



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement Learning and Skills

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 20 April 2023

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

Purpose:	To update the Scrutiny Panel on EOTAS provision in Swansea.
Content:	An update on the current position, emerging issues and a proposed way forward.
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and give views
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Kate Phillips, Head of Vulnerable Learner Service Kate.Phillips2@swansea.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2016, Swansea Cabinet agreed a report proposing a complete overhaul of Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) services in Swansea. This included agreement for a purpose built pupil referral unit (PRU) that has now been completed and is fully operational, known as Maes Derw.
- 1.2 The intention of the proposals agreed from the 2016 report were that Swansea Council extensively overhauled its entire EOTAS service and that the PRU significantly reduced capacity in recognition of increased devolution of funding and responsibility to schools. The needs of the majority of learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) should be met through mainstream education, with central provision only being made for those learners with the most severe SEBD needs.
- 1.3 The current EOTAS provision in Swansea currently includes Maes Derw PRU, independent special schools, home tuition delivered via the Home Tuition Service and Tŷ Fedw provision. The Local Authority also devolves £700k annually to secondary schools to focus on providing SEBD provision for learners in Key Stage 4 to remain in mainstream during this critical point in education.
- 1.4 The largest central provision is Maes Derw with 158 available places and a budget of £2,673,659.

- 1.5 The needs of learners in Swansea have changed since 2016 and it is appropriate to review the current offer to learners requiring EOTAS and make changes where necessary.

2. Current EOTAS provision

- 2.1 The Home Tuition Service which has a caseload of approximately 75 children and young people including a number who are awaiting placements in Maes Derw or who have been allocated places there but are not attending.
- 2.2 Tŷ Fedw is a specialist provision for children and young people (CYP) who have a Statement of Special Educational Need along with SEBD and who may be on the Autistic Spectrum (ASD). There are four part time places. This provision is currently full and considered highly effective in meeting the needs of the CYP who attend.
- 2.3 There are currently 127 pupils on roll at Maes Derw some of whom attend on a part time basis. Total capacity is 158 but some phases of the provision are oversubscribed whereas others have capacity. Maes Derw has been established on the premise that pupils who access the provision do so for an agreed period with the aim of reintegrating in to mainstream provision. This is in line with Welsh Government expectations of PRUs.

3. Current issues

- 3.1 There has been an increase in referrals to EOTAS provision for CYP who are experiencing anxiety and emotionally based school avoidance. This has seen an increase in numbers within the Tŷ Glas provision at Maes Derw as well as the home tuition caseload.
- 3.2 There has also been an increase in the number of CYP who are neurologically diverse, some of whom exhibit challenging behaviour in response to their environments. The reintegration model operated in the PRU is not appropriate for learners with this type of need although it is currently our identified central provision for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- 3.3 There has been a national increase in the number of exclusions from school, both permanent and fixed term. In addition, school attendance is low, often attributed to emotionally based school avoidance. This trend is reflected in Swansea and while our national position is relatively strong we recognise a pressing need to seek innovative solutions to the current challenges and to promote engagement and inclusion.
- 3.4 Budget pressures are significant for local government and the Education Directorate has needed to identify savings both in year and for future years. Maes Derw has received significant investment to operate as a PRU and has been allocated the majority of the funding for EOTAS services. As a PRU is not the appropriate provision to meet the needs of all of the learners requiring EOTAS provision in Swansea there is a need to both rebalance the distribution of budget and also maximise the potential of the Maes Derw building.

4. Steps to address current issues:

- 4.1 The work of the Team Around the PRU has now concluded and it was agreed to establish a means of providing bespoke education packages for those learners, mainly in Key Stage 4, who cannot access PRU provision as it is not

appropriate to meet their needs. £150,000 has been transferred to the Pupil Support Team budget from the PRU budget and this team are now supporting and developing bespoke packages of support to both prevent referral in to the PRU and also offer an alternative arrangement should the point of referral be reached. This funding has also been used to strengthen the work of the Pupil Engagement Team in reducing exclusion and promoting inclusion. Permanent exclusions are decreasing and fixed term exclusions are beginning to plateau but there is more work to be done in reducing exclusions.

- 4.2 Following the success of Tŷ Fedw, plans to provide similar provision in the primary sector are underway and work is being completed at Clwyd Primary School who will be able to provide provision from September 2023 for primary age learners who have behavioural difficulties as a consequence of additional learning needs.
- 4.3 A new Inclusion Strategy has been finalised and is awaiting Cabinet approval. This outlines 5 key priorities in relation to provision for vulnerable learners, one of which is securing sufficient specialist places to meet the changing demand in learner need. There is a further priority around supporting emotional health and wellbeing. Both of these priorities are intended to address some of the current pressures on finding appropriate placements for CYP who find it challenging to engage with education either as a consequence of an additional learning need or emotional health and wellbeing issues.
- 4.4 The Education Directorate is in the process of undertaking a resetting and rebalancing exercise in relation to Specialist Teaching Facilities. This work will support schools further to create inclusive learning environments meeting the needs of all learners wherever possible. The work should also increase and enhance provision for learners with Autism and we aim to include increased specialist support for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within the remit of this work.
- 4.5 A Cabinet report has been prepared in order to seek permission to evolve provision for EOTAS in Swansea. While the recommendations of the 2016 Cabinet report sets the direction of travel for Maes Derw, needs of CYP have changed and so we must adapt and flex our provision.

5. Summary

- 5.1 In Swansea, we have a whole school approach to promoting inclusion with many schools demonstrating innovative approaches to supporting CYP with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, there is an increasing need and a decreasing budget and so we must maximise available resources and amend, adapt and innovate.
- 5.2 Significant investment in the Maes Derw building has been critical to improving our PRU provision and there is a clearly stated remit for the PRU. However, a PRU has a specific remit and so Swansea needs to extend the EOTAS provision available to meet the needs of all learners. This has to be achieved within the existing budget envelope.
- 5.3 The forthcoming paper to Cabinet will allow for the current changes to EOTAS provision to be formalised and a more comprehensive review and redesign undertaken.

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are no legal implications within this report.

7. Finance Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications within this report.

8. Integrated Assessment Implications

8.1 An IIA is not required as this report is for information only.

Appendices: None