up with the work at that time, a colleague from the Preventative Services and a social worker from the Flying Start Service provided support and the Chief Executive also authorised overtime payment for the Duty Officers in an attempt to catch up with the backlog which was achieved.

Unfortunately, staffing levels have continued to be problematic, one member remains on long term sickness leave with 'long covid' and the others have been off with various ailments including covid. Additional grant funding was received to recruit 3 new Duty Officers until March 2022, however we have not been able to recruit to these posts due to having no suitable applicants.

The management structure has changed, the Manager of the Family Intervention Team is currently acting Team Manager and we have brought in an additional Assistant Team Manager to strengthen the team. We are also utilising a member of staff from the Preventative Service to work on a Sunday to prepare all referrals received over the weekend ready for a decision by the Duty Manager on the Monday morning, which then releases the Duty Officers to input directly on to the system. This has helped enormously in preventing further backlogs. Workers from the Family Intervention Team are also supporting when staffing levels are minimal.

Assessment Teams

If a decision is made that statutory intervention is required, the case will be allocated to one of the two Assessment Teams for an Assessment for Care and Support or a s47 investigation with the Police if an allegation of abuse has been made. There is a statutory requirement to complete the Assessment for Care and Support within 42 days.

The number of assessments undertaken by Children’s Services has increased significantly during the past 2 years, 2970 were completed between April 20 – December 20 compared to 3430 during the same period in 2021. The number of s47 joint investigations with the Police has also increased from 108 between April and December 2020 to 182 between April and December 2021. However, the teams have experienced vacancies during this period, in particular Carmarthen/Dinefwr Assessment Team having 3 vacancies at one point, fortunately the team is now fully staffed. Llanelli Assessment Team continues to have one vacancy.

The number of vacancies has impacted on the timescales for completing the assessments, as at December 2020, 94.5% of assessments were completed within timescales compared to 90% as at December 2021.

Long-term Child Care Teams

Following completion of the Assessment for Care and Support, if additional support is required the case will be transferred to one of the four child-care teams for ongoing support.

The number of caseloads within the child-care teams have remained fairly static with the exception of East Child Care Team and 0-25 Team, however the teams have experienced a number of vacancies which we have been unable to fill due to no applicants to the extent where some posts have been re-advertised several times. This has resulted in the need to recruit agency workers for the first time in many years, this problem is a nationwide crisis and the WG are looking at how they can support Local Authorities.

Caseloads as at 1.12.20					Caseloads as at 1.12.21				
CCCT	DCCT	ECCT	WCCT	0-25	CCCT	DCCT	ECCT	WCCT	0-25
114	102	116	123	179	121	106	133	121	229

The number of children on the Child Protection Register has also increased from 71 as at 31.12.20 to 91 as at 31.12.21 and the number of Looked After Children has also increased from 149 as at 31.12.20 to 161 as at 31.12.21.

This increase is likely to be significantly contributed to by the lack of community and preventative support services as well as children not being in school and professionals not seeing children during the pandemic.

Preventative Services

Flying Start – What are Flying Start doing to support Children’s Services:

This social care team within Flying Start is one of the key teams supporting the contacts and referrals to CRT.

The team had a social worker vacancy, but the assistant manager, despite her managerial duties, held some cases to prevent them going into CRT. The social care team normally work closely with CRT and will take on cases that may be on the cusp of referral to CRT, or even referred to CRT, in order that we may divert cases. This is especially so, where they know the family and already have a relationship that will help facilitate the family’s engagement. They also provide support services to prevent referral via face to face 1: 1 support, as well as face to face group work. This has been maintained throughout the pandemic.

The Domestic Abuse Project workers have supported some very complex cases within FS and some of which are in the statutory services. This work is to aid closure to statutory services and then to be maintained through ongoing support from FS. Support workers have provided 1:1 parenting support to statutory cases in order to support and aid closure and step down to FS. Health visitors will make internal referrals to FS services to support families to prevent referrals.

We have developed a case management discussion process, led by the FS social worker, where the more complex families are discussed, and plans reviewed. These cases also have input from one of our Educational Psychologists. We are now supporting families to be part of their own plan / decision making to improve outcomes / person centred approach.

