



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

24TH SEPTEMBER 2019

PARTNERSHIP WITH UNITED WORLD COLLEGES (UWC) ATLANTIC COLLEGE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR MRS J ROSSER)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update about partnership working with United World Colleges (UWC) Atlantic College in relation to the potential post-16 residential placement of children who are looked after in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).
- 1.2 To consider the efficacy of funding places for one or two young people who are looked after as an alternative to care for 2020/21.
- 1.3 To agree potential processes to identify a group of key stage 3 (KS3) and key stage 4 (KS4) learners who are looked after who would benefit from the opportunities at Atlantic College.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agree that officers continue to work in partnership with Atlantic College and schools so that the potential opportunities can be explored.
- 2.2 Agree that officers from Education and Children's Services work with the College to identify suitable candidates for potential placement in the College.
- 2.3 Consider if the parameters should be extended to include a wider group of vulnerable learners, such as adopted children or children in need of care and support.
- 2.4 Consider whether earlier induction opportunities should be implemented in KS3.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Atlantic College representatives made contact with the previous Director of Education in 2018 to explore the potential opportunities for partnership working. In a drive to broaden the impact of the Atlantic College and its potential reach, the college was keen to strengthen its outreach programme and to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds from across the UK.
- 3.2 As the college is based in Wales, there is a strategic vision to increase support for learners who stem from the local area and to establish an Associated Schools Programme aimed at creating partnerships between the college and schools within RCT.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Atlantic College was established in 1962 and is the founding member of the United World Colleges (UWC) movement, a group of 17 independent international schools and colleges spanning Europe, North and Central America, Asia, and Africa. It is a residential sixth form college for young people aged 16-19, situated at St. Donat's Castle, Vale of Glamorgan. Students are selected irrespective of their nationality, religious or ethnic background and socio-economic means, leading to a truly diverse student body. The college believes all people are of equal worth regardless of wealth, status, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, race or faith. The college aims to build a community that embraces individuality, fosters responsibility and celebrates difference.
- 4.2 The college's aim is to break down intangible boundaries that continue to exist within the educational sector in the UK, by bringing its unique educational offer to a greater number of disadvantaged young people, unlocking potential, creating higher educational aspiration and raising academic achievement.
- 4.3 Students at the college study the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme. This is a full-time two-year course that consists of both an academic curriculum and a parallel programme of experiential learning that focuses on key aspects of peace, social justice and a sustainable future. Students serve in the community, organise conferences and help in the delivery of faculty programmes. Physical activity, youth leadership, innovation, authentic responsibility, team work, community values and positive youth activism are key aspects of the programme. The college is also currently developing new career pathways of a vocational nature.

- 4.4 Due to the challenging and diverse content of the Level 3 IB Diploma Programme a minimum of five A*–C grades at GCSE level is an essential entry requirement prior to consideration for enrolment. This ensures that students have the best possible opportunity of achieving academic success.
- 4.5 In September 2018, Cabinet agreed for the local authority to explore opportunities to develop a partnership with the college and a possible placement for children who are looked after. It was agreed that a robust 12 month induction and selection process was required to ensure success. Activities would include a group of potential students visiting the college, meeting other students and having a tour of the premises, accessing information about the setting, and undergoing a selection and interview process. The involvement of potential students, parents/carers and LA representatives was considered to be essential to gaining insight into the college ethos and culture and an opportunity to demystify the often stereotypical image of boarding schools.

5. RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP WITH ATLANTIC COLLEGE

- 5.1 Nationally, the education and social outcomes for children in care are significantly lower than for children who are not looked after. As the number of looked after children continues to increase year upon year, local authorities are under increasing pressure to find effective ways to support children and young people in need so they can achieve improved outcomes across social care and education.
- 5.2 The latest Welsh Government statistics show there is still a wide gap between the educational attainments of children who are looked after and that of other learners. Clearly boarding at a residential college is not the right option for every child, but for some it can provide the necessary stability, security and a place of 'belonging' that many vulnerable learners seek and need. A strong emphasis upon personal and social development and access to effective pastoral support in the college enables students to engage in many enriching extra-curricular activities, ensuring that their emotional and social needs are well met in addition to their academic achievement.
- 5.3 Central to the success of student placement is the careful matching of learner(s) to the college, both academically and socially and emotionally. Nevertheless, the college has support systems in place to ensure that all students have the best possible chance of achieving success.
- 5.4 Candidates would ideally need to be in Year 11 when applying for a placement. Whilst acknowledging the importance of strong academic achievement, the college's selection process also takes into

consideration a broader range of knowledge and skills based criteria that reflect the particular ethos of the college and ensure that its students are well-rounded individuals. This includes attributes such as the ability to interact with others and to be tolerant of fundamentally different opinions and attitudes.

- 5.5 The college's extensive experience of recruiting young people from all kinds of backgrounds ensures that it can draw on the expertise of a range of organisations including the Boarding Schools Partnership endorsed by Kirsty Williams, Education Minister Wales, and the Royal National Children's Spring Board Foundation.

