

High Aspirations

How are services being improved for those children and young people who need or are at risk of being educated other than at school?



The Education Inclusion Scrutiny Inquiry Panel
City and County of Swansea - Dinas a Sir Abertawe



October 2015

Why This Matters by Councillor Cheryl Philpott (Convener)



We found this topic to be complex and challenging at times, we found it difficult to see *the wood from the trees*. Given this complexity it is essential that all those involved in working with this group of children understand this complexity and their role within it.

We found that some of the support for this group of young people, particularly by schools, to be strong, like for example the nurture group PACE in Pentrehafod Comprehensive and Elevate in Bishop Gore School, while others were much weaker and needed addressing.

We did feel that schools working at the coalface need more support and assistance in working with those children who are at risk of exclusion or Education Other Than At School (EOTAS). A clear and active behaviour strategy was needed for the authority which details how schools will be supported to move forward in this area.

The secondary schools we spoke to felt out of loop in relation to any development in behaviour support and in EOTAS changes. The Panel early in the inquiry put a recommendation to the Cabinet Member which emphasised the importance of involving schools; recognising that they are critical part of service. We also emphasised the point that schools are showing many areas of good practice that could be shared with the Pupil Referral Units (PRU) and other schools. We also found that there was a lack of communication between different parts of the education department and felt that there was a need for a reflective journey to discuss their commonalities and communication links.

We did feel that by asking questions around this subject it has helped keep a spotlight and momentum on these services and on the needs of this group of young people and we hope this has helped move things along.

The changes to the PRU Management Committee were found to be positive by the Panel who believe that, in refreshing membership and refocusing the Committee, it is now in a much better position to drive forward improvements once the action plan is complete. We were also pleased to hear that a dedicated challenge advisor for the EOTAS service has now been allocated.

I would like to thank all those people who have helped us with this inquiry especially schools and the other agencies who contributed to this important piece of work.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

How are services being improved for those children and young people who need or are at risk of needing) EOTAS services?

Conclusions

1. The local authority, schools and EOTAS service must be better at meeting the needs of this group of vulnerable children.
2. Communication between professionals needs to be improved.
3. There needs to be a greater emphasis on reintegration of young people back into school.
4. The PRU management committee must drive improvement in the EOTAS service.
5. The PRU staff need to be part of mainstream training and development.
6. A holistic wrap around approach is needed for this group of children and young people.
7. Improve the quality of services for and outcomes of this group of children.
8. Improve services for young people 16+ transitioning to adulthood.
9. Ensure that the pupil voice is heard for this group of vulnerable children and young people.
10. Improve the fabric and suitability of the buildings used to house EOTAS services as a matter of urgency.

The Panel recommends to Cabinet that:

Long term challenges

1. A specific part of the education strategy is developed that will provide a steer for the local authority, schools and EOTAS on how it will deal with behaviour matters into the future. This strategy should:
 - a) form part of the overall education strategy and provide a clear way forward for the whole education service
 - b) detail how schools will be supported to develop their nurture provision or similar in order to support challenging pupils
 - c) ensure school staff are upskilled to be better able and prepared for working with difficult and challenging young people
 - d) have clear aims and targets for reducing the number of children and young people using EOTAS provision
 - e) be developed in partnership with schools and other stakeholders including children and young people
 - f) ensure School Governing bodies are kept in the loop and understand the issues around behaviour

- g) ensure that schools allocate a staff member who can be a behaviour champion within their school settings.

Medium term improvements

2. The Education Other Than At School action plan should be similar to a School Improvement Plan and it must:
 - a) stipulate clear lines of responsibility and detail desired outcomes
 - b) be challenged and driven forward by the PRU Management Committee
 - c) that pupil voices are heard in the development of this way forward endeavouring to produce a vision of something better from the perspective of children and young people
 - d) clearly focus on improving pupil outcomes (this should include numeracy and literacy across whatever part of the service the child attends)
 - e) ensure that it has a whole system approach to children and young people with social and emotional difficulties
 - f) be clear about the role it has in supporting schools in the drive to reduce the demand on EOTAS services
3. The possibility of secondment of (or sharing of) teaching staff between schools and PRUs be investigated.
4. It encourages joint working between/across schools when looking for solutions which potentially could result in economies of scales (including for example developing and sharing specific skills sets and expertise).
5. It provides support for and commitment to reintegrating young people back into school from EOTAS, particularly up to KS3, this should include:
 - a commitment is made at the outset between the school, EOTAS and the child/parents to the child returning to school. This should include a shared target for this to happen when the child enters EOTAS service.
 - schools keeps in regular communication with the child through for example a weekly update discussion
 - a process be developed that will bring all those people who can help with the reintegration of the child together providing an holistic approach to reintegration around the child who can help in the reintegration of a young person back to school be brought together to support that. Allocation of a lead worker to co-ordinate this process would be beneficial.
6. It investigate the possibility of a more formulised holistic Team Around the Family type approach for all children and young people using EOTAS services.
7. Gower College is encouraged to develop a mechanism to support those learners who require more support which should include a support worker link

and the upskilling of tutors in different aspects of working with this group of learners. A target to reduce drop-out rates should be introduced.

8. The use of restorative practice should be encouraged and used where possible in EOTAS provisions.
9. The United Nations Rights of the Child should be embedded in practice within these provisions. This will include training and support for all EOTAS staff and external providers on these aspects.

Quick wins

10. Carry out an awareness raising exercise to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the role of EOTAS services within the continuum of provision.
11. An analysis of training needs for staff across schools in Swansea be completed. This should be used as the basis for developing a training programme on behaviour for upskilling teachers and other stakeholders.
12. PRU staff have access to and are encouraged to use the same training and development opportunities as their colleagues in mainstream schools.
13. A mechanism for developing links between mainstream schools and EOTAS staff is developed in order to improve communication and share training opportunities, experience and good practice.
14. It ensures all Primary Schools use the Vulnerability Assessment Profile consistently in order to identify and to target interventions early.
15. An assessment of Special Teaching Facility places is carried out in conjunction with the relevant Health colleagues as a matter of urgency.
16. The Pathways service:
 - a) is advised and challenged by the school improvement service particularly around improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy
 - b) improve consistency, quality assure and develop the sustainability of external providers
 - c) have regular teaching observation and assessment by qualified staff similar to that which takes place within mainstream school settings
 - d) ensures robust quality assurance of Pathway providers in particular in identifying their training and development needs to upskilling in key aspects, including for example safeguarding and developing young people's literacy and numeracy which should be built into all activities they partake in.
 - e) Review any Pathways provider service level agreements and tendering documentation in order to reflect these changes.

17. Urgently improve accommodation for EOTAS services either by upgrading the fabric and layout of the current buildings or by finding more suitable premises. This should include the provision of suitable external recreation areas.
18. The different parts of the education department are reviewed in order to look at commonalities in service provision and ideas for joint and partnership working in relation to behaviour and services for EOTAS pupils. The outcomes of this must be built into the EOTAS action plan.
19. Awareness is raised with schools about the role of EOTAS, making a referral and the graduated response. This should be available to all schools but targeted specifically at those who are identified as the worst offenders for inappropriate referrals and/or inadequate paperwork.
20. Children and young people using EOTAS services are actively consulted and involved in developing the service and the physical environment they are taught within. This will require staff to be creative in the ways in which it engages and involves these young people.

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1 WHY WE PRODUCED THIS REPORT

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 In selecting this topic and producing this report our aim is to help improve the education and wellbeing of a vulnerable group of children. Those are children who are either receiving their education outside of school or who are at risk of doing so. The Panel looked to answer the inquiry key question *How are services for those children and young people, who need or who are at risk of needing, education other than at school being improved?*

1.2 Selecting the topic

1.2.1 The Inquiry into Education Inclusion was proposed by the Schools Performance Panel who completed some initial work before referring it on for an in-depth inquiry. The Inquiry began in February 2014 but was put on hold while an independent review of the issue was completed. The Inquiry resumed its evidence gathering on the 27 March 2015.

1.2.2 This topic was identified for inquiry because:

- We must ensure that we help every child meet their full potential by ensuring that every child can access effective education even whilst they are unable to attend mainstream school.
- Legislation in the UK prohibits discrimination in education and supports inclusive education. The UK also has obligations under international human rights law to provide inclusive education for all children.
- The need for equality of opportunity and the right of children and young people to receive high quality education, no matter where that education may be delivered – as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28) which has been fully adopted by the Welsh Government.
- Young people receiving education outside of mainstream school are one of the categories most at risk of not being in education, employment or training.
- An issue of concern was highlighted in a recommendation in the Estyn Inspection that we must ‘improve the quality of provision for those pupils who are educated other than at school, particularly to raise standards of achievement and to assist reintegration back into schools’.

1.3 Intended contribution

1.3.1 As a Panel we believe that we can make a valuable contribution to helping to improve this service. We recognise that the challenges are deep seated and complex. We also believe that, while no one has all of the answers, success will only come from a conversation that everyone is able to contribute to.

1.3.2 Specifically this report aims to contribute to this vital debate by:

- Drawing together some general principles for the development of the service for children who require services outside of mainstream schools
- Offering proposals for improvement in the long, medium and short term
- Providing a councillor perspective on how well the service is working
- Pointing to good practice examples
- Sharing the views of different people involved with this group of children and young people

- 1.3.3 We recognise the limitations of the inquiry. Given the complexity of the topic and the time that we had this report provides only a broad view.
- 1.3.4 Finally, many of our conclusions are in line with the Council's current direction of travel and these are offered in order to provide reassurance. Others may be either additional or contrary to what has already been agreed. These are intended to offer challenge and to stimulate debate. Where we have made recommendations these are intended to help improve the service.

1.4 Context

1.4.1 The Panel started this inquiry by looking specifically at the EOTAS service but it soon became clear that the needs of this group of children will only be met by a whole system approach which includes a number of services within and outside of the local authority. Detailed below is a short description of some of these services in order to give context and understanding to the detail of this inquiry.

1.4.2 The Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) service consists of:

- Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), this includes one for Key Stage 4 (14-16 years) pupils and one for Key Stage 3 (age 11 to 14 years) and below.
- Step Ahead - Step-Ahead is a Pupil Referral Unit for secondary school age pupils who are unable to attend a mainstream comprehensive school. All our pupils have an identified anxiety disorder.
- Home Tuition Services - For pupils who are not well enough to attend school
- Pathways - EOTAS Pathways works with young people 14-16 who are not educated in school or Pupil Referral Units. Young people are provided with a bespoke programme of schooling which include the use of external providers

1.4.3 The Behaviour Support Team supports and advises schools about pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) including those at risk of becoming educated other than at mainstream school. The team's time is allocated on a patch basis to secondary schools and their feeder primaries on the basis of pupil numbers and deprivation indicators. The team at present does not provide a direct service to pupils within the PRU setting. They also work jointly with EOTAS providers to help with reintegration at the request of the EOTAS Panel but this time does come out of that school's allocation. The team also work at a local authority level providing a range of training, sitting on special educational needs and EOTAS Panels and contributing to strategy groups upon request.

1.4.4 School Improvement Service is part of Education Through Regional Working (ERW) regional service that works with schools to *"build school capacity through support, challenge and intervention to become self-improving, resilient organisations which continually improve outcomes for learners"*.

2 THE EVIDENCE COLLECTED

- 2.1 In summary the evidence gathering activities undertaken by the Panel included:
- Overview of subject by Head of Education Inclusion

- The EOTAS independent Review Report¹
- EOTAS consultation outcomes and restructure proposals
- Equality Impact and UNCRC Assessment
- Careers Wales West and Keeping in Touch project
- School Improvement Service
- Pentrehafod Comprehensive School
- Bishop Gore Comprehensive School
- Clase Primary School
- Social Services Child and Family Services
- Behaviour Support Service
- Cabinet Member for Education and Chief Education Officer
- Youth Services Manager
- Youth Offending Service
- Education Welfare Service

2.2 The Panel recognised the importance of gaining young people's views in this process but also the difficulties in doing so for this group of young people where time to develop trust is needed before this can be done. The Panel did speak to young people while visiting the three schools but for this inquiry mainly relied upon the views given by the agencies representing the issues young people may have plus they used the report of the Children's Commissioner for Wales called '*The Right to Learn, Supporting children and young people at pupil referral units to reach their potential*' which detailed the views of young people using these facilities across Wales.

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The local authority, schools and EOTAS service must be better at meeting the needs of this group of vulnerable children

3.1.1 The Panel used the recent Education Other Than at School Good Practice Survey² by Estyn as a basis for assessing the evidence collected over the period of the inquiry. The conclusions and recommendations are reflective of this while also answering the Panel's key question...*How are services for those children and young people who need or who are at risk of needing EOTAS being improved?*

3.1.2 The local authority, schools and EOTAS must do better at meeting the needs of this group of vulnerable children. There is a need for a clear strategy for this group of young people. This needs to be developed as a part of the wider education strategy in order to provide Swansea with a whole system approach to this issue. The Panel recognises that the service is going through a process of change and that the strategy and action plan are currently being developed. The Panel hopes that the outcomes of this inquiry will help in developing that way forward.

3.1.4 The Panel was concerned to hear that some of those interviewed felt that the action plan, as it stood in February, was weak and that it did not have teeth. Additionally, responsibilities were unclear and that there was a need for all those named in the plan to understand their part and to work much more closely

¹ Provision for pupils educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS) in the City and County of Swansea Sue Willan - Independent Education Consultant - Final report: 25 July 2014 - [link](#)

² Education other than at school: a good practice survey – Thematic Report - Estyn – June 2015 - [link](#)

together. The Panel therefore believe the action plan must be stronger with clearer accountabilities and 'buy in' from all involved with this group of young people.

- 3.1.5 There was a clear need for the action plan when produced to be based firmly in 'what works' good practice and to be advised by the independent review and by schools. The Panel believe that the strategy moving forward must put greater emphasis on what is best for their vulnerable children and young people. It must show how they are at the centre of any decision and actions moving forward.
- 3.1.6 The Panel was also concerned by the findings of a recent report by the Children's Commissioner for Wales which said that Pupil Referral Units across Wales had been described to him as a '*Cinderella education service*', and he believes that *this issue must be urgently addressed so that every child can enjoy the right to an education that allows them to reach their full potential*³.

Children's Commissioner for Wales claims pupil referral units seen as an afterthought

A report looking at pupil referral units, where some of Wales' most vulnerable learners are taught, has concluded that practice is inconsistent and that they're too often seen as an afterthought both within local and national priorities.

The report by the Children's Commissioner for Wales examined the provision of education in pupil referral units (PRUs) and focused on the views of learners, their wellbeing and their right to education. The findings included:

- There is a need to change the general attitude towards PRUs: 'too often young people are labelled the worst of the education system'.
- Too many children and young people with additional needs are arriving at the PRU at a point where their issues have gone unsupported and have escalated to a point where engaging in education is particularly difficult.
- Meeting the range and depth of additional needs of learners at PRUs is challenging, in the context of staff capacity and access to appropriate training.

- 3.1.7 Evidence suggests that the way forward for the services involved with this group of children must be through an integrated whole system approach, which will form part of wider changes to the entire education system in Swansea. It was felt that there must be a more inclusive approach to the EOTAS service, that it must not be separate or isolated from the rest of the education provision in Swansea.
- 3.1.8 The Panel agreed with the Cabinet Member when she emphasised the importance of keeping children within the mainstream school setting wherever possible. The Panel recognise that this will involve schools making changes to how they work with children and young people with behavioural problems.
- 3.1.9 The Panel believe that the strategy and action plan moving forward must include the recognition to intervene much earlier in a child's life starting at primary and even in pre-school settings to reduce the need later along the line. The Panel was clear that the primary sector and even pre-school services must fulfil and meet their responsibilities in this area. It was clear that too many children and young people with additional needs are arriving at the PRU at a point where their issues have gone unsupported and have escalated to a point where engaging in education is particularly difficult.

³ The Right to Learn, Supporting children and young people at pupil referral units to reach their potential, Children's Commissioner for Wales - [link](#)

- 3.1.10 How effective are schools at delivering on this agenda? Evidence suggests that some are excellent and are putting facilities in place and are developing strategies for dealing with this group of children. However, indications show that some have not started moving forward fast enough in this area and it is patchy at present, particularly in the primary sector. The Panel found the need for more consistency in approach.
- 3.1.11 We found that many schools especially those in the secondary sector are starting to put solutions in place for example 'PACE' in Pentrehafod School and 'Elevate' in Bishop Gore School.