We have also developed an early support panel to look at the more complex cases and the hard to reach / hard to engage families, alongside this – developing a new referral form. The first panel is due to take place once the referral form has been translated into Welsh. The aim of this is to develop more alignment / multi- disciplinary approach, reduce waiting times through identifying alternative service provision should there be a waiting time for eg in Team Camau Bach – to support the family while waiting for the more specialist service. This panel will also look at the hard to engage families, and to avoid referral to CRT due to this, look at alternative approaches / key workers, to support the family and improve outcomes.

We are flexible, and will support teams, such as CRT, in the interests of the family and child.

Families First update December 21:

In 2021 there was a reduction in activity, because 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.

Families' needs were more complex requiring longer periods of support. On a positive note, there was an overall improvement in outcomes for families, as reported via the distance travelled tool from 75% in 19/20 to 83% in 20/21.

From April – Dec 2021 all Families First projects apart from Home-Start are supporting families both virtually and face to face in a variety of locations including schools, office/community basis and families' homes.

TAF Coordinator continue to support CRT when possible.

Families First projects are now delivering their services face to face and virtually which may help to reduce the pressures on Children's Services. Project staff have been carrying out support in families' homes, in schools and in the community and office settings.

Parenting programmes (Nurture programme, Talking Teens) and the STAR programme are being delivered.

Additional funding secured from WG to alleviate waiting lists and to provide additional early help and support. Additional funding to allow staff to attend various training opportunities, to enhance their continued professional development.

Projects have been forging links and collaborating with other support services/agencies
Various activities, trips and parties were organised for young people and families

One of the main challenges faced by Families First project managers is staff sickness and staff having to isolate due to a member of the family testing positive for Covid. Vacant posts, staff movement and staff recruitment has also been a challenge. We have worked in partnership with partner programmes and agencies to ensure continuity of service provision where possible and funded external providers out of additional funding to ensure families are receiving support.

Referrals have increased in 21/22, this is due to projects adapting well to the pandemic, using a blended approach to ensure delivery of service, with more face-to-face contact being provided to young people and families.

The number of New to service families have increased during 21-22, reflecting on the increase in referrals to the programme.

The number of single agency JAFFs assessments closed have increased during 21-22, 94% of assessments had a positive forward movement on the distance travelled tool.

The number of cases stepped up to Social Services have decreased slightly during 21-22, this could be due early intervention projects successfully addressing the presenting needs of young people and families.

The number of cases stepped down from Social Services during Q1-Q3, 21-22 has increased, demonstrating that projects are open for business as usual, delivering their services both virtually and face-to-face

The table below compares the data for the same period in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

FF all-programme:	Q1-Q3 2021-22	Q1-Q3 2020-21
Total no. of referrals received	2129	1338
Total no. of families supported	2888	2197
Total no. of NEW families	2002 (69%)	888 (40%)
Total no. of single agency JAFF assessments closed demonstrating a forward movement on the distance travelled tool	382 (94%)	270 (81%)
Total no. of cases stepped up to Social Services	14	16
Total no. of cases stepped down from Social Services	58	52

Electively Home Educated (EHE)

There is a new structure in place for Electively Home Educated children; the number of families electing to educate their children at home has increased since COVID 19 and is continuing to increase. The School have a new procedure in place to support families who are concerned about sending children to school at the moment with schools continuing to engage with the families and it is hoped that the pupils will then return to school after the pandemic.

The School Safeguarding and Attendance Team also have an action plan to ensure that they visit every family on our EHE list and a number of workers are currently prioritising this. Additional funding from Welsh Government has allowed us to strengthen the team but it is not clear how long this funding will be available

	Qtr. 1 2021/22	Qtr. 2 2021/22	Qtr. 3 2021/22	Qtr. 4 2021/22
Number of children that the Local Authority are aware of that are Electively Home Educated (EHE)	489	427	467	
% of the above that have NOT received an annual visit in the last 12 months	9.2%	14.98%	12.20%	
Number of EHE children that have received an annual visit in the last 12 months	433	372	410	