6. DEVELOPMENTS DURING 2018/19

- 6.1 In order to ensure success, senior officers within Education and Children's Services agreed a process for selecting potential learners for placement. This is detailed as follows:

Step 1: Children Looked After Education Team identify Year 10 and Year 11 learners who are looked after, attend mainstream school and have predicted GCSE grades of C and above.

Step 2: From the above cohort of learners, Children's Services identify young people who are in longer term and supportive care arrangements. This ensures that potential candidates are well supported through any selection process.

Step 3: Social Workers approach carers and young people to find out more about their future plans, ambitions and prospects for remaining in education for Year 12.

Step 4: The Educational Psychology Service and the Children Looked After Education Team, together with the appropriate school-based staff, consider potential learners for placement. Information relating to future aspirations and plans, ability to cope with a level three qualification (academically, social and emotionally), social engagement, motivation and interests is collated to inform decision making.

Step 5: A group of identified Year 10 and Year 11 learners visit Atlantic College to view and explore the residential and educational facilities.

Step 6: Applications are encouraged from interested learners and interviews are undertaken where appropriate.

Step 7: Atlantic College discusses potential arrangements with Children's Services for all successful candidates.

Step 8: Multi-agency risk assessments plans are completed with professionals, carers and learners and protective factors are identified and strategies put into place.

6.2 To support the agreed selection process, a number of further activities were undertaken, between Education, Children's Services and Atlantic College in 2018/19. Activities included:

- Visiting Atlantic College with Elected Members, a Headteacher and senior officers from Children's Services and Education;
- Meetings with Elected Members and senior LA officers;
- An initial visit to Atlantic College with a small group of potential candidates.

7. SELECTION PROCESSES 2018/19

The agreed selection processes outlined in section six were implemented and the outcomes are detailed as follows:

Step 1: Under Step 1 eligibility criteria a total of 43 Year 10 learners and 46 Year 11 learners were identified as looked after, of whom 23 and 24 respectively were educated in a mainstream school in RCT.

Step 2: Children's Services identified six Year 10 and four Year 11 learners under Step 2 eligibility criteria.

Step 3: Meetings were convened with potential candidates and their carers.

Step 4: From a potential cohort of 10 learners, a further five learners were discounted for varying reasons. No further information was forthcoming in relation to one learner; two learners had pre-existing plans; one was not interested; and a further learner was not engaged in education.

Step 5: The group of potential candidates was reduced to five, which included a cohort of four Year 10 learners for potential September 2020 entry and one Year 11 learner for a possible September 2019 entry. However, despite a visit to Atlantic College and further discussion with all agencies and the college leadership team, it was not considered an appropriate placement for the young people in question. It was however agreed that a more robust induction programme devised for KS3 and KS4 learners was required to introduce a wider range of potential candidates to Atlantic College.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment was not necessary as it is considered that a possible partnership with UWC Atlantic College will have a positive impact on vulnerable learners.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 A consultation exercise is not necessary for this proposal.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 10.1 Funding for placements will be resourced from existing budgets.
- 10.2 There is potential for UWC Atlantic College to source some additional charitable funding from a number of trusts and foundations, e.g. Royal National Children's Spring Board Foundation, Buttle UK and the Reedham Children's Trust,

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 11.1 Reducing the number of children and young people becoming looked after remains a key priority of RCT Council – Children's Services Delivery Plan 2018-19 and the Council's Corporate Plan

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 The process outlined in sections six and seven suggests that the small number of potential candidates who meet both the local authority and the college eligibility criteria for selection, may be a barrier to recruiting a candidate who would benefit from a placement of this nature. Without doubt the GCSE entry requirements are essential as the International Baccalaureate is a challenging qualification and learners who have not achieved significant success at GCSE level are likely to experience difficulties accessing the course. Therefore, in light of this, consideration should be given to extending the potential pool of candidates to include young people who have been adopted or who are in need of care and support.
- 12.2 Information about eligibility needs to be more robust and gathered over a longer period of time and in consultation with key school-based staff and Children's Services. Consideration should therefore be given to earlier identification of learners, for example, in KS3, to establish links with Atlantic College in a more timely manner. This should include the facility for vulnerable KS3 learners, school-based staff, social workers and carers to visit the college during open days and conferences so that they can become familiar with the setting and the opportunities on

offer, and the opportunity to fully consider the possibility of accessing further education in Atlantic College over time. It is considered that earlier exposure to Atlantic College will enable vulnerable learners to become accustomed to the college environment, its ethos and values and to consider whether or not it is a setting that they would be aspire to attend in future.

- 12.3 It is proposed that further details about this opportunity is shared with Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers early so that selection processes are well informed and considered.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 Members are asked to consider the information provided and decide whether officers from Education and Children's Service should jointly further explore opportunities in partnership with Atlantic College to improve the life chances of learners in RCT.

- 13.2 Members are asked to consider if the scope for identifying pupils should be extended to include a wider group of vulnerable learners and whether there is agreement that an early approach to induction and potential selection should be adopted.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers : ***None***

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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HOLDER (CLLR MRS J ROSSER)**

Item: Partnership with United World Colleges (UWC) Atlantic College

Background Papers

None

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