



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel - 10 April 2025

Education Other Than at School services

Purpose	To update the Scrutiny Panel on EOTAS provision in Swansea
Content	The report sets out progress since April 2024 in relation to issues considered in the previous report to Scrutiny Performance Panel
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided and give views
Lead Councillor	Councillor Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
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1. Background

- This report outlines progress in relation to the agreed changes to Swansea Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The current PRU model was established in 2016, but changing learner needs prompted a review which was agreed to following a report to Swansea Cabinet in June 2023.
- Following the agreement to undertake a review, an extensive engagement and consultation process was undertaken and the new model which was developed from that engagement activity was approved by Swansea Cabinet in January 2024.
- At the time of the last report to the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel in April 2024 the consultation period in relation to the new model had just concluded with agreement to begin implementation by September 2024.
- This report details the progress and early impact of the agreed changes.

2. New Model – Principles

The consultation period led to the development of a set of agreed principles to underpin the new model. They were as follows:

1. The model has to be one that maximises the current resource available across the Vulnerable Learners Service to meet the needs of all learners requiring EOTAS provision and identifies the PRU's role within that.

2. The model has to be one that will achieve better outcomes for all EOTAS learners across Swansea Council, not just those attending the PRU.
3. The model does not expect the PRU to provide all of the above however, the role of the PRU needs to be identified in the continuum of support and may need to contribute resource (physical, human, financial) to boost other EOTAS providers (home tuition, Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team and Pupil Support Team) with the aim of ensuring access to resources is as equitable as possible for EOTAS learners.
4. Equally, there may be opportunities for other teams in the Vulnerable Learners Service to work differently with the PRU to support learners who are dual registered at PRU better.
5. Achieving the above should in turn lead to the PRU functioning more as intended, namely, reintegration model with earlier intervention.
6. The model needs to work towards addressing the high level of violence and aggression reported by staff at the PRU. It also needs to provide opportunities to improve attendance, reduce exclusions and to ensure that those learners who are on Pastoral Support Plans receive a package of support which increases their time in education (not necessarily increasing time in Maes Derw but offering something alternative).
7. We need to maximise what works well and address challenges to make improvements where needed.
8. It is expected that all areas of the Vulnerable Learners Service will need to contribute and collaborate to achieve the above. There is no additional funding/resource but there is an opportunity to use funding / resource differently.

In order to achieve this operationally the following proposals were made:

- The existing primary phase and halfway house merge to form a single PRU, operating on a reintegration model for learners in primary and lower secondary (up to Y8).
- The provision for learners with Social and Emotional Mental Health needs remains but operate on a more flexible, bespoke, intervention model allowing for earlier and more flexible bespoke package to be developed for learners some of which will be offered on an outreach basis.
- The provisions for secondary learners will be merged to one provision catering for Y8/9 upwards and operate on a flexible, bespoke, intervention basis. There will be full time places available but there will also be bespoke, multi-agency outreach packages too.
- The options available to the EOTAS panel will be expanded and schools will be encouraged to refer earlier for preventative interventions to avoid escalation to longer term or full-time placements. Registration at Maes Derw will not necessarily be needed to access preventative interventions.
- A special school 'spoke' provision will be established in the Maes Derw building to cater for a small number of learners with a long-term additional learning need who require specialist teaching but access to the resources of a PRU.

However, the report noted that there will be learners mid-way through a course of study and there is no intention to disrupt this. The focus of the work to date has been to prepare for the new model and make changes in anticipation while

ensuring current learners will continue as they are while the new model is phased in.

The first task was to review and implement a new staffing structure for implementation by September 2024.

3. Progress to date

Staffing

A new staffing structure is now in place which has a reduced but refocused leadership team which allows for a more effective distribution of leadership responsibilities and staff development opportunities.

There is a new Head of Centre and Manger of EOTAS Services who is leading on the implementation of the new model.

The support worker team has been restructured to provide a term time only model with revised job descriptions to better focus on improving learner outcomes

The business support team has been restructured to better align with the wider Vulnerable Learner Service and provide a more cohesive approach to key business matters such as commissioning, budgeting and effective use of resources.

All job descriptions have been revised across the PRU to ensure that the required flexibility is in place.

The changes have also ensured that the PRU is more likely to be able to operate within the agreed budget.

EOTAS panel

An interim review of the EOTAS panel has been undertaken and new panel chairs have been identified from across the Vulnerable Learners Service to increase capacity, resilience and perspective. Additional panel members have been identified from across a range of agencies and services and attend regularly. The panel are now recommending part time placements to both increase access, retain engagement at school level and increase potential to reintegrate.

The new Head of Centre has initiated a full review of panel processes, including revised terms of reference, which is currently under way. This is a multi agency review and is an important step in revising the current offer and establishing clear expectations around the role of the PRU and expectations of both the setting and from referring organisations.

