

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 2.00p.m.**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor P. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, P.S. Farley, R.G. Harris, D.W.H. Jones and M. Powell

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

County Councillor E.J. Hackett Pain and Mr. K. Plow.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr. S. Burch	-	Chief Officer for Social Care and Health
Ms. M. Gatehouse	-	Policy and Performance Manager
Ms. T. Jelfs	-	Head of Children's Services
Mrs. A. Evans	-	Customer Relations Manager
Mr. P. Matthews	-	Chief Executive
Mrs. S. McGuinness	-	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Mrs. S. Hawkins	-	Principal Officer, ALN
Ms. H. Illett	-	Scrutiny Manager
Mrs. N. Perry	-	Democratic Services Officer

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.- Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P. Clarke and A. Webb.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.- There were no Declarations of Interest.

**SCRUTINY OF THE PROVISION FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS**

3.- We received a report from the Principal Officer, ALN regarding the Strategic Review of Additional Learning Needs. We were informed that the review followed an Estyn report in November 2012 which had found the quality of Local Authority education for children and young people with additional learning needs in Monmouthshire to be unsatisfactory.

In order to address the issues, the Children and Young People's Directorate engaged in a review of the strategy and policy for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The consultation process engaged with children, young people, parents and carers, the Health Service and Social Services.

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The overall aim of the strategy was to maximise the educational achievements and wellbeing of all pupils with ALN by providing a relevant, inclusive and effective education that met their needs.

During discussion following the presentation we noted the following:

- We had a duty to identify children's need through the schools. It would be the responsibility of the school to create an individual development plan.
- We had a statutory responsibility to respond to children's special educational needs. We would ensure, through pupil tracking, that the interventions were good value for money.
- The authority needed less staff as the necessary staff needed to be within the schools.
- A concern was raised as to whether the staff and funding was in place to implement the strategy. We were told that the money needed to be in schools. Schools had a statutory responsibility to respond to children's needs and it was important that they understood that responsibility.
- Pupil needs were tracked through an effective tracking system. The tracking system ensured that schools with ALN pupils received the necessary funding.
- A Member questioned how the roles and responsibilities were split. We were referred to page 15 of the report where we were provided with a detailed description of roles and responsibilities.
- Funds were not limitless so there was a need to build the capacity of schools within the Authority, to meet children's needs.
- A Member raised concerns regarding the extra workload expected from teaching staff to implement the strategy. The Principal Officer explained that the schools would benefit from the new strategy as they would now be in control rather than reporting to the authority. The Chief Officer for Children and Young People added that it was important to bear in mind that the workload of teachers currently included children with complex learning needs. Those children would still be catered for. The workload of teachers and teaching assistants would remain the same.
- A query was raised as to how the five schools listed on page 29 of the report as schools with additionally resourced classes, were run. We were informed that:
  - Chepstow Comprehensive Secondary Base was a different type of base as it was run by the school for the Authority.
  - Mounton House was a residential special school for boys aged 11-16 with BESD.

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- Caldicot Comprehensive accommodated up to 75 pupils with moderate to severe learning difficulties, ASD and physical difficulties.
- Deri View Primary School dealt with pupils with complex special educational needs, within the catchment area.
- Overmonnow and Pembroke Primary Schools support the Authority's needs.
- A Member queried what provisions were in place for girls with ALN, and that they appeared to be under acknowledged. Assurance was given that children were tracked through gender and girls were achieving very well. The designation of Mounton House may, in future, be considered to accept girls.
- We were provided with statistics regarding numbers of pupils with ALN within the County. It was evident that the number of children remained fairly constant. The number of Statements were going down, a reduction in 26 schools and an increase in 9 schools. We were also asked to note that at present there were no tribunals, due to schools working well to address children's needs and the Authority communicating well with the schools.
- The Chair requested that a data sheet be distributed to the committee detailing the figures.
- Monmouth school would have a fully inclusive resource base on the rebuild of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School.
- The Authority had a statutory duty to support children through psychology.
- The Authority had a statutory duty to provide a parent partnership group, SNAP.
- Feedback from schools had been extremely positive. They felt that it provided clarity around the strategy and the matrix was extremely supportive. There had been no negative comments received regarding the document. Service Plans were to be provided regarding psychology and specific learning difficulties.
- The Principal Officer, ALN confirmed that she had been working with EAS to develop training for SEN Governors.
- We were told that visits had been made to similar operating Authorities to see what 'good' looked like. These models had then been used to develop what worked for Monmouthshire County Council.
- The relationship between ALN inclusion and EAS was said to be strong and thriving.
- One to One tutoring was not always considered the best form of support for the child. One to Group tutoring could generally be more effective.

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The Chair thanked the Officers for the report and confirmed that the Committee would welcome an update quarterly.

### **SCRUTINY OF THE ANNUAL SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINT REPORT**

4.- We received the Annual Social Services Complaints Report from the Customer Relations Manager. We were informed that the complaints procedure had three stages:

- i. Stage 1 Local Resolution
- ii. Stage 2 Formal Consideration
- iii. Stage 3 The Independent Panel

During the period April 2013 to March 2014 there had been 32 complaints, 12 comments and 19 compliments. The most common reason for complaints related to communication. The majority of complaints were resolved locally. However, three complaints were referred to stage two of the Social Services complaints procedure for formal investigation. Most complaints concerning Children's Services were from parents/carers. There had been 2 complaints received directly from young people. They were resolved at stage one, and both complaints were resolved by providing information or an explanation and where appropriate an apology.

Compliments about staff in Children's services were received with individual staff named for their support, help and professionalism. All staff had been informed of the compliments received about them and a certificate given to them commending their efforts.

During discussion following the presentation we noted:

- It was acknowledged that where resolutions had gone over deadlines it could be due to having to gather information from various people. Children's Services complaints could be quite complex.
- It was felt that the complaints summary in the report should have included examples, as had the compliments summary.
- With regards to the amount of complaints increasing, there had been some discontent within the department in the last year. Staff pressures had meant responses had not been issued as promptly as required. Changes had been put in place to resolve these issues. Complaints may arise where the officers were unable to deal with the case, if the case was in court for example.
- The Customer Relations Manager stated that if there were no complaints it would be a cause for concern. Complaints were used as a positive tool.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report.

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**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ATTAINMENT PERFORMANCE SCORECARD**

5.- We received a performance report on the Attainment of Looked After Children. The purpose of the report was to provide members with a report card that looked at the attainment of children that social services worked with, against the general child population within Monmouthshire. The report card provided a line of sight between our activities and the outcomes and priorities which the council and partners were committed to.

We were informed that there was a significant gap in attainment between the children receiving social services in Monmouthshire and the all pupil population. This gap grew as the children progressed from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 and was most pronounced at Key Stage 3.

Members were advised that they should use the report and the associated indicators to scrutinise whether services were being delivered in line with expectations and were contributing to agreed outcomes.

The Policy and Performance Manager advised the Committee that as the figures involved were small, a four year average had been provided.

During discussion we noted the following:

- Members agreed that the figures provided would be more helpful in actual numbers rather than percentages.
- Examination results for children in the care system had increased and were not far from the mainstream figures.
- A question was raised as to whether we were confident that our services within the Authority, and with our partners, were focussed as clearly as needed to be on this group of young people. We were informed that the requirements of the Local Authority were that any child open to Children's Services would have a plan. Within that plan would be the educational attainment, health details and details of background of that person. The plan coordinated all agencies involved.
- Members were informed of compelling research that had shown that gaps in attainment tended not to occur within school hours, but during school holidays or weekends. During these times there would be less opportunity to access extra curriculum activities.
- With regards to higher numbers of people with disabilities, this was often the case when the area was close to a significant children's hospital. Often, families would move to be nearer the hospital.
- It was noted that domestic abuse figures may be higher in the county due to it being better identified. Parental issues were referred by police, schools,

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hospitals and children themselves. There was a link with the Domestic Abuse Forum in place.

- The Policy and Performance Manager commended the effort and commitment of the Children's Services team.

The Chair commended the Head of Children's Services and her team. We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

The Committee noted the dates and content of upcoming meetings:

- Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 11.00 am - Adults Select Item 7 for Joint Scrutiny.
- Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 10.00am
- Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at 2.00pm
- Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at 2.00pm

**The meeting ended at 16.45pm.**