

Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Well-Being

Cabinet – 15 June 2017

RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE SCHOOL READINESS INQUIRY PANEL

Purpose:	To outline a response to the scrutiny recommendations and to present an action plan for agreement.
Policy Framework:	None.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The response as outlined in the report and related action plan be agreed.
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The School Readiness Inquiry report was submitted to Cabinet in April 2017 after the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel completed its detailed inquiry. Providing services for young children relies on a number of inter-dependencies with services across the Council and the Health Board as well as the Third Sector to yield successful outcomes. The Inquiry focused on “How can school readiness be improved in Swansea?” The scrutiny report is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 Having considered the contents of the scrutiny report, and specific recommendations made the advice to Cabinet on whether it should agree, or not agree, with each recommendation is detailed in this report.
- 1.3 Cabinet is also asked to consider, for each of the responses, any relevant policy commitments and any other relevant activity and resource needs.

2.0 Response to Scrutiny Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Support those initiatives that are clearly improving school readiness and monitor impact.

Action already being undertaken:

As detailed in the Scrutiny Report there are a number of programmes, services and approaches making a considerable impact in relation to the outcomes of young children and their families.

There is commitment from the Local Authority to supporting this area of work as well as a clear multi-agency drive via the Healthy City Board and the Public Services Board.

At a national level there is a commitment to the continuation of a number of the major Programmes in the "Taking Wales Forward".

New actions following from the recommendation:

Continue to support and, where possible, build on successful initiatives that promote school readiness through investments made via the Local Authority, Welsh Government and collaboration on a multi-agency basis.

Continue to work with partners to integrate services to meet the identified needs of families.

To invest in a Prevention Invest to Save Framework in order to further develop the reporting of impact.

Cabinet Member Comments: Recommendation is **agreed**.

Recommendation 2

Support the ethos and practice of Flying Start and use this as a basis for developing early years services outside of the designated areas (with the longer term aim of providing coverage across the City and County of Swansea.)

Action already being undertaken:

This is one of the aims within the Best Start Strategy, initiated via Health City Partnership. Progress has been made over the last few years to achieve this within available resources. Examples include:

The Jig-so Project has been established to work Swansea wide with young parents under 25 from pre-birth and throughout their child's infant years. The service draws on the principles of the Flying Start Programme in relation to the provision of support for the family and the child through a multi-disciplinary and agency service including midwifery, parenting and language development.

An exemplar Project was initiated and commissioned by the GP Penderi Network to support families and their young children outside Flying Start areas with a focus on improving parenting skills. As the Panel heard, whilst it is early days, the post has been very successful to date and provided a much needed resource in the area.

During the last year the Local Authority has been supporting the Health

Board's Commissioning processes in relation to developing a proposal to address gaps in speech, language and communication for children of pre-school/nursery age.

New actions following from the recommendation:

To continue to develop the Jig-so project in partnership with the Health Board and, should additional resource be available, to extend the criteria to include parents over 25.

To explore the possibilities with the University to start the process of formally evaluating the Jig-so Project.

To discuss with the Health Board and GP Networks how the funding can be maintained and extended for the GP Penderi Network Early Years worker service. This would also include in relation to replicating the good practice in other GP Network areas in the future.

To share good practice from Flying Start Childcare settings with non Flying Start childcare settings via the implementation of the Free Childcare Pilot.

Continue to work with the Health Board to develop Speech and Language services in the Early Years prior to Reception.

Cabinet Member Comments: Recommendation is **agreed** where the ethos and practice has proven successful, and agree with the need for a Universal approach.

Recommendation 3

Ensure the Early Years Services led by the Flying Start Service in collaboration with the Additional Learning Needs Unit in Education prepare for the changes in the Additional Learning Needs Reform legislation.

Action already being undertaken:

Two actions have taken place in the Flying Start Service to date to prepare for the changes in the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform legislation for the Early Years population.

- Attendance at conferences led by the Welsh Government to increase understanding of the legislative changes and stage of reform process.
- The Additional Learning Needs Strategy Group in the Flying Start Service has engaged in a review of the current processes and provision in relation to children with emerging Additional Learning Needs across the Swansea Flying Start Service.

The following section summarises the current processes and provision in the Flying Start Service within Early Years in relation to ALN.

