

Report of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

Cabinet - 6 May 2014

RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE WELLBEING INQUIRY PANEL

Summary

Purpose:	To outline the response of the Cabinet Member to the scrutiny recommendations and to present an action plan to address these.
Policy Framework:	None
Reason for Decision:	To comply with the requirements of the Council Constitution.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Equalities
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The Cabinet Member response as outlined in the report and related action plan be agreed.
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Finance Officer:	Susan Rees
Legal Officer:	Janet Hooper
Access to Services Officer:	Phil Couch

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Wellbeing Inquiry report was submitted to Cabinet on the 15 October 2013 after the Wellbeing Inquiry Scrutiny Panel completed a detailed inquiry into attainment and wellbeing in schools across Swansea.
- 1.2 The response and whether Cabinet agree, or not agree, with each recommendation is detailed in this report.

2. Response to Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations

Recommendation 1

All schools in Swansea including pupil referral units should sign up to the UNCRC and work towards recognition as rights-respecting.

Cabinet Member Response: Swansea Council is proud to be the first authority in Wales to commit to UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) programme. Our vision is that by 2017 every school in

Swansea, including our PRUs, will have formally started the RRS journey with a vision to eventually becoming a level 2 RRS. A conference was held last year to launch and celebrate this commitment to children's rights and since then over 30 additional schools have joined the programme.

The commitment made by schools ensures that our children grow up understanding their rights and the rights of all of the children around them. The benefits of entrenching children's rights in our schools are clear and we have every intention of continuing with this commitment.

RRS is not simply an award, an initiative or a bolt on, marks a total culture and change in ethos within our schools.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 2

Awareness raising is carried out in relation to UNCRC including the provision of information to councillors, school governors, staff and partner organisations.

Cabinet Member Response: A substantial amount of work around awareness raising has taken place over the past year or so, with very public commitments being made to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including conferences, policy launches and press work. There is a significant amount of work that is still required in terms of ensuring staff, Councillors and Governors have the required training to fully understand the implications and meaning of the UNCRC, and that we provide clear information also to our partner organisations.

As part of its work to embed the UNCRC, a task and finish group of staff has been developed with the purpose of raising awareness of the UNCRC and the implications for rights-based practice. Training sessions with staff run by UNICEF have taken place, and more are planned.

Swansea Council has become the first in Europe to fully embed the UNCRC in its policy framework and is now required to publish an annual scheme outlining the work that has been done and that will be done to further realise the rights within the convention. The first scheme will include clear actions that will be taken to increase awareness and further embed the UNCRC.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 3

Schools are encouraged to work more widely with the many partners and organisations that could potentially deliver parts of the curriculum for PSE in schools.

Cabinet Member Response: Schools should be making full use of

expert outside organisations to deliver many parts of the curriculum and the Council should support them in doing so. Governors should be using their positions to encourage this also.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 4

It investigates different mediums for the wider training of governors including the use and availability of online training tools and involvement in appropriate inset days and be party to wider 'all school' training.

Cabinet Member Response: The Council currently has a strong Governor training programme with some compulsory elements that UNCRC training will soon become a part of. Take up of the Governing Body Bronze Awards programme is also being encouraged by the Council. Moves to online training and further support for Governors is being pursued by the Welsh Government and the Regional School Improvement Board.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 5

It encourages schools to find more creative ways to involve parents based on best practice.

Cabinet Member Response: Estyn has recognised the work of Swansea's schools to share best practice. The importance of this will also be emphasised in the next cross phase meeting and during future Governor training.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 6

It works to encourage a wider range of people to become governors with a variety of skills and knowledge and that are truly reflective of wider society.

Cabinet Member Response: Though this is agreed it is a difficult task. There are a significant amount of Governors in Swansea and changes to education such as possible federation make foreseeing future requirements less straightforward. However, we will look at best practice from other authorities to see how this can be done. The topic of Governor skills has also been addressed in the Hill Review which is currently with the Minister.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 7

It develops 'questions to ask' guidance in relation to wellbeing in schools for Governors using the issues identified in section 3.12 and in consultation with headteachers and governing bodies. This should be

made available online for schools and governors to access.
Cabinet Member Response: This will be developed through the regional improvement group and current joint working arrangements.
Recommendation is AGREED

Recommendation 8
It facilitates the introduction of a system leaders approach within governing bodies. That is new chairs of governors being supported by experienced governors from other schools across the regions and new governors offered a buddy system from within the individual governing body.
Cabinet Member Response: This will be facilitated through the regional improvement group which will facilitate a cross authority Governors network.
Recommendation is AGREED

Recommendation 9
To develop more consistency in transition from primary to secondary schools including the development of an advisory document based on 'what works' in conjunction with schools across the authority. This should be made available online for schools and governors to access.
Cabinet Member Response: This will be a cross phase item for discussion with the schools with the best track record.
Recommendation is AGREED

Recommendation 10
Performance measures relating to children and young people are revisited to ensure that they do not only measure objective data but ensure that subjective measures such as Children and Young People views are built in.
Cabinet Member Response: Our recent commitment to the UNCRC will see Council services over the next few years developed into becoming significantly more focussed around children and young people and their participation in particular. Many of this will be outlined in the first UNCRC scheme when it is published, but will also play a big part in satisfying Cabinet's Due Regard duty. A task and finish group of officers has been established to ensure we expand and develop our work to hear the voices of children and young people, and that they have opportunities to participate fully in our decision making process. This work will be outlined at the launch of the Council's UNCRC scheme. The Super Survey and Big Conversation run by the C&YP Strategy Unit's participation team ensure children and young people's subjective views are fed into services.

Recommendation is AGREED

Recommendation 11

More opportunities for schools to share good practice be developed (including online options).
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Cabinet Member Response: The Estyn improvement plan will outline actions that will be taken around this but as previously stated it will also become a topic for discussion at the next cross phase meeting. However it is important to note that school to school working and improvement will also be a core principle of future local and regional school improvement plans.
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Recommendation is AGREED

3. **Addressing the Recommendations**

An Action Plan is being developed as part of the embedding of the UNCRC. Addressing these Recommendations within that plan will avoid duplication of effort and monitoring too many plans.

4. **Equality and Engagement Implications**

The Council's decision to embed the UNCRC duty into policy and practice was agreed on the 24th September 2013, we are now working across Council to look at the detail of how this will work. The existing Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be adapted to include a section on Children's Rights Impacts (CRIA). This is likely to increase the advice and guidance needed from the Access to Service team.

5. **Legal Implications**

In October 2013 it was agreed that the UNCRC (1989) be embedded within, and become part of the Council's Policy Framework and that a duty be placed on the Executive ('the Cabinet') to have 'due regard' to the UNCRC (1989).

By agreeing to place a 'due regard' duty upon the executive of the Authority, i.e. the Cabinet, Swansea Council shows commitment to children's rights, the UNCRC (1989), and to supporting and respecting the young citizens of this City and County.

6. **Financial Implications**

There is an annual cost of £40,000 to continue with the agreement with UNICEF UK to deliver the Rights Respecting Schools Award in Swansea.

There are also financial implications in terms of roll out of training and capacity building in the Access to Service Team to support the EIA and CRIA process and in terms of building capacity within the Children and Young People Strategy Unit Participation Team to deliver and embed Rights Based Practice. These costs will be contained within existing budget provision.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

None.