Bishop Gore Secondary School outcomes of work with young people at risk of exclusion and/or EOTAS services - Outcomes (Estyn July 2015):

The school provides very high levels of care, support and guidance that enable all pupils from diverse backgrounds and with different abilities to achieve their potential. There are very effective support systems to promote and encourage pupils' academic progress, attendance and wellbeing. As a result, pupils achieve excellent outcomes regardless of their ability or particular needs. The support systems have contributed exceptionally well to improving attendance for vulnerable groups, reducing exclusions and the number of pupils educated away from the school. The number of pupils excluded permanently from the school over the past three years is very low. Number of pupils excluded for short periods decreased significantly in the past two years.

PACE (Pentrehafod Alternative Curriculum Education)

The provision for pupils at Pentrehafod Secondary School who are at risk of exclusion and/or referral to EOTAS services. PACE is an off-site provision that is located in a small building in the community in a location close to the school. Principles of PACE are to: improve outcomes for all pupils', to improve whole school Level 1 and Level 2 indicators, to re-engage pupils motivation to learn, to provide a holistic framework of support for pupils and their families, to raise pupil attendance, to reduce the number at risk of exclusion, to reduce the number of pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET, to provide the most vulnerable pupils with essential skills for life.

The outcomes from PACE so far include: all of the year 11 pupils are predicted to gain the Level 2 indicator; all pupils have gained at least level 1 in English and Mathematics; improved engagement in learning, increased confidence and self-esteem and attendance is 92%.

- 3.1.12 Good practice has also been identified in many primaries including Clase and Hafod. We must ensure that there is a way for these and other examples of good practice in 'what works' to be shared and used by other schools.

Case study: Clase Primary School – engaging families

The school is located within a large housing estate in a Communities First area. Within the school, there are four specialist teaching facilities (STFs). Fifty-eight per cent of pupils are eligible to receive free school meals. Thirteen per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. In order to engage pupils who are at risk of low attendance and underachievement, the school places a strong focus on working with families. Example: the Derbyshire Play Project (DPP) and nurture groups help the school to engage in activities with whole families, including outdoor activities, a pastoral worker is an attendance officer keeping contact with families when attendance is a concern. Parents are highly supportive of the school and have high expectations of their child's standards. Parents feel confident asking for help with a child's learning and behaviour. There has been an increase in the attendance of vulnerable pupils; attendance rose from 76% to 97% in 2013-2014. There has been an upward trend in attendance figures since 2010. The school has had no exclusions in the last five years.

- 3.1.13 The Panel found a need for working more closely with Health colleagues to ensure that Swansea has adequate Special Teaching Facilities (STF) provision across schools. The Panel was informed by schools and the previous Chief Education Officer that a hold had been put on increasing provision until an 'assessment of requirements' is made in conjunction with Health. This has not yet taken place and the Panel feel this must be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Panel believes that this is, and will continue to cause pressure in other parts of the education system including within EOTAS until it is resolved.
- 3.1.14 The Panel emphasised the importance of the action plan itself being a working document. It must be seen and used as the driver for improvement across all services for this group of children; this will include getting buy in from schools and all those services affected. The Panel also believes that the action plan should be advised and challenged by the School Improvement Service on a regular basis.
- 3.1.15 The Panel and schools were concerned that the early reconfiguration proposals which were presented to them in February 2015 seemed to be mainly based around financial matters rather than what the actual key requirements were for this group of vulnerable children. The Panel expressed these concerns to the Cabinet Member for Education who reassured the Panel that this reconfiguration document was a consultation document and that no decision had been made on the way forward. The Panel was pleased to hear that they were considering all options at this stage. The Panel was also informed that no one service was going to be ring-fenced or will have priority over another in the reconfiguration process. The aim will be to ensure children and young people are able to move flexibly across the whole education service based upon their needs.

Proposed reconfiguration of EOTAS service - as presented to the Panel meeting on 16 Feb 2015

- 1) Retain the provision at Arfryn as it currently stands whilst ensuring that there is effective reintegration from the centre into mainstream schools.
- 2) Combine Step Ahead, Teenage Learning Centre (TLC) and Home Tuition as recommended by the external review, With TLC pupils being educated with Step Ahead Group.
- 3) Take the amalgamation further than the review considered by amalgamating Arfryn with Step Ahead under new Head of Centre.
- 4) Close Key Stage 4 Education Centre and make provision for KS4 Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty pupils through EOTAS Pathways as recommended by the review.
- 5) Keep the number of planned places in the PRU under review as schools will be expected to make provision for pupils with SEBD reducing wherever possible referrals to EOTAS.
- 6) Make efficiency savings where possible and appropriate.

- 3.1.16 The Panel was reassured that many of the findings from the External Review were reflective of their own early thoughts and concerns on the issue, for example *the relatively high provision for EOTAS places. This indicates that provision in mainstream schools at earlier stages of the graduated response is not effective enough*, in particular *that the authority does not have a coherent strategy for inclusion and behaviour support*. The Panel felt that the external review was a good basis to start the process of change and will help to inform and develop the action plan that will be able to drive change.

3.1.17 The Panel met with Headteachers from three schools in Swansea, Bishop Gore and Pentrehafod Secondary schools and Clase Primary School in order to gain a sample of views and see how schools are working on the frontline in relation to working with this group of children.

3.1.18 The Panel found clear views coming from the three schools around the way forward for the services for these children and young people. These are summarised as follows:

- The reconfiguration proposals (Feb 15) seem to be focused on cost savings
- EOTAS should include a small KS4 PRU that has overarching responsibility for a small Pathways provision and the remaining funds to go back to schools for them to develop capacity internally and possibly between/across schools. Outcomes after interventions in PRU at KS4 are improving so why is there a proposal to close it.
- Schools know their pupils best and are in most cases best able to understand and cater for their needs...given the resources to do so.
- There is great potential for joint working and economies of scales in schools working together in this.
- The Action Plan must clearly reflect how schools will be supported to reduce demand for EOTAS.
- EOTAS provision needs to be at the centre of schools and not an add-on...it could potentially be staffed by schools or be part of a school provision which would bring it closer to mainstream.
- Unsure how the reconfiguration proposals had got to where they were because the input they had had potentially showed a different set of proposals.
- Must ensure the quality, consistency and standard of Pathways providers.
- It is vital that all schools and education facilities/services understand their primary purpose which is to raise educational attainment. Must be all on the same page especially in relation to literacy and numeracy.

3.1.19 The Panel was not convinced that the continuum of provision was currently complete. They felt that a number of questions were still left unanswered (or not yet answered to the Panel's satisfaction) these include: if StepAhead are to take pupils with SEBD difficulties what will be the impact on the capacity and upon those children who attend for anxiety related issues? Will it mean longer waiting lists? Where will these children receive education while waiting? What will happen to these children while they are waiting for a place given Home Tuition will potentially be reduced? Are the skills sets available in StepAhead to deal with children with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) group of children? The Panel did not feel that they were adequately assured that these aspects had been addressed fully.

3.1.20 The Panel recognise that, given the budgetary climate within the local authority the cost of services must be considered. The Panel did find that the cost of nurture type provision within schools, for example PACE compared to EOTAS was far more economical. This coupled with preferable outcomes made it clear to the Panel that this should be considered as a way forward. The Panel found EOTAS to be a very expensive option and emphasised that it should only be the last resort. The Panel recognise that having a small EOTAS provision was important financially as it is more cost effective than using out of county facilities.

3.1.21 The Panel for these reasons recommends:

- The Education Other Than At School action plan should be similar to a School Improvement Plan and it must:
 - stipulate clear lines of responsibility and detail desired outcomes
 - be challenged and driven forward by the PRU Management Committee
 - that pupil voices are heard in the development of this way forward endeavouring to produce a vision of something better from the perspective of children and young people
 - clearly focus on improving pupil outcomes (this should include numeracy and literacy across whatever part of the service the child attends)
 - ensure that it has a whole system approach to children and young people with social and emotional difficulties
 - be clear about the role it has in supporting schools in the drive to reduce the demand on EOTAS services
 - Swansea Council, Schools and PRUs identify pupils who are at risk of disengagement early and put in place appropriate, timely interventions.

