
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

03.10.13

Present: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn – Chairman
Councillor Peter Read - Vice-chairman

Councillors: Alan Jones Evans, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, Liz Saville Roberts, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, and Hefin Williams.

Others invited: Cllr. Siân Gwenllian (Cabinet Member for Education), Cllr. R H Wyn Williams (Cabinet Member for Care)

Co-opted Members with

a vote on education matters: Mrs Rita Price (Catholic Church), Rev. Canon Robert Townsend (Church in Wales)

Also Present: Marian Parry Hughes (Senior Manager Children's Services), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Commissioning Service) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer), Dewi R Jones (Head of Education), Orina Pritchard (Senior Manager Transitional Service).

Observer: Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Customer Care), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director).

Apologies: Councillors Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Mr Dylan Davies (Meirionnydd Parent Governors Representative), Mrs Rhian Roberts (Dwyfor Parent Governors Representative) and Siôn Amlyn (Teachers Union).

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) The Chair welcomed Mrs Rita Price to the meeting as a representative of the Catholic Church on this Committee.

(b) Best wishes for a full and speedy recovery were extended to Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 20 June 2013, as a true record.

4. QUALITY OF EDUCATION - SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

The report of the Scrutiny Investigation on the Quality of Education was submitted which had been commissioned by the Education Cabinet Member to look at the following issues:

- Why did polarisation occur in the KS4 performance of schools
- Achievement standards in Mathematics and the impact of this on the TL2+ indicator
- Why were the quality standards and KS3 provision generally robust across all the authority's schools
- Foster a fuller understanding of the performance of pupils receiving FSM and the degree to which the achievement of this group of learners impacts on KS4 performance
- The impact of leadership on the performance of schools and the way leadership skills are nurtured and developed.

(a) The Chair of the Investigation, Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts, set the context by firstly thanking her fellow members and Reverend Robert Townsend together with the officers for their praiseworthy work. It was noted that the main findings of the investigation had expanded beyond the above brief. It was stressed that it was possible for Members to contribute to the recommendations prior to submitting the final report to the Cabinet Member for Education for action.

The order of the Investigation was explained and it was noted that interviews had been conducted with:

- Heads of six specific schools in the County
- Parents/governors of the six schools
- Pupils

The six schools were chosen on the basis of good performance, underperformance and where significant change had occurred in performance.

In addition, presentations were received by external experts that were extremely interesting, inspiring and memorable. In terms of the impression received by the investigation stemming from the interviews and the presentations, it was noted how important it was to inspire, motivate and calling to account and this played a key part in the quality of leadership and good results.

Several members of the Scrutiny Investigation felt that there had been a tendency for Gwynedd in the past to be introverted and that it was important to look at good practice outside the County.

Members were guided through the recommendations of the Investigation based on the following findings:

- (a) Leadership in Schools
- (b) Mathematics attainment standards
- (c) Performance and Data
- (d) Raise and Convey Expectations
- (e) Polarization in terms of Quality
- (f) The Authority's Role
- (g) The Role of Governors
- (h) Contact with Pupils

(b) Members were given an opportunity to scrutinise the conclusions and the following points were highlighted:

- (i) It was questioned if the NPQH qualification for Heads prepared individuals for the range of responsibilities attached to the work of a Head.

In response to the above, the Head of Education explained that 100 persons were accepted to undertake the qualification annually and this included a very detailed programme that required a series of experiences.

- (ii) That there was a need to strengthen elements in primary schools such as tracking progress in Mathematics. Attention was drawn to one of the experts who gave a presentation to the Investigation who stated two examples of excellence in raising standards in Mathematics within the County and noted further that there were successful examples of good practice in poor areas outside the County to raise the standards of Mathematics.
- (iii) Concern that some teachers had to teach a subject where they had no qualification and this caused concern especially for small schools.
- (iv) That there was a danger to focus and misuse data for one purpose that would lead to losing the human element.
- (v) Important to focus on the future rather than look back but to use what had been learnt in the past to build upon for continual improvement.
- (vi) Raise ambition to increase the performance target to 100% rather than be satisfied with 65%.
- (vii) In the context of data and performance, it was asked to what extent consideration could be given to factors such as learning Welsh and English as an additional language especially considering the complexities caused to those pupils who do not speak Welsh or English at home. It was felt that worthy recognition should be given to this factor for the benefit of the progress of the pupil.
- (viii) There should be an attempt to inspire parents regarding their children's education
- (ix) Several frustrations were seen with the role of the governors, specifically too much responsibility was given to them.
- (x) The role of the authority's governors should be expanded as a result of receiving a complaint from one governing body that Council Members were not members of the governing body and they saw this as an important contact point between the school and the Community.
- (xi) Governors should be more challenging with Head teachers and it was seen that some governing bodies would welcome a meeting without the Head and the staff being present.
- (xii) The importance that governors learn about the culture of being a critical friend and being more challenging whilst accepting that support should also be offered.
- (xiii) That current training addressed the requirements of governors with what was expected from them and meetings to share experiences amongst each other and with governors from other counties were appreciated.
- (xiv) Governors should receive more support / training on proficiency action
- (xv) That the observations received from the pupils were valuable and it was necessary to give specific attention to them.

