



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Scrutiny Performance Panel – 18 April 2024

Update on Education Other than at School (EOTAS) provision in Swansea

Purpose	To update the Scrutiny Panel on EOTAS provision in Swansea
Content	The report sets out progress since April 2023 in relation to issues considered in the previous report to Scrutiny Performance Panel
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided and give views
Lead Councillor	Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Education Improvement Learning and Skills
Lead Officer	Helen Morgan Rees, Director of Education
Report Author	Kate Phillips, Head of Vulnerable Learners Service

1. Background

- 1.1 As reported to Education Scrutiny Performance Panel in April 2023, the needs of learners in Swansea have changed since 2016 when the current model of Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was agreed.
- 1.2 Since the last update to Scrutiny Panel a number of developments have taken place to address the changing needs of learners. In June 2023 Swansea Cabinet considered a report requesting permission to review the current model of EOTAS provision in order to evolve provision for EOTAS in Swansea.
- 1.3 Cabinet approved a recommendation from this report which was to undertake a period of consultation with the PRU Management Committee and wider stakeholders in order to review the current operating model and reorganise the PRU internally.
- 1.4 This consultation and engagement period was undertaken with stakeholders and resulted in the development of a new, proposed model for service delivery. This proposed model was shared via a further report to Cabinet in January

2024 and permission was then granted to take forward the new model of service delivery.

- 1.5 The Head of Vulnerable Learners Service is currently undertaking the operational changes required to begin to implement the new model from 1st September 2024.
- 1.6 This report will update Scrutiny Panel on the proposed changes to the delivery model as outlined in both the June 23 and January 24 reports and the operational steps that have been undertaken to date, to complete the actions required.

2. Consultation and Engagement Period

- 2.1 Following agreement from Cabinet in June 2023 to undertake the consultation exercise the following stakeholders were identified:
 - pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Management Committee
 - staff at PRU
 - learners attending PRU and those in receipt of other EOTAS services
- 2.2 The consultation activity took place over a 12-week period which started following Cabinet's agreement on 15 June and ended on 20 October 2023. This allowed for the school summer break to be excluded from the consultation period.
- 2.3 The consultation activity included consultation with the PRU Management Committee. Two focus groups were formed. One with a leadership focus and the other with a practitioner focus.
- 2.4 Eight principles were shared with the focus groups which outlined what needed to be achieved. These principles are as follows:
 1. The model has to be one that maximises the current resource available across the Vulnerable Learners Service to meet the needs of all learners requiring EOTAS provision and identifies the PRU's role within that.
 2. The model has to be one that will achieve better outcomes for all EOTAS learners across Swansea Council, not just those attending the PRU.
 3. The model does not expect the PRU to provide all of the above however, the role of the PRU needs to be identified in the continuum of support and may need to contribute resource (physical, human, financial) to boost other EOTAS providers (home tuition, Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team and Pupil Support Team) with the aim of ensuring access to resources is as equitable as possible for EOTAS learners.
 4. Equally, there may be opportunities for other teams in the Vulnerable Learners Service to work differently with the PRU to support learners who are dual registered at PRU better.
 5. Achieving the above should in turn lead to the PRU functioning more as intended, namely, reintegration model with earlier intervention.
 6. The model needs to work towards addressing the high level of violence and aggression reported by staff at the PRU. It also needs to provide

opportunities to improve attendance, reduce exclusions and to ensure that those learners who are on Pastoral Support Plans receive a package of support which increases their time in education (not necessarily increasing time in Maes Derw but offering something alternative).

