

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday, 11 June 2021

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen, K.V. Broom, D.M. Cundy (In place of G.R. Jones), T.A.J. Davies, J.P. Jenkins, B.W. Jones, R. James (In place of B. Thomas), M.J.A. Lewis, S. Najmi, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, E.G. Thomas and D.T. Williams

Co-opted Members:

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

Also in attendance:

Councillor G. Davies – Executive Board Member for Education & Children

The following Officers were in attendance:

S. Davies, Head of Access to Education
A. Rees, Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing
A Thomas, Head of Education Services and Inclusion
G. Adams, Principal Manager - Youth Support Service
E. Williams, Additional Needs Processing Manager
R. Williams, Additional Needs Provision Manager
M. Evans-Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer
R. Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator

Virtual Meeting – 10:00am – 12:35pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Bowen, G.R. Jones and B. Thomas.

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

Member	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Cllr. Jean Lewis	4. Youth Support Services	She is a Chair of a Young Farmers Club in Carmarthenshire

There were no declarations of party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICES

[NOTE: Councillor J. Lewis had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee considered a report providing an overview of the Youth Support Service response during the COVID-19 pandemic, together with relevant background information. The report outlined the provision of Youth Support Service and the Youth Justice under a single management structure allowing the development of a holistic approach to the delivery of youth support services across Carmarthenshire.

The Executive Board Member for Education & Children's Services commended the service on gaining the Silver award in supporting the delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and being responsible for all the open access provisions available within the 4 teams of the Youth Support Service.

The YSS Principal Manager advised that during lockdown the Youth Support Service has shown flexibility and has responded well with challenges faced whereby they've supported staffing of the school hubs during lockdown, offered support to families as and when appropriate, food delivery duties across the county, conducted door-step/garden visits for those deemed vulnerable and have adapted quickly with the aid of social media and technology as a form of engaging with children and young people in a safe manner alongside working with Social Services, the Health Board and the whole of the Education Department.

During lockdown safeguarding remained of paramount importance to the service; the Youth Service is a learning organisation that has been restructured to meet the needs across Carmarthenshire. The service was integrated in January, 2016 in order to work to optimal levels with the Youth Justice team and the Youth Justice Management Board completed a self-assessment against the Youth Justice Board National Standards for Children in the Justice System in March, 2020.

Pre-lockdown staff worked together to identify the risks and needs profile of the team's caseloads to assist in prioritisation and the type of contact/support each child needs whereby Managers and staff completed a Red / Amber / Green status on each Court and Out of Court case using a template which captured Risk of Serious Harm, Safety and Wellbeing concerns or any other need or required response.

The YSS Principal Manager is in the process of drawing up the YSS Business Plan which will include a focus upon the Youth Justice Plan for 2021/22 as well as an overview of the YSS during the past year as well as future planning.

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

- Reference was made to the homelessness situation; Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing advised that many challenges are encountered with homelessness as well as foster placements, needing extra care and that there are staff linked in with the Housing Department.
- It was asked if staff capacity is down from working in other areas and the YSS Principal Manager confirmed that the service is back at full capacity; detached youth work has commenced and the Carmarthenshire Youth Centres are open for appointment only and that Youth Clubs have

continued virtually for now as a safe working practise.