(c) The Education Cabinet member appreciated the thorough work undertaken by the Scrutiny Investigation and the fact that they had extended their work beyond the brief. The recommendations made by the Scrutiny Investigation would interweave with the Raising Standards Project which was one of the Council's main priorities. In addition,

reference was made to the Robert Hill Report and it was noted that it was anticipated that there would be a change in the world of education stemming from the contents of the report. The Cabinet Member for Education confirmed that she would respond formally to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Investigation.

(ch) The Senior Manager Commissioning Work explained that the Quality of Education Scrutiny Investigation would meet once again to draft a final report to include the observations recorded above and submit this to the Cabinet Member for a formal response. In response to a query by a Member regarding the establishment of a standing Scrutiny Investigation to monitor progress in this field, the Senior Manager Commissioning Service explained that the investigations, as a matter of procedure, were 'task and finish' working groups, however, this could be discussed further at the next preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee

Resolved: (a) That the Education Quality Scrutiny Committee hold another meeting to draft a final report bearing in mind the comments made above, to be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Education.

(b) To request the Cabinet Member for Education to respond formally to the recommendations of the Investigation in the form of an action plan/work programme and submit a report to this Scrutiny Committee within approximately 6 months noting the progress in the implementation of the recommendations.

(c) Discuss how to monitor progress in the above field at the next preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2013.

5. POST-INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

The Post-Inspection Action Plan for the Education Service was submitted in response to the Estyn report on the quality of local education authority services for children and young people.

(a) The Cabinet Member for Education reminded members that ESTYN had visited the Education Service in March this year and had adjudged that the authority was in the sufficient category in terms of current performance with a forecast for improvement. Consequently, it was a requirement for the Education Service to draft a post-inspection action plan to respond to the ESTYN recommendations. It was noted that a great deal of the work had been undertaken over the summer and the action plan had by now been adopted by the Cabinet and submitted to ESTYN on 20 September 2013. Reference was made to the six recommendations by ESTYN namely:

1. Improve protection through ensuring that the Council's procedures and policies are clearly understood by all LEA employees and are regularly up-dated and disseminated.
2. Raise standards at key stage 4 through targeting poorly under-performing departments at secondary schools more robustly.
3. Monitor and challenge every school and use all the available powers at the LEA's disposal to improve leadership and management at underperforming schools.
4. Continue to develop and implement current LEA strategies to improve attendance at secondary schools
5. Improve quality of self-evaluation, and how improvement plans and performance management procedures are implemented in the Education Department.

6. Continue to implement plans to reduce number of empty places.

(b) Members were given an opportunity to give observations and the following points were highlighted:

(i) Concern regarding the challenging percentages in recommendation 6 to reduce the number of empty places bearing in mind that it was necessary to give consideration to an extensive part of Gwynedd within a period of two years.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Education explained that the Welsh Government placed great emphasis on getting rid of empty places and this Council had challenged its stance noting that the priority was to improve the quality of education. A target of 10% was given to each authority by the Welsh Government and this was challenged and a compromise was accepted that a rural area such as Gwynedd could never attain the target and within the outcomes of the Education Service there was a more realistic figure. The Cabinet had agreed on a priority plan that included the current re-organisation and the work that was on-going in the catchment areas of y Gader, y Berwyn and in Arfon. In addition, the Service undertook technical work regarding calculating the empty places in schools and by re-defining the space within schools a reduction was seen in the percentage of empty places.

(ii) That some of the outcomes were ambitious on the attainment of the school and it was asked if they were accessible.

In response, the Head of Education noted that it appeared from this year's results on TL2+ which would be published publicly in due course, that 4 out of the 5 schools where there was under performance in the Departments had made very good progress based on work that had been undertaken in Mathematics.

(iii) Whilst accepting the above comment, it was further noted that it had become evident through the Scrutiny Investigation that the results percentages did not reflect the actual situation in schools because of all the private lessons which occur outside schools. The situation should be analysed to see if the improvement in the schools corresponded to the figures for success.

(iv) It appeared that there was a shortcoming in the progress with written skills as a result of the modern technological age and that an eye should be kept on this.

In response, the Head of Education explained that since September this year the framework for literacy and numeracy should address the above concern, which was a statutory requirement for every organisation and received worthy attention in primary and secondary schools.

(v) It was asked if the performance this year was reflected in the national quartiles.