3.2 Communication between professionals needs to be improved

3.2.1 We found this topic to be complex and challenging at times, the Panel found it difficult to *see the wood from the trees*. Given this complexity it is essential that all those involved in working with this group of children understand this complexity and their role within it. The Local Authority, schools and PRUs must work together to meet the needs of these pupils to ensure that they remain in full-time education

3.2.2 All agencies understanding their role and working together to provide a holistic service to these young people is vital. The Panel felt that a flow chart translating this complexity would be a useful pictorial representation of the service for all those involved.

3.2.3 In respect of this issue the Panel found the lack of communication to be a key factor across the whole education service. More working together across sections within the education department was needed. Evidence suggests that joint working and communication across different agencies seemed to be working much better for this group of children and young people. However, the Panel concluded that the involvement of and consultation of schools must be improved along with cross specialism working within the education department. This was also highlighted in the independent review which said '*that there are too few opportunities for joint working between inclusion and school effectiveness officers to raise standards and promote inclusive practice in schools*'. The Panel believed that the key focus must be on improving the outcomes of children and young people and not the systems/silos in which we work.

3.2.4 Concerns were raised by a number of those interviewed about different parts of the education service not working together effectively in relation to this group of children. The Panel felt that some of the processes and/or ways of working encourage this, for example the 'hours allocation model' with schools for Behaviour Support, which does not easily allow for flexibility in support provided. The Hub Head of the School Improvement service felt that there was huge scope for working together and pooling knowledge with the Behaviour Support Team.

3.2.5 The Panel was pleased to see that a Challenge Advisor had been allocated to EOTAS services moving forward. This person will also sit on the PRU Management Committee. The brief for this role will also be to provide a link and to improve working right across the education department in relation to this group of children and particularly between the inclusion and improvement teams. The Panel hoped that this would start with the basics of pulling together all the different specialisms around a table and start the process of building relationships and identifying commonalities.

3.2.6 The Panel spoke to a selection of different agencies as part of the review in order to assess the level of joint working and their comments are detailed throughout this report.

3.2.7 *Child and Family Services (CFS), Social Services Department*

The Panel recognised that a significant number of children and young people using EOTAS services are known to social services found out that many of these are on Pathways, but the exact figures were unknown. The Panel also found that:

- The Head of CFS is a member of the Swansea PRU Management Committee.
- Communication between EOTAS and CFS is good with regular meetings to ensure joined up approach to individual children.
- Swansea schools use of the Vulnerability Assessment Profile was important and using this to assess and intervene early was important.
- There needs to be a more formalised multi agency structure around those children who are at risk of or using EOTAS services (team around the family type approach)
- Buy in from schools must be sought in any changes made.
- Must recognise that schools are in the best position to work with these children but did express a concern that some schools may not be fully exercising their responsibilities in respect of this group of children.
- There are concerns around some aspects of the early re-figuration proposals with regard to the potential for higher exclusion rates which can increase the looked after children population because of pressure on families.
- More work place development in relation to working with children with behavioural issues was needed across the board, particularly in schools, colleges and with Pathway providers
- Pathways has some good outcomes, the flexibility of the provision and development of bespoke packages are good but do have concerns about the number of hours the young people are doing and therefore the amount of time on their hands. It is suggested that Pathways need to strengthen its workforce development, safeguarding in provider settings and development of young people's numeracy and literacy.

3.2.8 *Youth Offending Service (YOS)*

The Panel found that the YOS is very aware of the link between exclusions, non-school attendance and offending and anti-social behaviour. Members recognised the link between non-constructive use of time and its link to offending and anti-social behaviour. The relationship between YOS and EOTAS was well defined and worked well although they were informed that the communication channels with schools can fluctuate, while some work closely with YOS others are slow to communicate. The Team Leader of YOS is on Swansea PRU Management Board. They would like to see a range of provision remaining in EOTAS in order to support different needs, as not one size fits all.

3.2.9 Swansea Youth Service

The Panel met with the Youth Services Manager where they were particularly keen to hear about the development of the Lead Worker role for the Youth Service which is a substantial change to its role and function. The nature of the change will include each youth worker having caseloads. Referrals are made to the youth service and a lead worker is then allocated to work with that child (and sometimes the family). The Panel heard that the role of the youth service is now much more targeted at those children identified as vulnerable (young people referred into the service are on the continuum of need levels 2 and 3). The capacity is limited, they are not able to work all the children and young people identified so must prioritise their resources. They have started to work more closely with Pathways with a newly developed direct referral system from them into Youth Service. Two staff will be allocated to the EOTAS services from autumn.

Specification for the 'lead worker' role

Lead workers will have a direct relationship with the young person, being a consistent point of contact and support as they move forward and helping them to build and develop the long term resilience they need to succeed in education, training and employment.

Alongside their existing role, professionals identified as lead workers will have a responsibility for keeping in touch with a young person and for formally reporting back to the Engagement and Progression Coordinator (EPC) if the support package and interventions put in place around an individual are not actively helping re-engage and move the young person forward.

The specific responsibilities associated with the lead worker role are:

being a named individual for a caseload of young people as agreed by their host organisation with the EPC and wider partnership

- providing support directly to the young person to help build resilience and/or coordinating support from a range of other support services
- acting as a champion for the young person to make sure they are getting the support they need providing feedback on the progress of the young person to the EPC to enable an assessment of whether support is having the desired impact.

Welsh government Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

The Youth Service Manager made some observations of good practice which they wished to note including

- Must include young people and families in any changes to get buy-in
- There needs to be a whole system approach we cannot work in silos anymore
- Must use evidence based practice to improve
- Must use available data to plan for the future
- Pay levels must continue to be able to attract and keep the best staff (not get low paid staff to work with the most vulnerable children)
- Capital investment in services and facilities for all service for CYP but particularly EOTAS. No using old unsuitable buildings and facilities that imply that these children are second best.
- Learn lessons from others including England where many authorities have had to deal with financial restraints and cuts before Wales.

3.2.10 Careers Wales West and the Keeping in Touch Project

The Panel found the following after meeting with representatives from both Careers Wales West and the Keeping in Touch Project the Panel:

- The Welsh Government Youth Engagement and Progression Framework⁴ is a key document in relation to the work with this group of young people who often make up the core of Swansea's NEET population.
- This group of children are identified as a priority and receive services within the EOTAS provision. There are currently two dedicated specifically trained Careers Advisors that work with young people using EOTAS services. A more bespoke service is provided to the EOTAS services including more freedom for advisors so they can develop and engender trust of the young people they are assisting.
- Colleges need to improve their support and engagement with the group of children when they are allocated a place.
- There is a gap in provision for those young people who are not able/ready for college, training or employment currently. No answer to give for this yet.
- Any young person who needs additional support once careers advice stops can be allocated a Lead Worker from the youth service. Although issues have been identified in capacity and also in the difficulty that there can be for these vulnerable young people transitioning to a different agency with different staff, procedures, practices and locations. Young people say they just want consistency.
- Careers Wales West felt it was important that lead workers including those in the youth services have clear and consistent job descriptions and to ensure they are trained in working with this group of young people. It was felt that not all staff are currently sensitive to the needs of these young people.

3.2.11 The Panel for these reasons recommends:

- Carry out an awareness raising exercise to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the role of EOTAS services within the continuum of provision.
- A mechanism for developing links between mainstream schools and EOTAS staff is developed in order to improve communication and share training opportunities, experience and good practice.
- The possibility of secondment of (or sharing of) teaching staff between schools and PRUs be investigated.
- An assessment of Special Teaching Facility places is carried out in conjunction with the relevant Health colleagues as a matter of urgency.
- Encourage joint working between/across schools when looking for solutions which potentially could result in economies of scales (including for example in developing and sharing different skills sets and expertise).
- The different parts of the education department are reviewed in order to look at commonalities in service provision and ideas for joint and partnership working in relation to behaviour and services for EOTAS pupils.
- Awareness is raised with schools about the role of EOTAS, making a referral and the graduated response. This should be available to all schools but targeted specifically at those who are identified as the worst offenders for inappropriate referrals and /or inadequate paperwork.