Improvement Action Plan

The new Head of Centre has produced an Improvement Action Plan to support implementation of the new model. The plan is informed by the 8 principles agreed

during the consultation and engagement period and the senior leadership team and management committee have also contributed to the plan.

The Improvement Action Plan is included as Appendix A to this report and outlines the steps needed, this academic year, to support implementation to the new model but also address some of the issues that necessitated change.

The previous model was not meeting learners' needs sufficiently and there were key challenges in relation to low attendance, high exclusions and high levels of reported violence and aggression.

The new model expects the PRU to be an example of best practice when supporting children with social emotional and behavioural difficulties. The PRU should, in time, provide outreach support to schools with the intention that children remain in mainstream schools, wherever possible, but access support from the PRU if needed.

The Improvement Action Plan has four strategic aims. They are:

1. To align the vision and remit to the functions of a PRU.

The rationale for this aim is to provide appropriate and targeted support for learners across the authority with identified needs. Specialised and experienced staff at Maes Derw to be used more effectively across the local authority.

2. To achieve better outcomes for pupils all EOTAS learners across Swansea Council, not just those attending Maes Derw.

The rationale for this aim is to develop a clear vision for progression for all learners receiving support from Maes Derw. Pupil progression to be bespoke and relevant to the individual. Clear links to other EOTAS services to allow access to facilities and specialist staff.

3. To achieve better outcomes for pupils all EOTAS learners across Swansea Council, not just those attending Maes Derw

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4. To review the wellbeing support of learners being supported at Maes Derw

The rationale for this aim is that health and wellbeing is at the centre of the needs of all pupils who require support for Maes Derw. Health and wellbeing is embedded in everything that we do from whole centre culture, class planning and individual interventions that are preventative and reactive. This is done well to meet the needs of the pupils but not clearly assessed, monitored and evaluated to show progress.

5. Progress to date – what has changed

While it is important to note that we are not yet two full academic terms into the transition to a new model there have already been some changes and improvements in the offer for learners and also learners' experiences.

These improvements are detailed in the evaluation section of the improvement plan but some key highlights are as follows:

Improved communication with schools and clarity of expectation has meant that 9.8% more learners have reintegrated to schools now when compared to Autumn 2023

There is improved collaboration between mainstream schools and the PRU in relation to learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) with an increase in the number of pupils having a jointly written Individual Development Plan between mainstream and Maes Derw.

More flexible offers of support, including part time places, mean that 141 pupils have received support from Maes Derw in the Autumn term 24. Compared to 124 in Autumn term 23. Increase of 13.7%.

Grant investment has improved the offer for learners. For example, electronic drums and DJ music studio have been installed and pupils are learning to use new equipment to support learning in music and widen opportunities through music therapy.

In line with the expectation to work more effectively across the Vulnerable Learners Service, meetings have taken place with the Vulnerable Learners Service Commissioning Officer to establish a new EOTAS provider framework

A number of parental and community engagement opportunities have been developed including an enterprise fayre to showcase and develop pupils' creativity, practical and independence skills. Parental engagement was excellent and developed an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of qualifications and curriculum.

Four support workers have been trained by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to enable Maes Derw to refer pupils to CAMHS for specific Mental Health support. This is the first time the PRU has been able to refer pupils themselves.

Strategies to improve engagement and respond to learners in a therapeutic and trauma informed approach are having a positive impact. There is a decrease of 55% in fixed term exclusions this term compared to Autumn 23.

There is a clear focus on planning for learner progression and improving the curriculum and qualification offer to maximise opportunities for learners. One example of this is for Year 5 – Step 2 & 3 Language, Literacy and Communication and Mathematics and Numeracy. Media Academy Cymru

delivered a 6 week course on numeracy, literacy and communication which engaged learners in hands on, practical experiences to support cross-curricular learning. Consequently, learner engagement in Literacy and Numeracy interventions increased, which in turn is having a positive impact on their progress.

Planning and responding to learner's needs is making a positive difference. For example, in Key Stage 4 the offer has changed from a 5-lesson to a 7-lesson model. This adjustment allows for more manageable lessons, better supporting learners' needs by breaking down content into smaller segments. Attendance has risen by 7.6% compared to the summer term.

There is a small cohort of children whose attendance at their mainstream school was 0% prior to referral but who now have attendance of over 90%. This can be attributed to their educational and emotional needs being met within the PRU.

A major concern leading to the need to review the PRU operating model was the reported incidents of violence and aggression. The intention was that the new model should better respond to learner's social, emotional and educational needs. This term there has been a 59% reduction in incidents of violence and aggression. There has been a significant reduction in staff absence compared to Spring 24 and alongside the reduction in exclusions and green shots of improvement in relation to attendance this suggests that progress towards meeting the intended aims of the restructure is good.

4. Legal implications

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5. Finance Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

6.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

6.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

6.2 As this is an information report to Scrutiny an IIA is not required.

Appendices:

Appendix A PRU Improvement Action Plan Academic Year 2024/2025