In response, the Head of Education noted that it appeared that the progress in Gwynedd on the TL2+ performance was nearly 58% this year compared with 55% last year however, it was too early to know how this would be reflected in the quartiles. It was stressed that the final information would be received later on in the year.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the Post-Inspection Action Plan.

6. PRESENTATION –CHILDREN ‘END TO END’ REVIEW

(a) A presentation was received for information by the Senior Children’s Services Manager on the above review when it was noted that the Council’s main priority was to ensure that Gwynedd’s children and young people are safe and protected when necessary. The second priority was also obviously to ensure that the Service is provided in such a way as to give value for money.

The review of the Children’s Services was commissioned since it appeared that the Service might be failing to offer value for money and in following best practice. Therefore, there was uncertainty as to whether the Service provided the best outcomes for service users. The scope of the review was agreed by giving full consideration to the following tiers by planning and recommending changes:

Tier 1 – Children (Universal Services)

Tier 2 – Vulnerable Children

Tier 3 – Children in Need (where failure to intervene would lead to a disadvantage to the family)

Tier 4 – Looked after Children or need protection (children on the register with complex and profound needs)

The main messages of the review in terms of value for money was that Gwynedd’s level of expenditure on Children’s Services was significantly higher than the ‘family’ of similar councils, and had been so for many years (£3.5m higher in 2012-13 and 2013-14 and the main drivers of the costs were:

- Residential care (£2.2m in 2012/13 for children with profound and complex disabilities outside the County) and foster care (£0.9m)
- Numbers of looked after children rather than the cost of care
- Lack of options.

As part of the review, and in terms of placements, an analysis was made of each case independent of the Service to see if the threshold was correct and the conclusion was that the determination was correct in each of the 22 cases. However, if other options had been available when the decision was made to place a child in out of county residential care it was assumed that only 7 children would need a long term out of county placement. This was due to the lack of specialist service available at the time such as an alternative provision to include specialist foster placements, specialist support by other agencies, short respite support for families, strong specialist support and also an increase in the numbers of foster parents who could cope with advanced care in accordance with the needs of the children.

It was noted that the national focus was on the following aspects:

- Early intervention when the child is young
- Quick response to problems when they arise
- Multi agency

Examples of best practice were seen across the United Kingdom and specifically in the Scottish model called ‘Streamlined Response’ which tried to reduce problems by moving responsibility from one agency to the next as needs increase i.e. multi agency Team based on local teams with the virtue of being able to intervene from the first evidence of problems until their solution.

Developed from the best practice research and the workshops that took place the following proposals presented themselves for further consideration:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Proposal 1 | - | Access to services across the tiers of need (changes in allocation of grants had excluded children's access) |
| Proposal 2 | - | One 'front door' (establish one multi agency door for all services where referrals are assessed jointly at the first step) |
| Proposal 3 | - | Multi-agency team (experimenting with a small team to undertake Multi-agency work on the basis of the 'streamline response' team and piloted in a specific area initially to be evaluated before extending further) |
| Proposal 4
intervention | - | Edge of Care Team (research shown focus on intense

In the first 6 weeks to get a child home succeeds better than leaving a child in care). |
| Proposal 5 | - | Managing Care placements (associated to the above) |
| Proposal 6 | - | Reducing bureaucracy (reduce the requirement on Social Workers in terms of recording in order to release time for them to spend with families in order to undertake valuable work) |

To conclude, the Senior Children's Services Manager outlined the following as a vision for the future:

1. Intervention and suitable care, at the right time, in the right place and at the right cost.
2. Good and timely professional application of skills, and readiness to work on a multi-agency basis where appropriate.
3. In communities that evidence vitality, and where the well-being and potential of children is maximised.

(b) During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- (i) That there was national criticism on the out of county care provision for children because of the cost and the numbers and there was concern that the distance from the family could intensify the children's problems by alienating them from families.
- (ii) That over expenditure on out of county placements had been a problem in the past and should not the authority have established its own provision by now to overcome the problem outlined above.
- (iii) It was asked what were the action points following the review and if the Service had drafted an action plan.

(c) In response to the above comments, the Senior Children's Services Manager explained as follows:

- that the distance of out of county placements was a concern to the Service although they were fairly close in miles in the areas of Wrexham and Cheshire they were far in terms of culture and linguistic needs. However, the Service had a responsibility to promote contact between the children and families and everything was done within their capability to have access to a proportion of their education through the medium of Welsh.
- That there were pioneering schemes in the pipeline to establish a Centre of Excellence that would include the education of Hafod Lon together with respite care facilities for disabled children.

- In terms of vision, the Service had a plan for commissioning for Children's Service and the priority was to reduce the number of children in care in the next five year.
- The aim was to make savings every year through preventative work however it had to be understood that some children and young people required specialist care that was not available in Gwynedd.
- That the Service had identified the priorities namely:
 - Establish an Edge of Care Team
 - Reducing the bureaucracy requirements
 - Act in an multi-agency manner across Tiers 2,3 and 4 and maximise access to families such as parenting services etc.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the presentation.

7. ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS REVIEW

(a) A presentation was received as background information to the Cabinet Member for Education's report regarding the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Strategy Review.

The above review was commenced approximately 18 months ago and stemmed from inconsistencies in the provision that Gwynedd's children and young people receive across the authority. A Welsh Government Consultation Document published in 2012 stated the following and encouraged the authority to think much wider in order to ensure an effective partnership to provide effectively for children:

"Progress towards effective multi-agency partnerships to provide for these most vulnerable of children and young people has been weak in most areas of Wales".

The Government highlighted the following three important points:

- Poor communication and information sharing
- Under-developed planning and evaluation; and
- Multi-disciplinary assessments, which were often completed in isolation from one another.

Bearing the above in mind, the aim in Gwynedd was looked at:

- To ensure a complete service for children and young people and their families
- To interrelate and ensure integrated plans
- To ensure good quality services and value for money
- To respond fully to national and local policies
- To respond to agreed principles: to promote independence, measure quality, ensure consistency and the promotion of equal opportunities, up skill staff.

A company called CAPITA was commissioned to look at this field and the their findings from the current system were:

- Inconsistency
- Traditional and complicated
- The quality of performance tracking

- Collaboration
- Different patterns of practice
- Growth in specific needs
- Communication
- Creating dependency

In consultation with the stakeholders the main messages were:

- 88.5% were of the opinion that doing nothing was not an option
- 100% of the education professionals were of the view that the current system was not sustainable in the future
- Between 88.7% and 99% of parents were in favour of change, in order to improve elements of the service
- 99% of parents of individuals with more profound and complex difficulties/disabilities favoured moving to a service that concentrates on the child/young person and their families with fully integrated multi-agency support
- 100% of all stakeholders approached welcomed the role of an individual as a person to provide a direct link with families so as to ensure:
 - A direct link with parents to improve communication between agencies
 - Full implementation to conduct multi-agency reviews and realise outcomes

The elements to be addressed were listed as well as the background to the options discussed in response to future requirements namely:

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Option 1 | - | No change (this would lead to failure to implement the statutory requirements and failure to meet the identified aims and objectives) |
| Option 2 | - | Improve Service Elements (this would involve up-skilling staff and forming a front line team of teaching assistants to develop a career path and place them within the schools) |
| Option 3 | - | Substantial Change (this would lead to a service that focuses on a child/young person with multi-agency support i.e. health and social services) |
| Option 4 | - | Radical Change |

To conclude, it was noted that Option 2 was favoured with the intention of moving to Option 3 as phase 2. The need to keep Option 2 and 3 separate at the moment was emphasised due to the financial implication attached to Option 3.

(b) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions on the contents of the presentation and the report before them and the following points were highlighted:

- (i) concern regarding financing the options and that other services would suffer
- (ii) concern regarding the apparent risk of recruiting specialists in the field
- (iii) information was requested regarding the timescale for implementing the favoured options and how expenditure would be monitored and measuring the implementation plan?
- (iv) bearing in mind that teaching assistants were central to the implementation of Option 2 and by up-skilling them was it realistic to expect them to work on their current salaries?

- (v) by creating Catchment Area Teams of Assistants, it was asked how many fewer assistants would there be in schools and how would they cope with this?

In response to the above comments, the Senior Transitional Service Manager explained as follows:

- It was trusted that the options could be financed by using resources that already exist more effectively by considering the needs of the children and up-skill the assistants to be able to deal with a range of needs such as learning cognition, language disorder and behaviour more effectively
- That they would collaborate closely with Colleges of further education to ensure that specialist individuals received appropriate and relevant training
- In terms of the timescale, there were many milestones to be reached to achieve change however it was hoped that phase 1 of Option 2 would be implemented by September 2015.
- There was close cooperation with the Council's Human Resources Department and when the responsibilities were identified and determined that it would be necessary to evaluate the posts of the assistants
- It was difficult to currently note how many fewer assistants schools would have as parallel to this the Welsh Government had published a target for the devolvement of education funding to schools and perhaps service level agreements might have to be established between the authority and the schools for special needs provision. An assurance was given that discussion would be held with schools to this end and they were aware of the favoured Options.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the presentation.

8. CARE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

The Chairman of the Investigation, Councillor Peter Read, reported that one meeting of the Care Scrutiny Investigation had taken place and the brief had been agreed to scrutinise how good the service was for patients once they had been discharged from hospital. They would consult with partners in this field together with interviewing a sample of service users.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.50 pm

CHAIRMAN