⁴ Welsh government Youth Engagement and Progression Framework - [link](#)

3.3 There needs to be a greater emphasis on reintegration of young people back into school

- 3.3.1 The Panel was concerned to assess whether the EOTAS has a well-established referral processes and clear entry and exit criteria. The Estyn Good Practice Survey says that *'in the best cases there is a strategic approach to EOTAS, authorities have clear policies and procedures, included well-established referral processes, robust entry and exit criteria and effective reintegration strategies. They identify pupils at risk of exclusion at an early stage and provide them with appropriate support. They place pupils promptly at a PRU or other EOTAS provision to ensure that they do not miss out on education. These authorities monitor provision regularly and use data effectively to ensure that there are enough EOTAS places to meet the needs of pupils across the authority'*.
- 3.3.2 The Panel considered aspects of the referral process and had concerns about whether schools had different tolerances and thresholds for referring. Do we need to work with schools to improve this consistency to ensure that the graduated response is working effectively across all schools? The Panel felt more guidance and training needed to be available to schools in the referral and graduated response process. This should also be monitored to ensure that it is being used consistently and appropriately by all.
- 3.3.3 The Panel believed that the referral process and entry and exit procedures were generally clear but that they had not been communicated effectively to all schools and therefore varying qualities of referral were received. The Panel felt that an awareness raising process with schools around this issue would be beneficial; with specific extra development sessions on using the process made with schools that were the worst offenders or requested extra help. The Panel considered that if more support/advice was provided to schools around the referral process the standard of referral paperwork and appropriate use of the process would improve. The Panel was not convinced this was happening presently.
- 3.3.4 The Panel did have concerns that decisions at the EOTAS Panel were only based upon the paperwork submitted. The Panel was told that it is done this way to ensure objective decision making based on the evidence presented and avoids advocacy for individual pupils. There was no representation for the child, from the school and no involvement from parents or carers. The Panel believed that we would not make decisions about a vulnerable child in any other circumstances without attempting to involve those who are important in their life.
- 3.3.5 The Panel considered how effectively the authority reintegrates children back into school from EOTAS i.e. using of the revolving door properly and consistently. Evidence suggested as highlighted by both schools and staff from within EOTAS that a lot more work is required in this area. The Panel found little evidence of consistent reintegration where children went back to the mainstream particularly at Key Stage 3. It seemed that there was limited commitment to this by many schools and that the systems in place to ensure this happened were inadequate.
- 3.3.6 Communication will be key to improving the reintegration process. Evidence from schools suggested that there was little indication that EOTAS and Schools talk and share information regularly to enable reintegration. The aim must be for the child to return to school and work to ensure this happens must be a priority and planned at the outset.

3.3.7 The Panel believe that all those who can help with ensuring a successful transition back to school should be brought together around that child to ensure that it happens successfully. This includes the school, PRU, Behaviour Support Service and the parents/carers where possible.

3.3.8 The Panel believe that the school must retain ownership of the child when they go into EOTAS. It is not adequate to just hand over the child to EOTAS and not follow up. The child should still have links with the originating school and must be kept in regular contact. The Panel proposes that each child has a link teacher allocated from the originating school that can be responsible for keeping regular contact. The child then still feels part of the originating school and transition back will be potentially smoother. The school link could then also be invited to activities and when reviews are undertaken on the child while in the provision for example celebrations of achievement. This link teacher will then work alongside EOTAS and others to bring that child back to the school through a reintegration process.

Ceredigion Council – Case Study - [link](#)

Ceredigion carried out a review of EOTAS provision in 2009. They found the rate of exclusions was high and there were too many pupils in the KS4 PRU provision. It was also recognised they needed to reduce the number of pupils in expensive out of county provisions.

It was recognised at a strategic level that there was a need for a change in culture. It was recognised that attendance and behaviour should become part of the wider school improvement agenda. Following this review the local authority reorganised the provision, the main aims were to:

- Develop schools' capacity to manage behaviour more effectively
- Focus on early intervention and building links with pre-school providers
- Introduce an inclusion centre and a provision to support children with behavioural difficulties and services as an alternative to exclusion
- Develop a counselling service in schools
- Develop a strong peripatetic support service to schools
- Restructure the PRU portfolio
- Reduce the rate of permanent and fixed-term exclusions
- Reduce the number of pupils registered as EOTAS pupils
- Reduce the number of children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties placed out of county

As a result of the changes the Council now has a clear continuum of provision and

- There have been no permanent exclusion since that time
- The number of fixed term exclusions of six days or more reduced significantly.
- Attendance in secondary schools has been the highest in Wales for the last four years
- The percentage of Year 11 leavers becoming NEET was the lowest in Wales in 2013 and second lowest in 2014

3.3.9 Estyn identified good practice in schools that retain close links with their pupils and where pupils stay on the school role. Examples given included where these links include visits by school staff to the PRU, attendance at regular review meetings, the provision of coursework or specialist resources and the effective use of data to track pupils progress. The Panel found little evidence of this in Swansea at present.

3.3.10 The Panel believe that the role of the Behaviour Support Teams (BST) in working with children when they reintegrate back to school was important and should be

more formalised. The BST can act as a bridge/link back to school, preparing and working with the young person helping to elevate anxiety and make the transition smoother. The Panel was informed that the need for this had been identified in previous service review work but the BST was not currently doing this at present due to capacity issues. The BST at present works to a time allocation model and any work with a child comes out of the schools time allocation.

3.3.11 It is for these reasons that the panel recommends:

It provides support for and commitment to reintegrating young people back into school from EOTAS, particularly up to KS3, this should include:

- a commitment is made at the outset between the school, EOTAS and the child/parents to the child returning to school. This should include a shared target for this to happen when the child enters EOTAS service.
- schools keeps in regular communication with the child through for example a weekly update discussion
- a process be developed that will bring all those people who can help with the reintegration of the child together providing an holistic approach to reintegration around the child who can help in the reintegration of a young person back to school be brought together to support that. Allocation of a lead worker to co-ordinate this process would be beneficial.

3.4 The PRU management committee must drive improvement in the EOTAS service

3.4.1 The Estyn Good Practice Survey says that *'there is a wide variation in quality of PRU management committees across Wales. Where they are effective they have representation from a broad range of stakeholders who have relevant knowledge and expertise. In these committees, members have a clear understanding of the strengths and area for development of the PRU and provide robust support and challenge'*.

3.4.2 The Panel welcomed the recent changes to the Swansea PRU Management Committee. The membership of the Committee is now far more diverse and is headed by an independent Chair who is currently the Headteacher of a Secondary School in Swansea. The appointment of a Challenge Advisor allocated to the EOTAS and on the PRU Management Committee will provide the needed support and challenge the service requires. The committee now consists of:

- 8 Community members which includes the following places: 4 Headteachers, 1 Child and Family Services, 1 Snap Cymru, 2 Challenge Advisors
- 1 Parent representative
- local authority including at least 1 Councillor
- staff members from EOTAS

3.4.3 The Panel agreed that the role of the PRU Management Committee must be to drive improvements in this service, done through focusing firmly on the improvements identified in the EOTAS Action Plan (once it is agreed). It is therefore essential that this Action Plan has clear targets, timescales, expected outcomes and most importantly there should be clear accountabilities.

3.5 The PRU staff need to be part of mainstream training and development

- 3.5.1 The Estyn Best Practice survey found that most local authorities that were showing good practice *ensure that their PRU staff take part in local authority initiatives and the professional development opportunities available to mainstream colleagues*. This enables them to keep up-to-date with important developments such as curriculum changes and the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. The survey found that when staff do not have these opportunities they often feel *'isolated and unsupported'*.
- 3.5.2 The Panel concluded that that the training and development of EOTAS staff, particularly alongside mainstream school on important key initiatives is essential but limited at present. The Panel found little evidence of this shared training at present although some upskilling had taken place when the PRUs received support to move out of special measures.
- 3.5.3 The Panel thought that it might be useful for the EOTAS services to be paired with one or more schools where they share training and development opportunities. This could also extend to staff members in the EOTAS service particularly PRUs to be buddied with a teacher in mainstream to share practice and perspectives. This will also help to draw and link EOTAS services in which the mainstream while avoiding isolation of staff.
- 3.5.4 The Panel also believed that expertise could be better shared between schools and EOTAS by, for example, the secondment of teachers from mainstream to EOTAS and vice a versa for periods of time in order to develop and share skills between EOTAS and schools.
- 3.5.5 In the best cases identified in the Estyn Best Practice survey they ensure *'staff receive regular high-quality training that helps them to support pupils with speech and language difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, dyslexia and other learning needs'*. It was recognised that this happened in some schools across Swansea and the Panel felt this training would also be beneficial for EOTAS.
- 3.5.6 The Panel felt that the PRU should follow the same broad initiatives, policies and training as schools in Restorative Practice Methods and United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child Rights Respecting.
- 3.5.7 The Panel for these reasons recommends
- An analysis of training needs for staff in schools in Swansea be completed. This should be used as the basis for developing a training programme on behaviour for upskilling teachers and other stakeholders.
 - PRU staff have access to and are to encouraged to use the same training and development opportunities as their colleagues in mainstream schools.