% of the above where the child was spoken to as part of the visit	64.4%	68.90%	61.00%	
Of the number of known EHE children (P3.1), what % have de-registered in the last 12 months	57.5%	58.78%	45.21%	

How the current situation has been managed

- Management support has been increased with an additional manager seconded into the CRT. This has increased oversight and made the decision-making process safer.
- 2 temporary members of CRT staff made permanent within vacant posts
- Member of staff from Preventative Services is supporting CRT by preparing referrals received from Police over the weekend
- Agency Workers have been appointed to both the Llanelli Assessment team and the Llanelli East Child Care Team as we have been unable to attract applicants to vacant posts. Agency workers are of variable quality and are paid a lot more than our own staff.
- Grant funding has assisted with the increased demand in EHE
- A Growth Bid was approved by Council for 6 additional social workers within the service (from 1st April 2022).

Unfortunately, the position with regard to vacancies across the statutory service, has not improved. We have 11 social work vacancies and have not attracted external applicants to vacant social work posts for the past two years. It is not just social work posts but also posts in business support. These posts are critical in supporting the social work teams and avoid social workers spending time on work that could, and should, be done by business support.

In response to the chronic staff shortages, we are currently building upon our existing “grow your own” scheme and considering how best to make ourselves competitive with neighbouring counties, particularly Swansea. There are workstreams across Children’s Services and Communities Departments working together to develop a consistent approach.

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EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 16 MARCH 2022

SCRUTINY ACTIONS UPDATE

Purpose: To apprise the Committee of actions taken in response to decisions made.

To consider and comment on the following issues:

- To scrutinise the progress made in relation to actions, requests or referrals recorded during previous meetings of the Committee.

Reasons:

- To enable members to exercise their scrutiny role in relation to monitoring performance.

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

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Not Applicable

<p>Directorate: Chief Executive</p> <p>Name of Head of Service: Linda Rees Jones</p> <p>Report Author: Julie Owens</p>	<p>Designations:</p> <p>Head of Administration and Law</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p>	<p>Tel Nos./ E Mail Addresses:</p> <p>01267 224010 lrjones@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</p> <p>01267 224088 juowens@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</p>
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EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2022

SCRUTINY ACTIONS UPDATE

During the course of a municipal year, several requests for additional information are made by the Committee in order to assist it in discharging its scrutiny role.

The attached report provides members of the Committee with an update on the progress made in relation to these requests.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED ?	YES
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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 and Law

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: Linda Rees-Jones

Head of Administration and 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 - N/A

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED

N/A

No

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

There are none.

