

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 14th May 2024

Report Item 4: Additional Learning Provision/ Specialist Resource Bases

Key points raised by the Committee Members:

The following points were raised by the Committee for consideration by the Cabinet Member:

- The report refers to some inconsistencies across the SRB's highlighted through the review, so how it is being addressed to ensure learning is applied across SRB's, avoiding a postcode lottery.
- What is the differential between the evaluation that you see in front of you today undertaken by the team and the review undertaken by Estyn?
- There's a concern about rising numbers of young people with additional learning needs requiring complex ALN provision. It would be interesting to hear your thoughts on why there are increasing numbers and what effect that will have on our need to provide for increased need.
- Please can you explain how the partnership agreements between the local authority and host schools work and what they aim to achieve.
- Please can you expand on the capacity issues for Pembroke Primary School and Monmouth Comprehensive School and the impact on the pupils.
- In relation to the improvement needed in provision at a particular school, the Committee sought reassurance that the local authority is working with SRB's where improvements are expected. The Chief Officer advised that undertaking a self-evaluation allows the local authority to understand any issues that may need to be worked on with schools so that they can be supported.
- Can you expand upon the capacity and anticipated demand for the specialist resource bases across the county and the financial implications for the local authority.
- How do the SRB leads collaborate to produce a core version of documentation?
- There was a query about the wording of the catering arrangement in the report.
- What is the impact of COVID-19 on the SRB provision and the support for learners and staff?
- What are the transition arrangements for learners moving from SRB to mainstream or post-16 provision?
- How involved are parents and carers in the review and the feedback process?
- Please explain the alignment of the SRB provision with the ALN reform and the new code of practice.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

- What are the plans for future development and improvement of the SRB provision?
- What is meant by the variability in finances and accountability in the report.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair welcomed the report and praised the work of the SRB team and the schools. He thanked the officers for their presentation and their responses. He concluded that the report on the review of the specialist resource bases was moved with the recommendations, and that some questions and points raised by the committee members would be addressed in a follow-up report in 12 months. More information is requested on the capacity and affordability of the SRB model, the consistency and quality of the provision, and the Committee seeks reassurance that there are no individual schools with broad and consistent failings.

ACTION:

The Committee requested further detail on the financial implications of the increasing demand for SRB provision and the low, medium and high scenarios.

Report Item 5: Support for Vulnerable Learners

Key points raised by the Committee Members:

- What is the common ground and connection between vulnerable learners and additional learning provision and does the funding link as well?
- You mentioned children having suffered traumatic childhood experiences and the training offered, does this include parents and carers and what is the practical provision that enables children to build resilience?
- Given that emotional literacy isn't easy to measure, you have referred to this being evidence based, but do we do we accept that to an extent you cannot measure the effectiveness of these schemes? Please explain what criteria you apply to measure the effectiveness.
- What are the links between different agencies at the strategic and practise level to support children and families who have experienced trauma?
- Is there a risk that we will lose trained teaching assistants who provide emotional literacy support to vulnerable learners, and how will we mitigate that risk. With 16 schools potentially moving into a financial deficit this year according to the month 9 budget monitoring report, it raises a concern as to how schools will mitigate the risk.
- Please can you explain the reasons for the waiting list for the specialist teaching service?

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

- One of the identified risks you have spoken about is the reliance on grant funding. How will you manage that and have you secured funding for ongoing years? Do you have sufficient educational psychologist resource?
- It's interesting to see that the figure of 500 of the MCC staff have accessed the whole staff training and that seems a large number. Have all of our teaching staff undergone that training?

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked Dr Wagstaff for attending and presenting a significant amount of information in both reports and asked her to relay the Committee's thanks to the team.

ACTION:

Members requested an update on the waiting list for the specialist teaching service and how it is being managed.

Report Item 6: Strategic Risk Assessment Register Update

- The Committee were concerned that some risks remain high in the register, despite the mitigating actions being taken. For example, risk 11 referring to decarbonisation is a concern because despite the actions being taken, it is not changing the risk level.
- Risk 7, refers to instability in the market for children at risk and risk 8 causing delays in service provision to older adults are both highly concerning. There isn't any reference as to what is occurring and how this is being monitored.
- How the Council is planning to address the risk of some services becoming financially unsustainable was raised as a key area for concern.
- The Committee queried the main factors that contribute to the high risk of significant harm to a child or adult due to a specific failure of safeguarding arrangements.
- The actions that the council is taking to reduce the high absence rates of vulnerable children is an area of interest.
- How the council is monitoring the progress of the decarbonisation plan and the impact of climate change on its services and assets was also highlighted.
- The challenges and opportunities that the council faces in relation to the new curriculum for Wales and the regional learning and skills partnership was identified as a key risk area for focus.

Chair's Summary:

The Committee has concern that approximately fifty per cent of the risks in the register remain high after mitigation actions and it isn't clear what further measure will be taken to address these risks. The Committee will forward the comments to the Cabinet and will liaise informally to shortlist specific risks for inclusion into the scrutiny forward work programme.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

ACTION: To update work forward work programme with specific risks for detailed scrutiny.