- Feedback was sought on how the new developments including new projects including Mental Health and Wellbeing is working. The YSS Principal Manager advised that the YSS has a well-established partnership with Dr Mz via an SLA. As a result of COVID welfare/activity packs were developed and made accessible. For some time now hygiene packs had been kept to issue to young people. A lot of detached youth work and “keeping in touch” days with the vulnerable, youth club attendees and post 16. A Vulnerability Hub was held in Glan y Mor School last Summer and will again this Summer and will be using detached youth work to keep in touch with the vulnerable young people so that if there are any reports of any concerns in the community it can be ensured that Youth Workers can be put in that area to find out what support is needed and signpost them in the right direction for help. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that there is a strategic group in implementing a Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and exploring concepts and recovery plan
- The impact on young people has been significant in the past year and concern was raised on the increase of anti-social behaviour and asked if there are any identifying hotspots across the County with antisocial behaviour in conjunction with the policy. The YSS Principal Manager advised that she was aware of recent report in the media regarding some local ASB linked to trains and train stations and young people gathering in large numbers; the service has close links with the Neighbourhood Policing Teams and that the Youth Justice team have ASB referral mechanisms in place and a regional prevention referral form which the police have on their system for referrals. Prevention referrals are at a steady flow albeit slightly more since pandemic. However, the service has not seen a rise in relation to referrals linked to ASB hotspots.
- Reference was made to social media use and asked how much do the School Based Youth Workers know i.e. pupil sharing their issues and problems with them. The YSS Principal Manager reassured the committee that Carmarthenshire is fortunate to have SBYW's in all Secondary Schools and that safeguarding is key and should any issues arise it is followed up directly with Headteachers as well as the linked School Liaison Police Officers.
- Reference was made to changing the funding model and the Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing stated that the Youth work is targeted up to the age of 25 years – in general the service is getting more dependent on grants and targets the provisions closer to specific needs of provision of grants. The YSS Principal Officer stated that a lot of work is happening with the Interim Youth Work Board, Wales. The WG Youth Support Grant which was increased 3 years ago focuses on those not engaged in education training and employment, emotional and mental health and homelessness prevention. The Interim Youth Work Board are also looking at the Revenue Support grant and how this is used across Local Authorities for youth work.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. ALN TRANSFORMATION ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered a report on the progress of Carmarthenshire's ALN Transformation Action Plan and the review of ALN Formula Funding which outlines

how the local authority is supporting schools with their planning in the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (ALNET).

ALN system is the new statutory support system for children and young people aged 0 to 25 in Wales with ALN that is due to come into force in September 2021.

The Executive Board Member for Education & Children's Services advised that the new statutory system will be introduced in September, 2021 noting its importance to all stakeholders involved in the ALN transformation that each school ensures that what is in place is appropriate for them and, more importantly, the learners within the school. The New ALN Code will be implemented initially to Nursery, Years, 1, 3, 5, 7 and 10. The change gives more responsibility on schools and less on the Authority.

The Head of Education and Inclusion Services advised that the ALNCO model was published in March, 2021. He noted that the transformation isn't new to the authority and have been working on the transformation since 2018; the service has expanded in ALN and in the Inclusion Department. The ALN Managers have both been working alongside ERW with the 6 regional Local Authorities documenting the Principles and personalised planning to meet their needs with IDP. The WG has given an overview for a detailed technical implementation guidance with 4 key commencement orders and training for ALNCO will be tailored to the individual.

The ALN Managers presented a report on developing an ALN provision mapping programme, decision making delivery model, universal provision and ALP in developing an electronic mapping tool for schools. The Head of Education and Inclusion Services advised that Teacher Center has been commissioned to support IDP across schools, families, children and young people. The ALN Managers advised that a handbook for reference for schools will be implemented in the future and that a multi agency programme is being developed for sharing with Health colleagues in Hywel Dda and delivering training across Social Care and the Education sector.

The ALN Managers advised that each child will need a review and that criteria is set by WG for the IDP and to note that there will no longer be an ALN register / no Statement Children as it will be disbanded.

Additional funding given to schools to release ALNCo to consider implementation. Schools will receive the following funding supplements on the basis of FSM support, SEN register to be monitored and challenged, where statementing exceeds 1 x TA per pupil, LA will fully fund additional requirement and the intention that as Statements reduce, funding will transfer to the ALN supplement:-

ALN supplement

£1000 per LAC child / 25% FSM / 25% School Action / 50% School Action Plus

SEN supplement

100% supplement for those agreed upto October, 2019 / from October, 2019 – Primary: 50% for new Statements; Secondary 40% or 45% per statement

Elements requiring funding are School and Centrally held. The expectations for schools to make decisions is between 7 and 12 weeks (statutory time scales).