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
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Action No.	Meeting Date	Recommendation/Minute Text	Progress Update	Responsible Member(s) / Officer(s)	Status
E&C21/22-01	08/07/21	Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the Performance Of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2020/21 - Resolved that the Director of Community Services arrange for the Care Leavers Data to be made available to the members.	circulated via email on 13.07.2021	Gareth Morgans	complete
E&C21/22-02	08/07/21	Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the Performance of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2020/21 - RESOLVED that the Authority write to the new Minister at Welsh Government in relation to Home Education.	letter sent to Minister on 09.08.21	Cllr. Darren Price / Gareth Morgans / Democratic Services Officer	complete
E&C21/22-03	08/07/21	Education and Scrutiny Annual Report RESOLVED to update attendance of 2 x Councillors.	report updated 08.07.21	Democratic Services Officer	complete
E&C21/22-04	08/07/21	Interim Recommendations Report (Task & Finish) - Resolved that it be recommended to the Executive Board for approval.	Considered at a meeting of the Cabinet on 27.09.21	Cllrs. Darren Price & Glynog Davies	Complete
E&C21/22-05	08/07/21	Children's Services (Increased Referral Rates) - Resolved that the report goes before CMT and Executive Board due to concerns around staffing to assess the team and pressures under.	report has been considered at the CMT and noted at a meeting of the Cabinet.	Stefan Smith / Noreen Jackman / Noeline Thomas	Complete
E&C21/22-06	30/11/21	Wellbeing: Education and Children's Services Department - Resolved that the Committee receive regular updates on the situation regarding ventilation in our schools.	ongoing: (discussed as part of Business Plan agenda item on 28.01.22)	Cllr Darren Price / Simon Davies	Ongoing
E&C21/22-07	30/11/21	Education Department's 10 year Strategy - resolved that that reference to parents and carers be included in Aspiration 18 within the strategy.		Gareth Morgans	Complete
E&C21/22-08	30/11/21	Education Department's 10 year Strategy - Resolved that that the observations made above be relayed to the Cabinet for consideration.	Considered at a meeting of the Cabinet on 31.01.22	Gareth Morgans	Complete
E&C21/22-09	30/11/21	Future Arrangements for School Engagement Sessions - Resolved that School Engagement Sessions be arranged as follows: January 2022: Recovery from covid and wellbeing of staff Spring 2022: Preparedness for ALN transformation Summer 2022: Preparedness for Curriculum and WESP Autumn 2022: MEP – buildings	ongoing: school engagement session on Covid Recovery held 28.01.22	Aneirin Thomas / Elin Forsyth	Complete - arrangements for these sessions have been made.
E&C21/22-10	23/12/21	Working with those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) - Resolved that a letter be sent from the Committee to the Welsh Government conveying the Committee's concerns regarding funding and requesting that a more sustainable, long term system be introduced.	letter sent to Geraint Green, Head of Programme Management (ESF & ETC), Welsh European Funding Office -Welsh Government on 04.02.22. Rrsponse received by the Welsh Government on 28.02.2022 and circulated to Committee.	Cllr Darren Price / Gareth Morgans	Complete
E&C21/22-11	23/12/21	Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Group Draft Final Report 2020/21: School Organisation Consultation Process – Resolved that the Task & Finish Group draft final report 2020/21 on the School Organisation Consultation Process and the recommendations contained therein be endorsed for consideration by the Cabinet.	considered at Cabinet meeting 31.01.22		Complete

E&C21/22-12	28/01/22	School Engagement: A playlist by the federated schools had recently been published on HWB as part of the Welsh Government national resource case study to promote best practice and facilitate self-evaluation and improvement. It was agreed that the playlist be circulated to Committee.	circulated via email to the Committee 01/02/2022	Mr Paul Jones / Julie Owens (DSO)	Complete
E&C21/22-13	28/01/22	School Engagement: Reference was made to the Estonian education system who had pioneered 'e-school bags' to promote digital inclusivity. The Director of Education and Children's Services noted that the Estonian education digital solutions would be further explored.	Cllr Dorian Williamns has shared link to the article and officers are consdiering the approach used in Estonia	Gareth Morgans	Complete
E&C21/22-14	28/01/22	School Engagement: Members suggested that pupils could form part of future engagement sessions to articulate their experiences directly to the Committee. This was agreed.	learners will attend in future probably as a pre-recorded contribution.	Aneirin Thomas / Elin Forsyth	Complete
E&C21/22-15	28/01/22	Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2022/23 - 2024/25 - Resolved that the Charging Digest detailed in Appendix C to the report, be endorsed.	The Finance division have been informed of the Committee's endorsement	Julie Owens (DSO)	Complete
E&C21/22-16	28/01/22	Forthcoming Items - The new Lead Officer, Mr Ian Altman, to be invited to attend the next meeting to participate in the discussion surrounding the new Regional Collaboration Model.	Ian Altman is aware and available.	Gareth Morgans / Julie Owens (DSO)	Complete

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday, 28 January 2022

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors:

E.G. Thomas, S.M. Allen, L.R. Bowen, K.V. Broom, J.S. Edmunds (in place of S. Davies), J.P. Jenkins, B.W. Jones, D. Jones, G.R. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, K. Lloyd (in place of R. James), E.M.J.G. Schiavone, D.T. Williams

Co-opted Members:

A. Enoch - Parent Governor
F. Healey-Benson - Parent Governor
V. Kenny - Roman Catholic Church Representative
Rev. D Richards - Church in Wales Representative

Also in attendance:

Councillor G. Davies, Cabinet Member for Education & Children
Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Cabinet Member for Resources

School Representatives for Bryngwyn and Glan y Môr Federation Comprehensive Schools:

Mr P. Jones - Headteacher, Ysgol Bryngwyn & Ysgol Glan y Môr Federation
Mr J. Jones - Head of School, Ysgol Glan y Môr
Mrs A. Bevan - Assistant Headteacher, Ysgol Bryngwyn

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 Services and Inclusion
S. Smith, Head of Children's Services
E. Forsyth, Interim Head of School Improvement, Curriculum and Wellbeing
R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services
S. Nolan, Group Accountant
A. Eynon, Principal Translator
M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer [Webcasting]
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer
J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer [Note Taker]

Virtual Meeting - 2.00 - 4.02 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Davies and R. James.