3.6 A holistic wrap around approach is needed for this group of children and young people

- 3.6.1 The Panel recognised that there must be a greater focus on education providers using a range of different strategies to reduce exclusions and prevent pupils from going into EOTAS.

- 3.6.2 Most schools manage most children's behaviour very well, but have some problems around recognising or understanding some conditions and therefore are not getting appropriate interventions in early enough was highlighted. Particularly around ADHD, it was felt that some schools were better at this than others. Those schools with special teaching facilities are especially aware. There is ongoing need for training in this area.
- 3.6.3 The Panel agreed with the Councils Executive Board in its conclusion that *'there are too many pupils receiving provision outside of mainstream schools and at how well they currently achieve'*.
- 3.6.4 The Panel found that strategic planning around behaviour support needed to be strengthened particularly in relation to how schools were and will be supported in order to improve their services and facilities for this group of children. This is key in the aim to reduce the need for EOTAS services. They believed the strategy must be developed in conjunction with schools, have clear buy in from stakeholders and be included in each schools self-improvement and development plan. Swansea must have a clear behaviour strategy which provides a way forward for the whole education service in relation to this matter.
- 3.6.5 The Panel was keen to see that the behaviour strategy, once developed, had clear actions identified for the way forward with targets, timescales and accountabilities. This strategy must be developed in conjunction with schools and other stakeholders.
- 3.6.6 The Independent Review said *'evidence indicated that the School Improvement Service and Education Inclusion Team do not routinely work together to support and challenge schools to develop inclusive provision for pupils'*. The Panel's findings mirrored this conclusion and agreed that work was needed in this area. The Panel was pleased to hear that some work had started in this area. In particular the allocation of a Challenge Advisor specifically to EOTAS service and part of that brief will be to develop the relationship across education services for the benefit of this group of children.
- 3.6.7 Upskilling and support/advice for schools in dealing with difficult and challenging children and young people is needed. The Panel suggested that schools have an 'in-house' designated person (who can cascade training) who is specifically experienced and knowledgeable around behaviour matters; that they act as the link on this matter, keeping the school up to date and helping to cascade training. It is also important that governors understand the issues around behaviour, are committed to the strategy and are kept in the loop with developments in this area.
- 3.6.8 The Panel was surprised that the Behaviour Support Team did not provide a predetermined service for EOTAS provision although the Panel was informed the original reconfiguration proposals included creation of an additional half a post to start to do this.
- 3.6.9 The Panel was unsure whether the time allocated model was the best way for the allocation of Behaviour Support Services. The Panel thought that the whole service priorities need to be re-assessed in line with different changing requirements of education services and in line with the new behaviour strategy. Do we need to look more closely at the balance between preventative and reactive services, given there is limited provision for those children who are currently

experiencing actual behavioural issues? The revolving door and reintegration back to school was also identified as a particularly beneficial moment for the BST to be involved, helping to make those returns back to school more sustainable. The Panel felt that there was also an important role for the BST in the drive to upskill schools in how to deal with this group of young people better.

3.6.10 It was suggested that an analysis needed to be completed into the needs of individual school staff development requirements in relation to behaviour matters. A programme of training can then be developed based upon what is actually required. Developing this capacity in schools to deal with behaviour is essential if we are to reduce demand for EOTAS services.

3.6.11 The Estyn Good Practice survey found schools that were most effective at reducing exclusions and addressing the needs of pupils within the school adopted a consistent whole school approach to managing pupil behaviour, for example by using restorative approaches. The Panel found many examples of good practice in Swansea schools but recognise that this needs to more consistently be the case across all schools.

Effective strategies improve behaviour and wellbeing

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bryn Tawe has implemented restorative strategies to promote positive behaviour across the school and has reduced the number of exclusions considerably. The school established procedures to ensure that pupils are included in an active way in every aspect of pastoral processes. A whole school strategy was developed that focused on introducing affective language, quick chats, restorative circles and using restorative questions.

The school's discipline policy has been adapted to ensure that these strategies are at its core. Pupils now feel more positive, the number of incidents has reduced and improvement has been seen in the school's ethos and atmosphere.

Best Practice 2014, Estyn

3.6.12 Secondary schools in Swansea recognise the importance of developing a curriculum that engages pupils at risk of disengagement, with most putting nurture type facilities or strategies in place. The Panel was pleased that secondary schools are developing programmes to meet the needs of individual pupils. Although the Panel were concerned with comments made by the secondary schools that the Panel met when they reported that *it felt a little like a lottery as to what a young person would get when entering EOTAS*. They said that their concerns were such that they began to set up their own systems because of poor outcomes.

3.6.13 The Panel believed that making the curriculum interesting and engaging both within schools and within EOTAS was essential. The Estyn Best Practice survey found that *'positive outcomes in secondary schools visited who recognise the importance of developing a curriculum that engages pupils at risk of disengagement. These schools develop programmes to meet the needs of individual pupils. These programmes generally include a focus on vocational options and relevant qualifications that prepare pupils for life after school'*. The Panel believes that a curriculum where children feel they can succeed was important and they emphasise that schools must develop their curriculum so that it is inclusive for all, with a wide and interesting offer that will engage all pupils. Governors must challenge and ensure that this is the case.

- 3.6.14 It was agreed that in all educational facilities, whether a schools or an EOTAS service, there must be a focus on the development of literacy and numeracy. The Panel also believe that there must also be a constant strive to achieving excellent outcomes and raising the aspirations of pupils. It is important that we have high expectations for each child relating to both outcomes and behaviour, even when they may not have them for themselves.
- 3.6.15 The Panel supports the use of restorative practices both in schools and in the EOTAS services. The Panel do recognise that some of these young people do not always have the construct to work this way but it was still felt that the concept was valid and that it should be used wherever possible. Good practice in its use can be found in a number of schools across Swansea.
- 3.6.16 Education providers must recognise that many pupils who are at risk of or unable to maintain mainstream placements often have a range of difficulties to overcome. The Panel agreed that a consistent approach to the complex needs of this group of children was needed. It must be recognised by all education providers that many of these pupils will have, for example, challenging family situations and personal issues. Others have underdeveloped literacy and numeracy skills or other additional learning needs. Training to recognise these issues early and in how to work with them is essential.
- 3.6.17 The Estyn Good Practice Survey reported that *‘schools that have effective systems for monitoring and tracking pupil progress, which identify pupils who are at risk of disengagement at an early stage, can put in place appropriate intervention that keeps pupils in mainstream’*.
- 3.6.18 The Panel believe that there is a Team Around the Family multi agency type approach to these children and young people. *This should not include blitzing the family with services and then withdrawing.* These children and young people often need a specific wrap around service including support around wellbeing matters. Schools believe that often this support requires more than what say Pathways provides, school nurture groups are usually in the best place to provide this.

Swansea Tackling Poverty Strategy - [link](#)

We know that this investment in early intervention and prevention works, because we have seen improvement in some key areas where we have seen it adopted – such as work with young people not engaged in employment or training, youth offending and unemployment rates in parts of the city and county. A strong example is how some schools have made use of pastoral programmes, which in one case has improved attendance from 83.4% to 90.9%.

A. Children Have a Good Start in Life

“The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, emotional – are laid in early childhood.” **The Marmot Review**

B. People Learn Successfully

“Inequalities in education outcomes affect physical and mental health as well as income, employment and quality of life.” **The Marmot Review**

- 3.6.19 The Estyn Good Practice survey found that close working relationships between schools and other agencies, for example health, social services and voluntary agencies, helped to ensure that pupil’s at risk of disengagement and their families receive appropriate, timely support. The Panel felt that this was essential if we want to avoid, wherever possible, young people entering into EOTAS services.

3.6.20 The Panel wishes to emphasise the point that arose in the Independent Review that *'the relatively high demand for EOTAS places indicates provision in mainstream schools at the earlier stages of the graduated response is not effective enough'*. The Panel believe that it is essential to reduce this demand on EOTAS by working with schools to improve their ability to recognise issues and intervene early, highlighting the importance of the use of the vulnerable assessment tool or Boxall profile. Some schools may need upskilling in order to do this effectively.