A number of tools are available to support the identification of children with emerging Additional Learning Needs within the Swansea Flying

Start Service. Some of these tools are already embedded; however, it was highlighted and recognised that there are also many tools that are at an early stage of implementation.

A number of different processes and services are available to facilitate early intervention to support the needs of children with ALN within the Swansea Flying Start Service. In addition, these processes and services are available to support the further exploration of the needs of children with emerging ALN. These include

- Individual Play Plans,
- Home based block play sessions by Early Language Development Team and the Speech Therapy Team,
- Developmental play sessions in the Stepping Stones Additional Learning Needs Children's Centre,
- Consultation work with the Flying Start Speech and Language Therapy Service to empower childcare staff and parents,
- Consultation work with the Flying Start Educational Psychologist to empower childcare staff and parents,
- Joint consultation work with the Flying Start Speech and Language Therapy Service and the Flying Start Educational Psychologist for children with emerging or identified social communication difficulties to empower childcare staff and parents,
- Informal drop in consultations for advice with the Flying Start Educational Psychologist,
- Flying Start Additional Learning Needs Panel. This panel provides a decision making mechanism for the provision of Additional Staff Support for children with the most significant and complex levels of Additional Learning Needs in Flying Start childcare settings to provide enhanced learning opportunities,
- A number of different services within Flying Start refer to services out of Flying Start (within Health and Education) to further explore a child's underpinning difficulty and to seek decisions regarding provision to meet the needs of children with emerging or identified ALN.

New actions following from the recommendation:

It is recognised the second draft of the Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice regarding the legislative reforms for ALN in Wales published by the Welsh Government in February 2017 still provides a substantial lack of clarity. This lack of clarity particularly pertains to the responsibilities of Local Authority services in relation to Early Years populations regarding the ALN legislative reforms in Wales.

It is also recognised that the ALN legislative reforms in Wales are not likely to be formally implemented for a number of years. In addition, it is probable that a staged approach to implementation will be advocated by the Welsh Government.

However, it is also recognised that it is nevertheless important to begin to interpret the current and future draft guidance prepared by the Welsh Government to begin to prepare for the changes in relation to Early Years populations for children with emerging ALN. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

i) As part of the ALN Commissioning Review:

A formal review of the documentation of all of the current processes, provision and structures in relation to the identification and intervention for children with emerging or identified ALN within the Early Years population in Swansea across all Local Authority and Health based services.

A working group to be established (or utilising an appropriate alternative existing forum/group) that includes both the Early Years' Service and the Additional Learning Needs Unit in Education to organise the strategic direction of preparing for the Additional Learning Needs reform legislative changes for the Early Years population.

Scoping visits to neighbouring Local Authorities who have piloted implementation of different streams of the legislative changes.

Exploration and decision making regarding a system for how Individual Development Plans can reflect the severity level of a child's ALN within a graduated response within the Early Years population.

ii) Specifically in relation to Flying Start:

An overarching framework to be implemented within the Flying Start Service that defines a graduated response to co-ordinate the identification of and intervention for children with emerging or identified Additional Learning Needs within the Flying Start Early Years population.

To establish a Flying Start centralised Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator to support the Flying Start Educational Psychologist to promote the co-ordination and implementation of a graduated response to support the identification of and intervention for children with ALN in Flying Start.

To explore options to enable individual Flying Start Settings to have capacity to implement the graduated response.

Development of a common template for Individual Development Plans for Early Years that will be consistent with the Individual Development Plans used for the school based and further education populations.

Central Flying Start services to facilitate training in order to:

- Promote Flying Start childcare staff knowledge in utilising and analysing data generated from assessment tools available to identify Additional Learning Needs.
- Increase knowledge in person centred planning philosophy across Flying Start services.
- Increase knowledge of Flying Start childcare staff and childcare setting based Additional Learning Needs Practitioners in writing Individual Development Plans and One Page Profiles.
- Increase knowledge of childcare settings to facilitate Person Centred reviews.

Cabinet Member Comments: Recommendation is **agreed** and action already commenced.

Recommendation 4

Monitor, use and share the good practice that is emerging in this area.

Action already being undertaken:
 Considerable monitoring is in place of the services and programmes and approaches relating to school readiness. Good practice is also shared with wider partners as well as other LAs. There have also been many opportunities to showcase the good practice via presentations at national conferences etc.