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

Councillor	Minute No (s)	Nature of Interest
Dot Jones	4. School Engagement	Son is a pupil at Bryngwyn comprehensive school

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

[NOTE: Cllr. D. Jones having earlier declared an interest in this item remained in the meeting for its consideration].

In accordance with the School Engagement Programme agreed by Committee at its meeting on 30th November 2021, a report was presented to Members which focussed upon the process of recovery as schools emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was explained to Members that that an alternative structure, in the form of online school engagement sessions, had been introduced to temporarily replace school visits during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and which would enable the Committee to continue with its school evaluation and improvement function.

The Committee considered the financial support allocated to schools during 2021/22 by way of the Accelerated Learning Programme and which included an additional 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards' (RRRs) grant recently provided. The Committee's remit was to focus upon the utilisation of the additional funding provided to schools to meet the needs of the requirements of the RRRs, within the areas of Accelerated Learning, Priority Cohorts for Support and Curriculum Reform.

The Committee then received a presentation from the school representatives which focussed upon the means by which they had addressed the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact upon pupils and staff and the perceived longer-term challenges ahead. An overview of how the schools had utilised the additional funding received provided members with a detailed understanding of the impact of the Local Authority's support on provision across the school system. Key points covered within the presentation included:

- A culture of excellence was at the heart of the federated schools, which enabled a rapid development of new norms and priorities, with communication and wellbeing central to the school's revised strategy.

- A number of adjustments were made within the federated schools in the national effort against coronavirus, including the establishment and monitoring of contact groups, Lateral Flow Testing, Risk Assessments and the introduction of two new assessment systems. Physical mitigations included the introduction of hand sanitisers, face coverings, one-way systems, designated entry points and ‘bubble’ learning zones.
- The grant funding enabled the federated schools to support pupils in ways which could not otherwise have been provided, including the introduction of parent engagement roles, increased capacity of core subjects and enhanced ICT provision (in terms of both equipment and skills) to assist with the transition to virtual and blended learning.
- A number of unexpected positive outcomes had been derived from the Covid-19 pandemic, termed by the federated schools as “Covid keepers”; these comprised:
 - Enhanced relationships with parents by way of regular communication facilitated by the use of technology.
 - Blended learning being viewed as the new status quo, enabling flexible learning.
 - Sharing of best practice, including exploration of new ICT platforms and approaches. A playlist by the federated schools had recently been published on HWB as part of the Welsh Government national resource case study to promote best practice and facilitate self-evaluation and improvement. It was agreed that the playlist be circulated to Committee.
 - Social benefits, including wellbeing walks to further strengthen social cohesion amongst pupils in year groups.
- Reference was also made to recent challenges imposed by ‘Storm Barra’ in December 2021, which had caused significant damage to the Bryngwyn school building roof and had resulted in the closure of the school whilst repairs were underway. Nevertheless, the Committee was pleased to note that there had been no disruption to the learning of pupils due to the seamless transition to online learning and relocation of pupils in accordance with the school’s business continuity arrangements.

A number of observations and queries were addressed, as follows:

In response to a query regarding the issue of ‘lost learning’ and the introduction of the Centre Assessed Grading system, the Committee was informed that the additional resources provided by the RRRS grant funding enabled the school to respond appropriately by way of enhanced ICT and technical support to bridge gap between the school and communities, Parental Engagement Officers to support families with learning and the use of mentoring programmes and smaller group work to provide appropriate intervention into areas of need. Furthermore, the additional grant funding was utilised to temporarily enhance the budget to address staff resource issues and sufficient capacity for continuity of learning.

