



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Joint Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel and Child & Family Services Scrutiny Panel

Committee Room 3A - Guildhall, Swansea

Thursday, 2 May 2019 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor P R Hood-Williams (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
L S Gibbard
B Hopkins
P K Jones

Councillor(s)

A M Day
K M Griffiths
L James
S M Jones

Councillor(s)

M Durke
D W Helliwell
Y V Jardine
L R Jones

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Officer(s)

Helen Morgan Rees - Head of Education Achievement and Partnership
Mark Sheridan – Acting Director Education
Kate Phillips – Head of Schools Support Unit
Helen Howells – LAC Co-ordinator

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): S J Gallagher, M A Langstone, H M Morris and L J Tyler-Lloyd
Co-opted Member(s): J Meredith

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Cllr Mike Day, Personal Interest

2 Supporting Looked After Children - Public Submission

On the 2 May 2019, the Schools Scrutiny and Child & Family Services Scrutiny Panels came together to look at an issue that had been raised by both panels, the Educational Outcomes of Looked After Children. We would like to thank Mark Sheridan, Julie Thomas, Helen Morgan Rees, Kate Phillips and Helen Howells for attending the meeting.

Prior to our meeting, the Panel received an email from a Youth Ambassador for The Fostering Network who is also a carer leaver herself. She asked to address the panel on behalf of a number of Swansea's looked after children who have concerns about the cuts in funding for their bespoke, tailored 1:1 support and wished to share their individual experiences on how the loss of this service has and could impact on their lives.

Councillors heard that these changes are the result of the LAC element of Pupil Deprivation Grant being diverted from specific LAC-centred support directly into mainstream schools. She said that the young people are having difficulty accepting this abrupt change and feel they had not had the opportunity to have their voice heard about such an important change. They heard the young people have established strong relationships, built respect and trust with their support workers and do not feel that schools could replicate this. They also feel that it is not only about the support received from workers but the support they receive from each other which has become like a family.

She recognised that the decision had now been made but wanted to raise these concerns with the Council so that it is understood and that improvements can be made around future decisions. She asked for a response to the following points:

1. Why the decision was made?
2. Why the decision was made so abruptly not giving young people time to adjust adequately?
3. Why the young people affected were not consulted?
4. How will LAC young people be supported, now this service have changed?

Officers attending the meeting responded to the issues raised and apologised to the young people for any hurt or upset that had felt. It was explained that the uncertainty in how the Pupil Development Grant from Welsh Government will be used in future was a contributing factor. That they had worked hard to find a solution and keep the support workers but it was not possible. They explained that support of the Tribe Group was really successful and valued but that it only reaches about 20 young people so a lot young people are not being heard in Swansea as the resources are concentrated in one place. Officers also explained that the Diamond Project will continue with the University and that the Councils Children and Young People Participation Team will be picking up this activity. Officers agreed to respond to the above four points in writing and will send a copy of this response to the panel for information.

3 Educational Outcomes and Support for Looked After Children in Swansea

The Joint Panel discussed the briefing report on the Performance of Looked After Children. They heard and welcomed the allocation LAC Pupil Development Grant on a cluster of schools basis recognising that monies can then be concentrated and used in the best way for that group of schools. They would like to see young people consulted on how the money will be used to support them.

Councillors highlighted the principle of Looked After Children and wider support for pupils being everybody's business and not just LAC Co-ordinators in Schools. The Panel agreed with Officers when they said it is important that capacity is built within all schools to work with vulnerable pupils.

The difference between education outcomes of LAC pupils between KS2 and KS4 was raised. The panel wanted to understand why there is such a stark difference in performance here. Officers explained the figures shown are based upon a small

cohort of children each year and these are not the same children, as children come in and out of care throughout the year. The data therefore will vary year on year because each cohort will have different abilities and this, because the figures are so small, can have a big impact on our results.

They also heard that the L2i is very difficult to achieve for vulnerable pupils and that it is better for them to be tested on the progression they make rather than merely attainment; Councillors recognise the importance of the value added measure. Councillors were concerned to hear Value Added Measures are no longer easily available from the Welsh Government but are encouraged that we do have our own Vulnerability Assessment Profile.

The Joint Panel heard that there is a real will in Swansea to develop a more systematic approach to improving the outcomes of vulnerable pupils, recognising that it is not just down to schools and not just relating to LAC but also those children on the Child Protection Register and Special Guardianship Orders. Councillors agreed with Officers that we need to be able to see what difference we are making to pupils and need to support them to be as good as they can be. The Panel were interested to hear about the intention to develop an Action Plan to deliver an integrated and outcome focussed approach. We would welcome more information on this as it develops.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm