

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 20th December, 2017 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor S.Rees-Owen – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

J.Brencher	H. Fychan	W. Lewis
A. Calvert	M. Powell	

Co-opted Members

Mr.J.Fish – Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative
Mr S Jones - Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative
Mrs S Jones - Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative
Mr M Cleverley - Representing NASUWT and Teachers Panel
Mr.D.Price – Representing UNISON

Officers in Attendance

Ms G. Davies -
Mr.P.Nicholls – Head of Legal, Litigation, Planning & Environment, Community &
Children’s Services
Ms.K. May - Head of Democratic Services
Ms.C. Jones – Head of Access & Inclusion Service
Ms K. Webster – Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist
Ms A Theaker – Head of Eye to Eye Counselling Service

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillor J.Harries and S.Evans, R. Smith, S. Powell

41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED – that in accordance with the Code of Conduct there were no personal declarations of interest made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

42 MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on the 22nd November, 2017.

43 REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC IN RESPECT OF ESTABLISHING A COLLABORATIVE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP.

The Head of Democratic Services presented the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with the report in respect of establishing a Collaborative Scrutiny Working Group.

Members were informed that the Central South Consortium is responsible for school improvement on behalf of the five local authorities, namely Bridgend, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and the Vale of Glamorgan.

It was brought to the Members attention that the Consortium is accountable to the local authorities through a Joint Committee comprising of the relevant Cabinet Members for each Authority.

The Head of Democratic Services took the Committee through the rest of the report and informed Members of the functions that the collaborative scrutiny working group would be carrying out.

After in depth discussion Members **RESOLVED** to agree to the proposed establishment of a Joint Collaborative Scrutiny Working Group comprising the Chairs of the Education Scrutiny Committees in each of the five local authorities (or a nominated representative of the Scrutiny Committee) supported by a Scrutiny Officer to consider regional performance of the Central South Consortium and share best practice and information.

REPORTS OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

44 SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING

Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee were presented with an overview of the provision of counselling services in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist informed Members that in April 2013 the

School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act came into force. It was explained that this Act places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide an independent counselling service in respect of the health, emotional and social needs for children and young people in their areas. Members acknowledged that within schools, counselling complements other approaches to support the

health and wellbeing of learners.

Members were informed that in Rhondda Cynon Taf the Eye to Eye Young People's Counselling Service is currently contracted to provide the statutory Service within schools and in the community. The organisation consists of 21 employed counsellors and a number of volunteer counsellors who work in the community setting in the evening.

The Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist explained the current position within RCT.

It was explained that three year trend data has been gathered for the period Commencing academic year 2016/17, this provided the Committee with information in relation to the overall use and effectiveness of the counselling service provided in RCT.

A number of graphs were produced in the report which demonstrated the number of young people who had accessed the service along with the number of sessions attended, the year groups and the number of vulnerable learners accessing counselling.

Members were informed that data suggests over the last three academic years more young people have accessed counselling service in RCT than anywhere else in Wales. Members asked if there was any information as to why this was the case. In response the officer explained that this was unclear as to whether it is better access or greater demand for counselling services.

In respect of the data presented in the report Members asked with regards to more girls than boys attending counselling; what was the reasoning behind this and what was being done in the way of supporting male pupils. It was explained this is a common trend across Wales and it is considered to be reflective of fewer boys tending to request talking therapy or the chose not to attend if they are referred.

Members were informed that pre and post intervention assessments indicate that the counselling offered in RCT is very effective in assisting young people in overcoming their emotional needs. It was explained that this service complements other approaches to support the health and wellbeing of learners.

Members raised the question how young people get to access the service and how is it advertised and promoted. It was explained that the referrals to the service come from school staff, parents and on a positive note self referral from the young persons.

Members raised concerns in relation to the data that very few young people accessing counselling are referred to other agencies for further specialist support and help. Officers explained that this is unlikely to be because all issues are resolved but may be more indicative of the young person themselves not giving agreement for this to happen. It could also be due to the fact that the counsellor is

not able to directly refer to agencies such as CAHMS. Members were informed that these types of referrals can be done through the schools' educational psychologist.

A member asked whether there was any provision for Welsh speaking Counsellors, in response the officer explained that there is a provision in the Welsh medium schools however this take up is very low.

Co-opted Member asked how long young people are having to wait to access the Service, it was explained that at present the waiting time is approximately 4 weeks.

Members considered the rest of the report and thanked officers for their comprehensive report.

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:-

- Acknowledge the content of the report
- Receive an updating report in a 12 month

45. ANNUAL SCHOOL EXCLUSION PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2016/17

The Head of Access & Inclusion Service provided Members with an analysis of the school exclusion performance for academic year 2016/17 and a comparison of performance over the last five years, and gave her observations under the following headings:

- Summary of Exclusions.
- National Benchmarking Data.
- Analysis of permanent Exclusion.
- An Analysis of Fixed Term Exclusion of More than 5 Days.
- An Analysis of Fixed Term Exclusion of 5 Days or Less.
- An Analysis of Primary Fixed Term Exclusion.
- An Analysis of Secondary Fixed Term Exclusion.
- Exclusion Rates of Vulnerable Groups in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Addressing Rising Data Trends.
- Case Study.

Member noted that in graph 1 of the report the data suggested that there has been a significant increase in the number of permanent exclusions in 2016/17 when compared to 2015/16. In response to this Officers explained that the figures are in line with historical data: 17 reported in 2013/14 and 20 reported in 2014/15.

Members questioned what was being done to assist school that had high levels of exclusions. The Head of Access and Inclusion Service explained that these schools have been requested to attend a support and challenge meeting with the Head of Access & Inclusion Service and Head of School Achievement to discuss the schools behaviour management with a focus on reducing the exclusion rate. It was also brought to Members attention that there is an increased focus upon collaborative planning with schools supported by the Behaviour Support Teachers and Educational Psychology Service.

In respect of fixed term exclusion rates of vulnerable groups in RCT, Members raised concerns in respect of the male pupil exclusion rate. It was felt that early intervention and prevention, along with a consistent approach at Primary level may be a way forward.

It was explained to Members that the Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAIS) pilot has reached its conclusion for year 1 schools, which is currently being evaluated and impact being reviewed. Members felt that they would like to review the findings of the evaluation at a future meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

In conclusion Members thanked officer for a very thorough report and
RESOLVED:

- (1) To receive the findings of the RAIS Pilot at a future meeting.
- (2) To accept the report
- (3) To receive an updated report in 12 Months to include information around the health and wellbeing of staff and pupils.

46. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION POLICY

The Elective Home Education Policy was presented by the Head of Access and Inclusion Service. Members were given an overview of those pupils Elective Home Educated within RCT along with the proposed Rhondda Cynon Taf Elective Home Education Policy which has recently been revised In line with Welsh Government, Elective Home Education, Non Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities.

Members considered the report in depth and put their questions and observation from the report to the Officers after great deal of consideration
Members **RESOLVED-:**

- To approve the content of the report
- To approve the Elective Home Education Policy subject to the updating of the useful website pages.
- To upload the policy on the Local Authority Website.

S. Rees – Owen (Chair)