Concerns were expressed that some pupils were not equipped for formal examinations, and furthermore that they had not attained the expected standard of learning as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The school representatives advised that appropriate support was provided to ensure a positive experience for all pupils, within the parameters of national determinations. Data was also being collated by the schools to ensure the provision of accurate pupil grading in the event of any adjustments made to the assessment arrangements. Furthermore, it was highlighted to members that whilst not all pupils had reached the expected standard of learning within the core subjects, the Covid-19 pandemic had enhanced skills in areas such as resilience, independence and creativity.

Reference was made to the Estonian education system who had pioneered 'e-school bags' to promote digital inclusivity. The Director of Education and Children's Services noted that the Estonian education digital solutions would be further explored, however assurances were provided that a wide range of digital learning resources was already available to pupils via the HWB platform. The Head of Education Services and Inclusion further advised that a longer-term digital strategy would require a review of government funding arrangements to provide appropriate resources to schools and pupils. The Committee was also advised that areas of best practice was a key focus area for Carmarthenshire schools, demonstrated by the array of established forums such as the School Learning Organisation Networks, Secondary Focus Networks, Secondary Primary Networks, in addition to the ongoing collaboration between Education Support Advisors and regular Headteacher meetings.

Following an enquiry regarding the feasibility and flexibility of a longer-term blended learning provision post Covid-19, the school representatives assured the Committee that all opportunities were being explored to enhance learning experiences and provide greater flexibility of learning in conjunction with the imminent introduction of the new curriculum for secondary schools. In this regard, Officers referred to the alternative learning models being trialled for older pupils to promote independent learners and prepare pupils for higher education. It was however explained that further collaboration between schools was required to ensure the correct use of technology to reach its full potential. The Committee was also assured to note that blended learning would be utilised as a tool to support learning and was not intended to replace human contact.

The Committee commended the schools for the sterling efforts made in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and expressed their gratitude to the representatives for the informative and valuable presentation. Members suggested that pupils could form part of future engagement sessions to articulate their experiences directly to the Committee. This was agreed.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2022/23 to 2024/25

The Committee considered the Council's Revenue Budget Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25 which provided a current view of the revenue budget for 2021/2022 together with indicative figures for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years.

The report provided details of the budget process, the current Welsh Government provisional settlement issued on 21st December 2021 and the final settlement timetable and identified the validation and budget pressures that needed to be considered by Members in setting next year's revenue budget.

It was reported that, whilst significant work had already been undertaken in preparing the budget, the report represented an initial position statement which would be updated following the consultation process. Accordingly, Members were reminded that the report had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on the 17th January 2022 and members of the Committee had recently attended consultation events which had provided an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on various aspects of the budget.

The report indicated that, after adjustments for WG, identified transfers, the increase in the provisional settlement for Carmarthenshire was 9.2% (£26.335 million). The Aggregate External Finance (AEF) had therefore increased to £311.957 million in 2022/23 which accommodated teachers' pay and included £302k in respect of the Social Care Workforce Grant.

Committee's attention was drawn to section 3.5 of the budget strategy whereby an overview of the schools' delegated budgets was provided to Members. Whilst concerns were raised that many service specific grants remained at a similar level to previous years given the impact of pay awards and general inflation, it was reported to Members that for 2022/23, the RRRS grant would continue, and that the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) grant and Pupil Development grant would be enhanced

The Committee thereupon considered the following detailed budget information appended to the Strategy, relevant to its remit:-

- **Appendix A(i)** – Efficiency summary for the Education & Children's Services Department.
- **Appendix A(ii)** – **Growth Pressures summary for the Education & Children's Services Department.**
- **Appendix B** – Budget monitoring report for the Education & Children's Services Department
- **Appendix C** – Charging Digest for the Education & Children's Services Department

It was reported that the final settlement was due to be received from Welsh Government on the 1st March, 2022 and any amendments required to be considered in relation to the Budget Strategy arising from that announcement would also be considered by Council at its meeting scheduled for 2nd March, 2022.