New actions following from the recommendation:
 There will be a continued review and development of services and approaches and links will continue to be maintained and developed with leading academics and researchers with expertise in this area of work.

Cabinet Member Comments: Recommendation is **agreed** as already in place.

Recommendation 5

Work with schools to ensure that they are child ready and welcoming to all of their pupils by:

- a) Developing guidance for what constitutes a “child ready” school.
- b) Encourage schools and governing bodies to develop a community engagement strategy which clearly identifies how they will work with parents of pre-school and in the early years.(Including Welsh Government toolkit being more widely shared and contents more closely considered by schools).
- c) More vigorously challenging schools on their child readiness using minimum standards developed in 4.8.

Action already being undertaken:

- a) There are a number of schools already demonstrating good practice in relation to being “child ready”. However there is no overarching guidance on this to ensure consistency from school to school.
- b) A number of schools have excellent relationships with the local community and in some cases this includes engagement with children and their families before they start school. Some

schools have adopted the Welsh Government Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Toolkit and have been engaged in a research project on school engagement with the community via UWTSD. There is however a need to articulate an overarching expectation for all schools in relation to the approach relating to community engagement including pre-school.

c) This is an area identified for development.

New actions following from the recommendation:

- a) Guidance to be developed following the appointment of a new Foundation Phase Performance Specialist who will take up post in September 2017. Schools, Flying Start Link Teachers and Health colleagues and others with expertise relating to pre-school/nursery aged children will also be asked to feed into the guidance.
- b) Communication will be issued to schools to promote the Family and Community Engagement Toolkit emphasising that engaging families in their children's learning is a powerful way of raising standards and well-being in schools and is also essential in narrowing the attainment gap between learners from richer and poorer backgrounds.
- c) Alongside the Challenge Advisors the new Foundation Phase Performance Specialist will be expected to provide a specific focus on Early Years including school readiness. The Foundation Phase Performance Specialist will be expected to also work collaboratively with relevant partners including Flying Start, Health Visiting and Childcare providers in order to achieve this.

Cabinet Member Comments: Recommendation is **agreed** and action already commenced.

Recommendation 6

Encourage the use of the Pupil Development Grant by schools and/or clusters to help develop school readiness particularly when working with parents, families and communities.

Action already being undertaken:

Currently Challenge Advisors discuss the utilisation and effectiveness of the Pupil Development Grant on a school by school basis. This information has not to date been centrally collated and reported.

New actions following from the recommendation:

The Education Improvement Service will map the utilisation of the Pupil Development Grant during the first term of the 17/18 academic year. This will include the identification of specific expenditure and activities relating to school readiness.

Challenge Advisors will be asked to encourage the utilisation of the grant for school readiness purposes citing examples of good practice

identified through the mapping process.

However it should be noted that the terms and conditions of the Pupil Development Grant have become more restrictive. There is a need therefore to also explore other funding options in relation to Early Years learners with a clear focus on its targeting in relation to “age and stage” appropriate school readiness approaches and models of delivery.

Cabinet Member Comments: Agree, PDG is one of a number of funding sources to be explored for the purposes of benefitting Early Years learners and their families.

Recommendation 7

Ensure that the recently introduced Foundation Phase Profile baseline has more consistency and robustness.

Action already being undertaken:

This is a relatively new national assessment which has only been implemented since September 2015. Data is collated during the summer months for analysis.

The results produced for year 1 reflected inconsistencies suggesting differences in interpretation and application across all primary schools. It is however acknowledged that it takes a number of years to fully embed a new assessment.

New actions following from the recommendation:

Following the appointment of a new Foundation Phase Performance Specialist who will take up post in September 2017 the data produced during the 2015/16 and 2016/17 academic years will be further analysed.

A plan will be developed and implemented to address identified issues arising from the analysis such as including areas for further training and challenge.

Cabinet Member Comments: Agreed, this has the potential to become a universal and robust measure, similar to that available in other countries.

Recommendation 8

Develop minimum standards in relation to transition to school for both schools and day care settings.

Action already being undertaken:

Within the Flying Start Programme there are very effective examples of good practice relating to Transition from Childcare to Nursery. Swansea’s model of locating Flying Start settings on primary school sites has been instrumental in ensuring effective transition.

Many examples of good practice within Flying Start schools have been

recognised in School Estyn Inspection Reports.

During the last year the Local Authority has been supporting the Health Board's Commissioning processes in relation to developing a proposal to address gaps in speech, language and communication for children of pre-school/nursery age.

Swansea's Flying Start Programme was selected as 1 of 5 LAs to take part in a national programme to track children from Flying Start and into school and beyond. The purpose of this is to link national datasets between health and education to identify the impact of the Programme on individual children's outcomes.

Achieving a consistent approach to transition outside the Flying Start model was identified as an area for development both from a childcare setting to school and between health visiting and school.

The Early Years Transition Group led by the previous Foundation Phase Performance Specialist was developed to support the progression of the Swansea Early Years Strategy with a particular focus on:

- Developing minimum standards in relation to transition for early years services
- Ensuring that each school has an EY Plan in place setting out how children's holistic needs will continue to be supported during the Foundation Phase in order to build on the momentum gained

It recognised that whilst there is a wealth of data collected about children, it was not clear what information schools receive from the perspective of the child and their family, about the individual needs of children to enable smooth and successful transition into school.

Recognising children's right to voice in decisions that affect them, the group explored how children could further contribute to shaping their transition.

A common information booklet was drafted and presented to YCA. These standards were agreed by the Swansea Primary Head teachers Association for implementation.

New actions following from the recommendation:

The new Foundation Phase Performance Specialist taking up post in September 2017 will be required to implement and monitor this recommendation working closely with partners.

In addition transition will need to be re-visited in light of the new Free Childcare Pilot being implemented from September 2017 whereby there will be a greater expectation of close working between schools

<p>and childcare providers.</p> <p>Continue to work with the Health Board to develop Speech and Language services in the Early Years prior to Reception.</p> <p>The National Flying Start Data Linking Pilot will be implemented during 2018.</p>
<p>Cabinet Member Comments: Agreed.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9</p>
<p>Support the “Best Start Swansea Initiative” as a Public Service Board priority for the coming 12 months.</p>
<p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>Early Years and specifically the Best Start Messages formed one of the 4 priorities for the PSB during 2016/17.</p> <p>There is support from some members of the PSB for an Early Years focus for the next 12 months particularly given its importance in relation to the Future Generation Act and with drivers such as the Adverse Childhood Experiences.</p> <p>The PSB has organised a process for partners to be involved in selecting its priorities.</p>
<p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>That Early Years is identified as a priority in the forthcoming PSB workshop on 11 July and Board meetings.</p>
<p>Cabinet Member Comments: Agree, and the messages need to be provided not only to service users, but within PSB organisations too.</p>

2.1 An action plan for the agreed recommendations will be developed.

3.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

3.1 An informal EIA was completed as part of the Scrutiny Inquiry and there is also a draft EIA in place for the Early Years Strategy. This will be re-visited following the Inquiry and then undergo the quality assurance process as required. The draft EIA is available as a background paper.

3.2 The purpose of the Strategy is to improve all young children’s outcomes so that they are ready for school and tackling health inequalities through the universal approach.

3.3 Our approach is in line with the premise of the Marmot approach to target services universally however ensuring that support is proportionate to need.

3.4 The Strategy has been developed with specific equality issues in mind:

- Poverty – The focus is to narrow the developmental gap in young children so that they are ready for school and beyond
- The active development of and targeting of support from -9 months to 3. The audit also highlighted a gap in Service provision in this area.
- The Strategy is also aimed at parents and carers of young children to achieve the required level of sustainability. Parents/carers have already played an active role in the development of the Statement.

3.5 The Strategy recognises the rights of children aged 0-18 years as defined in the UNCRC and outlines plans to support children to know their rights and have the best start in life. This is demonstrated locally through the City and County of Swansea's Children and Young People's Rights scheme, and through ABMU's Children's Rights Charter.

3.6 As specific operational developments are planned they will need to take into account the active promotion of the Welsh language and access to Welsh medium services.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 No specific legal implications.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 Several of the recommendations are dependent on continued Welsh Government grants at a minimum at current levels. There is a commitment in the Government's priorities for continuing to support the Flying Start and Families First Programmes and the Pupil Deprivation Grant for the 5 year term.

Background Papers: Draft EIA reports

Appendices:

Appendix A – Original Scrutiny Report