3.6.21 The Panel for these reasons recommends

- All primary schools use the vulnerability assessment profile consistently in order to identify and target interventions early.
- Cabinet investigate the possibility of a more formulised holistic Team Around the Family type approach for learners using EOTAS services.
- A specific part of the education strategy is developed that will provide a steer for the local authority, schools and EOTAS on how it plans to deal with behaviour matters into the future. This strategy should:
 - form part of the overall education strategy and provides a clear way forward for the whole education service on this matter
 - detail how schools will be supported to develop nurture provision or similar to support challenging pupils
 - how school staff will be upskilled to be better able and prepared to work with difficult and challenging young people
 - have clear aims and targets for reducing the number of children and young people using EOTAS provision
 - be developed in partnership with schools and other stakeholders.
 - ensure School Governing bodies understand the issues around behaviour and are committed to the strategy and are kept in the loop with developments.
 - Consideration given by schools to allocating a staff member who is a behaviour champion within school settings.

3.7 Improve the quality of services for and outcomes of this group of children

3.7.1 As a Panel we believe that the quality of services for and the outcomes of this group of children need to be improved. Until more work is done in schools to develop ways of dealing with behaviour matters in-house and in relation to the revolving door/reintegration of young people back into school the high demand for EOTAS will remain. It is therefore important that the standards, quality and outcomes from EOTAS services continue to improve.

3.7.2 The Panel believes a consistent approach to those children at threat of exclusion is needed across all schools. We must ensure all schools are doing all they can to avoid a child being referred into EOTAS. This also includes ensuring that there are not differing tolerance levels to behaviour matters across schools. The Panel thought that potentially challenge advisors could have a role in advising and challenging schools to ensure that they are doing this effectively. If there are development needs around the referral process identified by schools these need to then be addressed.

3.7.3 The Panel recognise that for some young people Pathways may be the only option, we therefore must ensure that it provides excellent options, outcomes and support including raising the level of young people's literacy and numeracy. The

Panel did have concerns around the consistency of outcomes and sustainability of providers, also around quality assurance and safeguarding.

3.7.4 Concerns were raised by schools around the quality of some of the Pathways providers and the number of hours that pupils can attend. They felt there could be more robust quality assurance for providers but the main concern was around educational attainment and outcomes. Schools felt that they could provide their own Pathways placement which could include working with other schools to do this which would also have beneficial economies of scale. It was felt that schools would then be far more accountable for this group of children.

3.7.5 There was lack of clarity around the systems of observation and quality assurance in terms of teaching and training activity that is provided within Pathway providers as it would be in the classroom in mainstream schools. It is therefore difficult to be assured that the level of teaching is good and of a consistent standard across providers all of the time. The Panel found that the only time teaching observations were made is when the tender is being considered. Concern was raised that these settings teaching vulnerable young people are not being monitored for quality and for safeguarding on a regular basis. Measures need to be put into place to ensure that this is addressed. The Panel was informed that the allocated challenge advisor will now advise challenge and support these providers but the Panel did feel that regular teaching observation by qualified staff was also required.

3.7.6 The Panel felt that there was a clear need for certain aspects of this to be reflected in the tendering process for Pathways providers. This should include aspects like monitoring and measuring of outcomes, monitoring progress, teaching/training lesson observations, individual pupil planning and the recognition of challenge adviser involvement.

3.7.7 The Panel for these reasons recommends that the Pathways service:

- is advised and challenged by the School Improvement service particularly around improving outcomes especially in literacy and numeracy
- improve consistency, quality assure and develop the sustainability of external providers
- have regular teaching observation and assessment by qualified staff similar to that which takes place within mainstream school settings
- ensure robust quality assurance of Pathway providers in particular in identifying their training and development needs to upskilling in key aspects, including for example safeguarding and developing young people's literacy and numeracy which should be built into all activities they partake in.
- Review any Pathways service level agreements and tendering documentation in order to reflect these changes.

3.8 Improve services for young people 16+ transitioning to adulthood

3.8.1 A gap in provision and support for some young people 16+ was found. Some of the agencies the Panel spoke to recognised this and that this group of young people often make up the core of Swansea's NEET population. There is a gap in provision for those young people who find it harder to engage once they have left school and that services for them tend to be quite fragmented. It was recognised that some need more support 16+ to access and to sustain employment, higher

education or training opportunities. The main difficulties were based around funding this as there is currently no statutory requirement to support 16+.

- 3.8.2 The Panel was informed by the Education Inclusion Manger that colleges did not seem to be ready or fully able to deal with this vulnerable group and more training was required in order to develop these skills. It was recognised that college tutors may not have this skills set or the experience of dealing with these, often challenging young people. There is support from Careers Wales West and the Keeping in Touch Project but this finishes after certain period.
- 3.8.3 As mentioned earlier, there is a poor NEET rate for this cohort of young people. They are often not ready for college/employment or training and therefore fall out without intensive support. But there is little pastoral support for these young people aged 16+. The Panel was concerned that all the time and resources spent to this point is lost if these young person do not get support at 16+ to maintain themselves in training, or college or indeed employment. It is a 'spend to save' issue for all agencies involved and is clearly a way of breaking cycle of poverty. The Panel believed that there is no easy answer to this but did recognise that it does need to be addressed because these form the core of Swansea's NEETS and over their lifetime will cost far more to society than if we invest now.
- 3.8.4 The Panel was informed that that there was a new role for the Youth Service in supporting young people up until the age of 25. The Panel recognises that the development of the Lead Worker role for the Youth Service is a substantial change to how they have worked historically. It will involve youth workers taking on caseloads; these are allocated based on a referral system. The service supports 11-25 year olds but currently capacity allows for working mainly with 11-18 year olds. The referrals are usually based upon those children who are identified as level 2 and 3 on the Continuum of Need. The Panel was informed that the Service does not have the capacity to work with all of those identified as green and amber so they have prioritise resources.
- 3.8.5 The Youth Service Manager informed the Panel that they were developing their relationship further with Pathways. A process had recently been put into place where Pathways can directly refer young people into the Youth Service.
- 3.8.6 The Panel was told that the transition from one service to another can be difficult for some young people. Young people's issues are often complex, so it is not usually simply the case of referring on a piece of paper. The transition of relationships across services can be resource intensive and take those agencies involved to work together well to be successful.
- 3.8.7 The Panel was informed of plans for two members of the Youth Service to form a 'promoting inclusion' team to work directly with EOTAS young people, although at the time of this report the final arrangements had not been made.
- 3.8.8 We were informed that Gower College had identified a need to create a more nurturing environment including upskilling tutors in the college in order for them to understand the issues and work with this group of young people. The Panel heard that they also recognise the need to reduce drop-out rates of these young people.
- 3.8.9 The EOTAS group of young people have been identified as a priority with Careers Wales West and they have dedicated Careers Advisors going into schools and a

bespoke service specifically for EOTAS young people. The staff working in PRUs are trained and experienced in working with this group of children. Prior to leaving school young people are given Red, Amber or Green status in relation to their vulnerability and required support requirements.

3.8.10 The Panel for these reasons recommends that Gower College be encouraged to develop a mechanism to support those learners who require more support which should include a support worker link and upskilling of tutors in different aspects of working with this group of young people. A target to reduce drop-out rates should be introduced.

3.9 Ensure that the pupil voice is heard for this group of vulnerable children and young people

3.9.1 All education services must ensure that young people are involved and included in decisions that are made about them, wherever possible. The Panel also felt that it would be beneficial for children and young people using the EOTAS facilities to be involved in developing the environments around them. Many schools already do this successfully, a particular example Hafod Primary School where the children's art lines the walls of the whole school.

3.9.2 As a Panel we believe that United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ethos is an excellent one and that particularly the rights respecting aspect would be of benefit to both staff and pupils within EOTAS facilities. The Panel felt that all educational facilities should be committed to and using UNCRC.

Respecting rights

Hafod Primary School, Swansea, has introduced a framework of values so that children's rights are respected. Pupils and staff are expected to treat each other with respect.



Pupils create their own charters based on rights, respect and responsibilities. The pupil participation group evaluates the school's plans and give feedback that helps to improve policies. This approach has had a positive effect on the school community. Pupils take greater responsibility for behaviour and both relationships and attendance have improved.