Officers addressed a number of member queries and observations, as follows:

In response to a query regarding the take-up of the Hardship fund by Schools, Officers duly clarified the parameters in which schools could apply for the funding. It was explained to Members that common costs would usually be met from corporate departmental budgets. Furthermore, it was emphasised that individual school circumstances, in terms of the scale of impact from the Covid-19 pandemic in areas such as staffing, varied throughout the county. The Committee was

assured to note that regular communication was provided to all schools to ensure all schools were aware of the funding available and encouraged to apply in accordance with eligibility criteria.

Committee referred to the provision of air purifiers for schools and queried the level of funding available to the Council. The Head of Access to Education clarified that funding in the region of £134k had been received to deal with ventilation and data was currently being collated to determine school requirements in this regard. Members were informed that a total of 36 air purifying units had been procured and allocated to date, which was sufficient to meet the current level of demand. It was however noted that the funding allocation for the longer-term solution would likely need to be enhanced to enable schools with identified ventilation issues to be retrofitted with appropriate filters. The Cabinet Member for Education referred to the Notice of Motion considered at a meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th January 2022 and reported that a response was awaited from the Minister to confirm the advice from the Technical Advisory Group and the WG progress in terms of the procurement and funding of Ultra Violet and/or High Efficiency Particulate Air Filters in schools.

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Resources reported that the Minister's letter which accompanied the settlement was explicit that Welsh Government expects Council to meet the cost of any future pay awards from the improved settlement and confirmed that the 4% teacher pay awards for 2022/23 was reflected within the delegated budget.

Concerns were expressed regarding the reduction in the number of schools for 2024/25. It was clarified that a review of the Modernising Education Programme (MEP) was currently underway, following which the matter would be further considered.

The Committee commended the Director of Corporate Services and his team for the development of a budget against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and unprecedented circumstances, to ensure an appropriate provision of services for Carmarthenshire.

RESOLVED that:

5.1 The 2022/23 – 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation be received;

5.2 The Charging Digest detailed in Appendix C to the report, be endorsed.

6. EDUCATION & CHILDREN DRAFT DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2022 - 2023

Members were provided with an overview of the draft business plan for the Education and Children section which aimed to support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy. The Committee considered the departmental priorities for 2022-23 in relation to the following areas falling within its remit:

- Access to Education
- Children's Services
- Curriculum and Wellbeing
- Education and Inclusion Services

Reference was made to the effective practices and new methodologies which had been developed under Covid-19 restrictions; whereby it was acknowledged that many approaches and initiatives would form part of future working practices.

A number of observations and queries were addressed, as follows:

In response to a query, the Director of Education and Children's Services confirmed to Members that the Task and Finish Group Report 208/19, which incorporated recommendations emanating from the review of Carmarthenshire's School Admissions Policy, was scheduled to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 31st January 2022. The Committee noted that the business plan would be duly updated to reflect the determinations of the Cabinet.

Committee referred to the funding formula for ALN and requested an update in this regard. The Head of Education Services and Inclusion explained that a clear direction had been agreed amongst secondary schools, however, due to the variances in size amongst primary schools, it was resolved that additional funding would be allocated on a priority basis as part of the growth expenditure. It was explained that the general funding formula had been reviewed to address the pressures identified by schools. Following an imminent consultation period, it was envisaged that the revised funding formula would be implemented from March 2022.

Concerns were raised that feedback had been received from a school who had experienced difficulties in contacting the Council to report and rectify maintenance issues. Committee was provided with an explanation of the process to be followed in this regard and assurances provided that a simple one-page procedure was currently being developed for schools.

An update was requested in respect of music services. The Interim Head of School Effectiveness explained that blended opportunities had been provided to schools during the Covid-19 pandemic on a prioritisation basis, in addition to Key Stage 2 Curriculum support. Members were pleased to note that progress was being made in this area.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the Committee to be held on 16th March 2022. The Director of Education and Children's Services reported that a new Lead Officer, namely Mr Ian Altman would be invited to attend the next meeting to participate in the discussion surrounding the new Regional Collaboration Model.

In reviewing the Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2021/22, it was noted that the meeting scheduled for 26 April 2022 may be deferred in accordance with pre-election guidance, and further information would be circulated to Members in due course.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next meeting be noted.

8. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 23 DECEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 December, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE