



Cllr. Lyndon Jones
Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance
Panel

Cllr.lyndon.jones@swansea.gov.uk
(By Email)

Please ask for: Councillor Robert Smith
Direct Line: 01792 63 7429
E-Mail: cldr.robert.smith@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: RS/JG
Your Ref:
Date: 04 August 2023

Dear Cllr. Jones,

Re: - Education Scrutiny Performance Panel 13 July 2023 – Letter from Convener to Cabinet Member

Thank you for your letter dated 24th July 2023. Please see your Question and the following response below:

Question

How do you envisage Local Area Co-ordinators engaging with families, relating in particular to the issues of school attendance and exclusions?

Response

The Local Area Co-ordinators (LACs) support families by giving them a voice, helping them make new connections within the community and 'walking with them' when they most need it. Therefore, there could be a number of ways in which the LACs could work with families relating to the issues of school attendance and exclusion.

Strategic collaboration has taken place between the Tackling Poverty Service manager, Local Area Coordination Implementation Manager and Education Officers. All officers are keen to work together to ensure families are supported when needed. This could be in a number of circumstances, including and not exclusively:

Families of children who are not attending school.

Low school attendance through a child's anxiety and poor mental health, puts an enormous strain on the family, especially if the child is suffering to the extent that they are refusing to engage with services. Support for the family in this instance is important, as parents can feel isolated. The LAC can either work with the family or advise the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) of community support. Similarly, for children who are not attending and there are concerns around exploitation, timely support for the family can be critical.

Additionally, if an EWO suspects that a child is not attending due to lack of resources or poverty in the household, the LACs can also engage support from their wider service to provide practical financial advice for the family.



Furthermore, some families may find it hard to articulate the reasons why their child is struggling to attend school. A LAC can help give that family a voice.

Families of children who have been permanently excluded

The impact of a child being permanently excluded, and the subsequent stress that this causes families should not be understated. In these circumstances, advice is provided by the education inclusion officer, and many parents find themselves in a situation where they have to apply for a new school outside of their community, organise new uniform and transport (if required). This can be very challenging for some families; therefore, they may need a LAC to walk alongside them during this period until the child settles in their new school.

Community Focused Schools

Community Focused Schools are a key priority for the Welsh Government, with schools placing the child at the heart of their approach and connecting family, school, and community together to provide an integrated approach to learning and development. We are very keen to ensure that the LACs are part of this process, they're knowledge and links within the community will ensure the success of this approach.

Education Inclusion

In education we want to provide an excellent education for all by working together. We recognise that for some pupils this may mean alternative education offers to that of mainstream school, or to support the placement at a mainstream school. A secondment has been created for an officer to scope external provision and support schools and individual children by creating a bespoke provision suitable for the child. The Officer is already working with individual LACs so source community links to support their work, but we recognise that this work can be expanded upon.

Next Steps:

- Ensure a shared understanding of the role of LACs and that of the EWO. A joint meeting to be arranged.
- Both teams work within communities, information about location assigned to team members to be shared. This will create links within the community between the two teams.
- LACs to be invited to community focussed school's meetings.
- Collaborative work to create more bespoke experiences for learners within their communities. Further meeting to be arranged.

Yours sincerely

Robert Smith

Y Cyngorydd Robert Smith / Councillor Robert Smith
Aelod y Cabinet Dros Addysg a Dysgu
Cabinet Member for Education & Learning