7. We need to maximise what works well and address challenges to make improvements where needed.
 8. It is expected that all areas of the Vulnerable Learners Service will need to contribute and collaborate to achieve the above. There is no additional funding / resource but there is an opportunity to use funding / resource differently.
-
- 2.5 The groups were invited to propose suggestions to make changes and adaptations to the current model in line with the 8 principles and the feedback was collated.
 - 2.6 The consultation process also included staff engagement.
 - 2.7 Staff were invited to complete a questionnaire and provide their views and suggestions. In total 36 members of staff completed the questionnaire which was open to all staff including teachers, teaching assistants, leadership team and associate staff. The questionnaire had around a 50% response rate which was pleasing.
 - 2.8 The responses were honest, helpful and constructive. Collectively, survey responses provided some important input into revising the current operational model. Responses were analysed and a summary of the key themes is included below.
 - 2.9 It was considered critical to consult with children and young people too.
 - 2.10 Staff at the PRU supported children and young people to complete a questionnaire which asked for their views on the current provision. 19 responses were provided which was around a 22% response rate.
 - 2.11 In addition to this, Child and Family Services officers were able to speak to children and young people during via their attendance at youth clubs or other community activities.
 - 2.12 The School Support Team also worked with nine children and young people on the home tuition case load who were in receipt of EOTAS services but not able to access the PRU for a variety of reasons. This input was important as part of the review is about widening access to EOTAS services.
 - 2.13 The findings of the consultation exercise were grouped into themes with feedback from across all groups included within each theme. The themes considered what worked well, what doesn't work, and suggestions for improvement. They were also used to develop the new model. These findings and the proposed new model were shared in the report to Swansea Cabinet in January 24.

3. Further considerations

- 3.1 Alongside the consultation activity, consideration was also given to data held by the local authority in relation to current, emerging need and future predictions. A summary of this data can be found in the report to Cabinet January 24.
- 3.2 Furthermore Swansea Council corporate plans and commitments were considered to ensure any proposals was aligned accordingly.
- 3.3 The Vulnerable Learners Service Inclusion Strategy is a key document which outlined the priorities and goals for the Vulnerable Learners Service over the next five years. The proposed model is designed to align to this strategy.
- 3.4 It is also recognised that Swansea Council have made significant investment in EOTAS services including investment in the Maes Derw building. The proposed model allows greater and more flexible use of this resource to ensure it reaches the maximum number of learners.
- 3.5 Legislative obligations were also considered including the Wellbeing of Future Generations, UNCRC and ALNET 2018. There are legal obligations on Swansea Council to meet the needs of our most vulnerable learners and this proposed model is designed to align with these obligations.
- 3.6 As part of the consultation activity dialogue took place with an external provider on our current EOTAS framework to ensure any future proposed model was operationally deliverable.

4. Proposed model

- 4.1 The proposed model has been developed using all of the information gathered during the consultation period as detailed above.
- 4.2 In addition, it has considered ways to address the challenges outlined in the June 2023 Cabinet Report and has used the eight principles outlined earlier in this report.
- 4.3 The proposed model is detailed in Appendix A.
- 4.4 The key changes are as follows:
 - The existing primary phase and halfway house merge to form a single PRU, operating on a reintegration model for learners in primary and lower secondary (up to Y8).
 - The provision for learners with Social and Emotional Mental Health needs remains but operates on a more flexible, bespoke, intervention model allowing for earlier and more flexible bespoke package to be developed for learners some of which will be offered on an outreach basis.
 - The provisions for secondary learners will be merged to one provision catering for Y8/9 upwards and operate on a flexible, bespoke,

intervention basis. There will be full time places available but there will also be bespoke, multi-agency outreach packages too.

- The options available to the EOTAS panel will be expanded and schools will be encouraged to refer earlier for preventative interventions to avoid escalation to longer term or full-time placements. Registration at Maes Derw will not necessarily be needed to access preventative interventions.
- A special school 'spoke' provision will be established in the Maes Derw building to cater for a small number of learners with a long-term additional learning need who require specialist teaching but access to the resources of a PRU.

4.5 The new model was agreed by Cabinet in January 24 and the Head of Vulnerable Learners Service is currently reviewing the staffing structure to ensure it is operationally deliverable.

4.6 The PRU Management Committee is fully appraised and has been involved and updated at every stage.

5. Timeline

5.1 Following consultation, it is envisaged that the final staffing structure would be in place by April 2024 with implementation proposed for September 2024.

5.2 However, there will be learners mid-way through a course of study and there is no intention to disrupt this. Current learners will continue as they are while the new model is phased in. This is in line with the learner centred, bespoke approach advocated.

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are no legal implications from this report.

7. Finance Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications from this report.

8. Equality & Engagement Implications

8.1 The report is for information and not for decision.

Background papers:

[Cabinet Report June 2023](#)

[Cabinet Report January 2024](#)

Appendices: Appendix A