Best Practice 2014, Estyn

3.9.3 The Panel found a need for the EOTAS service to look at developing a consistent way of gathering the views of young people and using them to improve the service. It was also felt important to ensure, as indicated in the box above, that they know 'who they can speak to if they have a problem' and 'how to complain or express their concerns'.

3.9.4 The Panel for these reasons recommends:

- The use of restorative practice should be encouraged and used where possible in EOTAS provisions
- The United Nations Rights of the Child should be embedded in practice within these provisions. This will include training and support for all EOTAS staff and Pathways providers on these aspects.
- Children and young people using EOTAS services are actively consulted and involved in developing the service and the physical environment they are taught in. This will require staff to be creative in the ways in which it engages and involves these young people.

3.10 Improve the fabric and suitability of the buildings used to house EOTAS services as a matter of urgency

3.10.1 The Estyn Survey found good practice in local authorities where they '*recognise the importance of PRUs, they ensure that they are well resourced in terms of staffing, accommodation and equipment. Historically, the standard of accommodation housing PRUs has tended to be poor, and this has had a negative impact on the wellbeing and morale of staff and pupils and the ability of the PRU to provide an appropriate curriculum*'.

3.10.2 The Panel believes that this aspect of the provision must be improved. It was indicated that the PRU buildings felt like a poor relations to schools. Some of the buildings used to house PRU provision are not fit for purpose, are in a bad physical state of repair and configured badly for the young people using these facilities. For example: the Step Ahead PRU is a single skinned building so it was damp and cold. The WC facilities are limited and need to be accessed via a classroom. There is no outside space that the young people can use even though based within Gors Primary School grounds.

3.10.3 There needs to be serious consideration of the accommodation for these children and young people are educated in. The Panel believe that the links between the environment and wellbeing are important.





3.10.4 The Panel emphasised the importance of reviewing and upgrading this accommodation as a matter of urgency. The Panel for these reasons recommends that improvement to accommodation for the EOTAS services are made as a matter of urgency either by upgrading works to the fabric and layout of the current buildings or consideration of finding more suitable premises.

3.10.5 The Panel for these reasons recommends urgently improve accommodation for EOTAS services either by upgrading the fabric and layout of the current buildings or by finding more suitable premises. This should include the provision of external recreation areas.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel commends Cabinet to consider all issues and ideas raised by this inquiry and, in particular, the recommendations set out below.

The Panel recognises that the Authority

- (a) will need to ensure that any subsequent actions are legal and meet the requirements of any relevant legislation;
- (b) has a responsibility to make the best use of limited resources and that any additional costs will need to be considered carefully as part of the annual budget setting process.

The Panel has kept these principles in mind in the course of its investigations.

The Panel recommends to Cabinet that:

Long term challenges

- 4.1 A specific part of the education strategy is developed that will provide a steer for the local authority, schools and EOTAS on how it will deal with behaviour matters into the future. This strategy should:
- a) form part of the overall education strategy and provide a clear way forward for the whole education service
 - b) detail how schools will be supported to develop their nurture provision or similar in order to support challenging pupils
 - c) ensure school staff are upskilled to be better able and prepared for working with difficult and challenging young people
 - d) have clear aims and targets for reducing the number of children and young people using EOTAS provision
 - e) be developed in partnership with schools and other stakeholders including children and young people
 - f) ensure School Governing bodies are kept in the loop and understand the issues around behaviour
 - g) ensure that schools allocate a staff member who can be a behaviour champion within their school settings.

Medium term improvements

- 4.2 The Education Other Than At School action plan should be similar to a School Improvement Plan and it must:
- a) stipulate clear lines of responsibility and detail desired outcomes
 - b) be challenged and driven forward by the PRU Management Committee
 - c) that pupil voices are heard in the development of this way forward endeavouring to produce a vision of something better from the perspective of children and young people
 - d) clearly focus on improving pupil outcomes (this should include numeracy and literacy across whatever part of the service the child attends)
 - e) ensure that it has a whole system approach to children and young people with social and emotional difficulties
 - f) be clear about the role it has in supporting schools in the drive to reduce the demand on EOTAS services
- 4.3 The possibility of secondment of (or sharing of) teaching staff between schools and PRUs be investigated.
- 4.4 It encourages joint working between/across schools when looking for solutions which potentially could result in economies of scales (including for example developing and sharing specific skills sets and expertise).

- 4.5 It provides support for and commitment to reintegrating young people back into school from EOTAS, particularly up to KS3, this should include:
- a) a commitment made at the outset between the school, EOTAS and the child/parents to the child returning to school. This should include a shared target for this to happen when the child enters EOTAS service.
 - b) schools keeps in regular communication with the child through for example a weekly update discussion
 - c) a process be developed that will bring all those people who can help with the reintegration of the child together providing an holistic approach to reintegration around the child who can help in the reintegration of a young person back to school be brought together to support that. Allocation of a lead worker to co-ordinate this process would be beneficial.
- 4.6. It investigate the possibility of a more formulised holistic Team Around the Family type approach for all children and young people using EOTAS services.
- 4.7 Gower College is encouraged to develop a mechanism to support those learners who require more support which should include a support worker link and the upskilling of tutors in different aspects of working with this group of learners. A target to reduce drop-out rates should be introduced.
- 4.8 The use of restorative practice should be encouraged and used where possible in EOTAS provisions.
- 4.9 The United Nations Rights of the Child should be embedded in practice within these provisions. This will include training and support for all EOTAS staff and external providers on these aspects.

Quick wins

- 4.10 Carry out an awareness raising exercise to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the role of EOTAS services within the continuum of provision.
- 4.11 An analysis of training needs for staff across schools in Swansea be completed. This should be used as the basis for developing a training programme on behaviour for upskilling teachers and other stakeholders.
- 4.12 PRU staff have access to and are encouraged to use the same training and development opportunities as their colleagues in mainstream schools.
- 4.13 A mechanism for developing links between mainstream schools and EOTAS staff is developed in order to improve communication and share training opportunities, experience and good practice.
- 4.14 It ensures all Primary Schools use the Vulnerability Assessment Profile consistently in order to identify and to target interventions early.
- 4.15 An assessment of Special Teaching Facility places is carried out in conjunction with the relevant Health colleagues as a matter of urgency.

- 4.16 The Pathways service:
- a) is advised and challenged by the school improvement service particularly around improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy
 - b) improve consistency, quality assure and develop the sustainability of external providers
 - c) have regular teaching observation and assessment by qualified staff similar to that which takes place within mainstream school settings
 - d) ensure robust quality assurance of Pathway providers in particular in identifying their training and development needs to upskilling in key aspects, including for example safeguarding and developing young people's literacy and numeracy which should be built into all activities they partake in.
 - e) Review any Pathways provider service level agreements and tendering documentation in order to reflect these changes.
- 4.17 Urgently improve accommodation for EOTAS services either by upgrading the fabric and layout of the current buildings or by finding more suitable premises. This should include the provision of suitable external recreation areas.
- 4.18 The different parts of the education department are reviewed in order to look at commonalities in service provision and ideas for joint and partnership working in relation to behaviour and services for EOTAS pupils. The outcomes of this must be built into the EOTAS action plan.
- 4.19 Awareness is raised with schools about the role of EOTAS, making a referral and the graduated response. This should be available to all schools but targeted specifically at those who are identified as the worst offenders for inappropriate referrals and/or inadequate paperwork.
- 4.20 Children and young people using EOTAS services are actively consulted and involved in developing the service and the physical environment they are taught within. This will require staff to be creative in the ways in which it engages and involves these young people.

5 Acknowledgements

The Panel is very grateful to everyone who contributed to the inquiry and would like to thank:

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Education Welfare Service
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Headteacher, Pentrehafod Comprehensive School
Headteacher, Clase Primary School
Child and Family Services, Social Services
Youth Services Manager

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6 About the Inquiry Panel


The **Education Inclusion Scrutiny Inquiry Panel** is a team of Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. Their role is to examine a strategic issue of concern and to make recommendations about how policies and services can be improved.

Members of the Panel

Cllr Cheryl Philpott (Convener)
Cllr Fiona Gordon
Cllr Nick Davies
Cllr Hazel Morris
Cllr Ceinwen Thomas
Cllr Wendy Fitzgerald
Cllr Linda Tyler-Lloyd
Sarah Joiner (Co-optee)
Dave Anderson-Thomas (Co-optee)

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