



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the Education & Skills Policy Development Committee

Wednesday, 16 February 2022 at 4.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor M Durke (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**  
J P Curtice  
S Pritchard

**Councillor(s)**  
L R Jones

**Councillor(s)**  
H Lawson

Also present:

Councillor R V Smith (Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills)  
Cressy Morgan - Partneriaeth  
Dylan Williams - Partneriaeth

**Officer(s)**

Gareth Borsden  
Helen Howells  
Helen Morgan-Rees  
Melisa Perry

Democratic Services Officer  
Interim Head of the School Support Team  
Director of Education  
Solicitor

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): F M Gordon, B Hopkins, M A Langstone, M B Lewis and D W W Thomas

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**32 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

**33 Minutes.**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Education & Skills Policy Development Committee held on 19 January 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

**34 Adverse Childhood Experiences.**

The Chair outlined that the People PDC had previously undertaken work on this matter, and as such, he had invited Councillor Ceri Evans, the Chair of that committee to attend this meeting, unfortunately he was unable to attend due to a prior commitment.

Helen Howells then presented a report which report outlined to the committee the current positional statement of the Education Directorate on the response to research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and its effects within the education service.

She indicated that the department provides support to try and ensure that the cycle of ACEs is broken. She outlined the definition of ACEs as described by Ace Aware Wales as traumatic events, particularly those in early childhood that significantly affect the health and wellbeing of people in later life.

She referred to the Public Health Wales ACE Study for Wales in 2015 in which over 2,000 adults aged 18-69 years had taken part and which provided anonymous information on their exposure to ACEs before the age of 18 years and their health and lifestyles as adults. The survey showed that suffering four or more harmful experiences in childhood increases the chances of high-risk behaviour and ill health going forward.

She outlined that all looked after children and those under the child protection regime are identified by schools with designated staff to help and support them. The effects of ACEs can be mitigated and helped to an extent with the assistance of an emotionally available adult who can support the young people.

ACEs can happen to children across communities and impact on all schools across the city, but Swansea have always been quick to respond to the needs of its learners, with Estyn reports from 2017 to 2020 show that 97.3% of schools received excellent or good outcomes to wellbeing and attitudes to learning, with no schools receiving unsatisfactory outcomes. Similarly, 97.4% received excellent or good outcomes to care, support and guidance, with no schools receiving unsatisfactory outcomes.

The effects of the pandemic are already having an impact on both children and families who have experienced increased anxieties, altered routines, jeopardised finances, and the sickness and deaths of loved ones. This can have a particular impact on those previously affected by ACEs.

She outlined that staff in schools do get appropriate training to try and deal with ACEs based on a coordinated approach to providing support to schools.

This has been based around a regional professional learning offer for wellbeing which has always been an excellent source of training which many of our schools have benefitted from. As ERW and now Partneriaeth, regional staff recognised that trauma and attachment were huge barriers to learning at an early stage, and were one of the first regions to introduce an attachment awareness pilot scheme. The partners have consistently sourced excellent training on which attendance from Swansea schools is high.

The Looked After Children (LAC) element of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) issued by Welsh Government to be used as a school improvement grant, to “disproportionately advantage” care experienced children, and indicated schools in Swansea have used their allocation of PDG/LAC monies to purchase nurture and wellbeing facilities and equipment, such as the resilience toolkit, and programmes to support mental health through meditation and mindfulness.

She then outlined that the Education Directorate has built up excellent working relationships with other departments within both Swansea Council and external services and gave a snapshot and overview of the various schemes, initiatives and projects in operation to assist young people.

Examples of good practice were outlined in a couple of particular schools namely Cefn Hengoed Comprehensive and Plasmarl Primary but it was outlined that all schools across the city could have been included due to the excellent work that is ongoing across the board.

She outlined that although the authority has made excellent progress in the issue of ACEs, they are always keen to explore new ideas to ensure our children and young people have the best educational experience that we can possibly provide. Ace Aware Wales are very keen to work with the authority to become the first ACE aware Council in Wales, by using their TrACE Toolkit. This would be a significant undertaking for the authority but indicated that we are well placed to progress this.

Members asked various questions and made comments regarding both the circulated report and the information provided verbally at the meeting, to which the Officer responded accordingly.

Cressy Morgan and Dylan Williams then gave a brief overview of their background and experience in the subject area, and gave a detailed and informative powerpoint presentation to members outlining the areas covered during training in schools.

Included in the presentation were the following areas:

- Definition of ACEs;
- American study which identified the relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults;
- Different categories of child maltreatment and the impact and effects on the child's household;
- Mapping out of ACEs throughout a lifetime, including disrupted nervous, hormonal and immune development, social, emotional and learning problems, adopting of health harming behaviours and non communicative disease, disability, social problems, low productivity leading to potential early deaths;
- Public Health Wales research in 2016 and three reports which came from the research on Adverse Childhood Experiences and their Impact on the Welsh Adult Population relating to 1. Health-Harming Behaviours, 2. Chronic Disease and Health Service, 3. Mental Well-Being ;
- Setting up of the ACE support hub in 2017 and a series of important reports were produced following this including the one on Sources of resilience and their moderating relationships with harms from adverse childhood experiences;
- Review of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Policy led by Julie Morgan MS which began last year, and has outlined the impact of Covid in raising the problems of young people whilst at the same time reducing the access to services because of the pandemic;
- Welsh Government's Renew and Reform Covid recovery plan and its emphasis on supporting learners ' wellbeing and progression with a focus on narrowing educational inequalities;

- Curriculum for Wales guidance and focusing on developing learners;
- Equity in education and ensuring that those who need more assistance and help get access to it;
- Stress and the three types of responses within the nervous system – Positive, Tolerable and Toxic – and the reactions and issues associated with each type and its effect on the body going forward;
- Trauma based approach, racial trauma, supporting learners with sensory learning difficulties, building trust through play, using sociograms to develop peer to peer relationships, developing empathy in learners, using Emotion coaching and poverty proofing;

Members again asked various questions and made comments regarding both the presentation and information provided, to which the Officers from Partneriaeth responded accordingly.

The Chair thanked the officers from Education and Partneriaeth for their extremely interesting input, information and attendance at the meeting.

**35 Workplan 2021/2022.**

The Chair referred to the workplan as detailed in the report.

**Resolved** that the workplan be noted.

The meeting ended at 5.19 pm

**Chair**