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

- If Carmarthenshire have made full use of the funding and is there enough going forward? The Head of Education and Inclusion advised that as a service they've been fortunate in team growth and a large number of individual from school and that the budget in terms of professional learning received additional ALN grants at end of the financial year. The ALN Manager advised that an additional Teacher of the Deaf has joined the team and there are 2 Local Authority Specialists in Parcyrhun, Ammanford and Canolfan Elfed in QE High School and that there are upto 20 deaf children who want to access deaf education.
- Reference was made as to how levels of abilities are monitored in mainstream schools in relation to specialist units with more complex needs. The Head of Education & Inclusion Services advised that there is a comprehensive evaluation in each school enabling positive inclusion to share with inward inclusion into specialist settings.
- Asked if it was part of the schools remit to educate parents or would it be from the County. The Head of Education & Inclusion advised that as their still awaiting on technical information from WG we have to wait before any final publication is shared.
- Asked if there is a back log in Tribunals due to Covid-19 and what is the timeframe for tribunals. The ALN Manager advised that the tribunal service has continued virtually with tribunal appeals and has not stopped during Covid-19.
- Reference was made to the 5% pupil funding to their ALN budget; the Head of Education and Inclusion advised that key consideration is all about good teaching for all pupils and knowing that all teachers know where their children are at.
- Asked if the transition will be seamless to the digital platform for IDP as it has not been previously. The Head of Education and Inclusion advised that the choice of platform i.e. Teacher Centre is currently used within all schools and its an extension on the existing application. Moving forward the Early Years Officer / Flying Start will look in detail before they are entered onto the system initially.
- Reference was made to schools under 100 pupils which are under the central funding column and asked if the aim here is to share human resources. The ALN Manager has approached other authorities and its to delegate as much money to schools as possible but there is not 1 authority that have decided what is done. Best practise is more money given to schools to put in early intervention the easier it is to make the correct decisions and plan long term.
- There are 22 different formulas trying to achieve the same outcome. The Head of Education and Inclusion advised that as Statements won't be in existence we will be trying to give the resources on a flexible basis to schools so that the schools decide on the way forward. Schools will ask for money to meet the needs of that child i.e. early intervention. If it is thought that the schools cannot meet the needs of that pupil the County can decide and an IDP comes under the authority. In England they've decided on a national model in relation to funding as part of the new organisation. There are no discussions to this effect happening in Wales.
- Asked if Council's across Wales have put in a formal funding formula application to WG. The Head of Education and Inclusion and the ALN

Managers were not aware and it is felt strongly across the committee that it is necessary to write to the WG asking for clarity before new system is put in place in September, 2021 and possibly follow England's pattern. The Head of Education and Inclusion is to draft a letter on behalf of the Chair to seek clarity from the WG on using a similar approach to England on ALN funding.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS (PREVIOUSLY SCRUTINY SCHOOL VISITS)

The Committee considered a report outlining re-establishing engagement sessions with schools and the impact of the authority's support services on maintaining high quality provision in our schools and outlining Welsh Government expectations on them in contributing to school improvement.

The Executive Board Member for Education & Children's Services advised that the last year due to the pandemic has had a negative impact on plans with schools closed for months and no visits made. It is hoped that discussions with schools will take place for the academic year September, 2021 and the new curriculum.

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

- Asked how schools can be part of a discussion on what structure / discussions can be done without physical school visits / can they be invited to share their experiences with Scrutiny Committee? Both the Chair and the Head of education and Inclusion advised that they will liaise with school and form 3 x groups of members of the committee to have virtual discussions. A timetable of suggested themes / types of questions and evidence asked will be created for the Autumn term so that work can commence for the next 2 terms and the 3rd term used to discuss buildings etc. The Head of Education and Inclusion will link work and visits with the school improvement team to look at support and any elements for improvement.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee received an explanation for the non-submission of the following scrutiny report and noted that it would be presented to Committee at the next meeting:-

- Children's Services (Increased Referral Rates)

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the information be noted.

8. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 8th July, 2021 be noted and was verbally noted that the

Annual Report will be brought before committee also on the 8th July, 2021 and will potentially give an interim recommendation from Task and Finish.

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 21ST APRIL, 2021

Subject to the following change in establishment of the Task and Finish Group membership due to unforeseen circumstances-

Plaid Cymru: Cllr. Jean Lewis to replace Cllr. Emlyn Schiavone

Labour: Cllr. Dot Jones to replace Cllr. Bill Thomas

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21st April, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE