

Public Document Pack

People Scrutiny Committee
17th March 2016

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON THURSDAY, 17 MARCH 2016

PRESENT: County Councillor D R Jones (Chair)

County Councillors M J Dorrance, D Bailey, S McNicholas, P J Medicott,
G W Ratcliffe, K M Roberts-Jones, T Turner, G P Vaughan and J M Williams

Officers: S Adams (LAC Education Co-ordinator), S Morgan (Interim Safeguarding
Manager (Children's)), K Arthur (Adult Safeguarding Team Manager), M O'Grady
Youth Offending Team Manager) and C Williams (Leaving Care Services Team
Manager).

1.	APOLOGIES	PSC1-2015
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors G Bowker, A Davies, L R
E Davies, J Jones, M Mackenzie and Parent Governor Representatives A Davies and L
Jenkin.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	PSC2-2015
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 16th
December 2015.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	PSC3-2015
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No declarations of interest were received.

4.	DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP	PSC4-2015
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No declarations of party whip were received.

5.	CHAIR'S BRIEFING	PSC5-2015
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The Chair advised that scrutiny workload was an issue which was being
considered at Joint Chairs. He was aware that this Committee was not reporting
to Cabinet sufficiently regularly and this would be part of the discussions at Joint
Chairs.

The Chair advised that he had attended a recent ERW Joint Chairs meeting
where it had been noted that three of the education authorities making up ERW
were underperforming. Powys was one of the underperforming authorities along
with Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. ERW had commissioned, together with the
northern consortium GWE, a report on the effects of rural poverty on attainment.
The final report would be published in Autumn 2017 but updates were expected.

The Chair advised that he had also attended a meeting of the Mid Wales
Healthcare Collaborative as an observer. These Board meeting usually end at
lunchtime and a Joint Scrutiny Group (with Gwynedd and Ceredigion) had been
held on the afternoon of the Board meeting.zu8j

6.	EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
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PSC6-2015

The LAC Education Co-ordinator presented his report (copy attached with signed minutes).

The report relates to the academic year 2014/15 and is a snapshot as the LAC population can change from day to day. Generally the LAC population varies from 140 to approximately 180. In September 2014 there were 144 LAC of which 120 were in school which equates to approximately 10/12 pupils in each year. The Year 11 cohort was 16 which was comparatively high. It is necessary to have regard for the experiences these pupils would have had before they were taken into care. This cohort had a high percentage with special needs. Between a quarter and one third of pupils were in schools outside Powys which means that these pupils may follow a different pathway particularly if they are at school in England.

How does attendance compare with pupils in Powys rather than just with other LAC across Wales?

One of the indicators for coming into care is poor attendance at school. It would be expected that once a pupil becomes Looked After their attendance would improve and should be higher than the Powys average.

Why does Powys have such a high number of LAC exclusions?

A major problem in schools is behaviour and LAC may have been taken into care because of some kind of trauma at home which may affect the way they behave. This situation is also found in other pupils who are not LAC but may be affected by trauma at home. LAC may suffer from attachment difficulties which mean they do not relate well to adults and peers and they may have witnessed violence which is echoed in their behaviours. Schools have a responsibility for ensuring good behaviour and if a pupil misbehaves the school need to address this. LAC are vulnerable to the increase in exclusions as what these pupils need is a normal experience including a normal family life and school life which means being in school. There are some pupils that behave badly and need individual support to help improve their behaviour but schools do not all have the necessary expertise to deal with this and too many pupils are being excluded too quickly.

The authority has arranged training on 'Thrive' for staff in particular high school staff. In how to identify needs particularly for pupils suffering from trauma. ERW have arranged wider training for Attachment Aware Schools which gives teachers strategies to deal with poor behaviour.

Exclusions will always occur for example for drugs or assault.

The increase of 60% from 2013/14 is not good enough and suggests schools are using them too frequently. What is the local authority doing to support schools. Do schools use exclusions to get rid of a problem?

It is sometimes the case that a fixed term exclusion is expedient for the sake of the rest of the pupils and this is also the case if a pupil does something that puts other pupils at risk. There are some schools in Powys who use exclusions more than other and this position needs to be understood and addressed.

Is attainment of LAC rather than attendance a better measure so that the effectiveness of intervention can be measured?

The comparisons need to be understood. It would not be appropriate to compare GCSE results as the cohort is so small and has a disproportionate amount of pupils with special needs. A better measure is wider point score which includes results from BTec qualifications. The wider point score for LAC has been confirmed as 280 rather than the 252 stated in the report. This result shows an improving trend but still remains some way short of a score of in the region of 500 which equate to 5 or 6 good GCSEs.

Are LAC needs for behaviour support met by other agencies?

There is good support for advocacy but some mental health referrals from children's services to CAHMS have been rejected because they do not meet the current threshold which is very high.

Is support available from Children's Services?

At present some catchments are working well and have very few exclusions whereas other catchments are showing high levels of exclusions. It would be necessary to discuss the support available with the Children's and Young Peoples Partnership.

The positive position regarding post 16 pupils was noted with all pupils moving into sixth form, further education or training. The ability for care leavers to access apprenticeships within the Council was evidence of joined up working.

Recommended that the Portfolio Holders for Education and Children's Services continue to strive to provide the best education opportunities for Looked After Children together with the support required to allow these pupils to access these opportunities. In particular every effort should be made to address the high levels of exclusion that these pupils are experiencing.

7.	THIRD QUARTER REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING	PSC7-2015
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The quarterly update on Powys Safeguarding Children and Adults was presented by the Safeguarding Lead Manager (Children's) and the Adult Safeguarding Lead Manager (copy filed with signed minutes).

The Safeguarding Lead for children explained that the Council had recently appointed two safeguarding leads and was now assessing how closely this could be integrated with Health.

The Regional Safeguarding Board (CYSUR) had been in place since June 2014 and has had a first annual review. This identified that there were too many tiers which was leading to additional work. The arrangements for CYSUR are now that the Executive Board has a number of sub-groups below it. The Head of Children's Services in Powys sits on the Executive Group and Chairs the local board.

The Adult Safeguarding Lead Manager has attended one meeting of the Adult Protection Committee. This is transitioning to Safeguarding as part of the Social Services and Well-being Act.

The Council have cut funding for domestic violence support. Was Safeguarding consulted on this matter?

The Safeguarding Lead Manager for children had not been consulted and noted that there was an increase in incidence of domestic abuse within Powys.

It is understood that the population of Powys has a low level of ethnic population and the incidence of FGM is low. What work does safeguarding undertake with regard to FGM?

FGM is high on the agenda for regional and local safeguarding groups and on the community safety partnership. There is a legal requirement to report on FGM and the service are working with health and police colleagues with regard to this reporting requirement.

Children's and Adults safeguarding groups are working towards a more joined up approach and are looking to meet on the same day. There are a number of issues which cross over between Children's and Adults such as Domestic violence, FGM and Modern slavery.

How do the levels of safeguarding activity in Powys compare with other regions?

There has been an increase in domestic violence and a spike in child protection registrations last year. The increase in child protection registrations was to levels that had not been seen since Baby P was in the media in 2011. Investigations have been undertaken along with the Police and it has been identified that there has been a specific increase in domestic violence in the Radnor area followed by Llanelli.

The service have a key role in relation to children before they become looked after and are reliant on other agencies for support. Are these services as accessible for families as they should be?

The Safeguarding Lead Manager for Children advised that there was no problem accessing services and that a number of multi-agency groups were working together particularly in the arena of mental health (of adults) which was one of two primary factors which lead to children and young people being taken into care. Two of the busiest areas for referrals are Radnor and Newtown. Radnor is particularly difficult as it is in the middle of the county and has issues regarding accommodation (large Victorian properties split into flats with a transient population) with fewer resources available in this area.

Why are fewer resources available in Radnorshire?

There are more resources available in areas of larger population such as Newtown and Welshpool including facilities such as Flying Start, Open Door, Family centres etc.

Does the regional group look at resourcing when major sporting events take place?

The regional group has not specifically looked at this. It has looked at Child Sexual Exploitation. If there are issues that scrutiny think should be considered these will need to be communicated.

On the outcomes for Adults at risk can future reports give an explanation of what is meant by 'No action'.

This was accepted.

Where agencies are making inappropriate referrals how is training undertaken to improve the referral process?

The Adult Safeguarding Manager explained that providers undertake a number of referrals such as for missed medication and the action that was taken. It might be necessary to ask for more information and refer to CSSIW. Each case has a named lead.

Is it possible to identify the proportion of people living with dementia who are subject to abuse?

At present it would not be possible to identify this through the DRAIG system. As the replacement system is being developed it may be possible to identify those adults with a Learning Disability or those living with dementia who have been subject to abuse.

There has been an increase in the number of adults being supported through the system of Direct Payments. Is any of the financial abuse connected to the increase in use of Direct Payments?

It would be necessary to focus on individual circumstances and work closely with colleagues in the appointeeship section to determine this is the case.

The matter of fraudulent use of Direct Payments was raised in a report to Montgomeryshire Committee.

The new Social Services and Well-being Act increases the responsibilities in this area and will be discussed at a joint meeting of the Children's and Adults Safeguarding board. It will be necessary to learn from the findings of the fraud team.

A different concern regarding use of Direct Payments is the suitability of the person appointed to provide care. What can be done to ensure that people in receipt of Direct Payments are appointing suitable carers?

This is a difficult area as whilst the authority work closely with DBS to ensure that checks are undertaken where requested the essence of the Social Services and Well-being Act is that people are enabled through the use of Direct Payments to choose the care that they want.

How far can the authority go in ensuring that Direct Payment users get the right person?

It is possible to stop a Direct Payment arrangement if it is not in the recipient's interest or the terms of use are not being complied with. Any actions in this regard would always be undertaken sensitively.

Recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Adults Services and Children's Services:

- **investigate the possibility of amending the report to show the number of adults with a learning disability or living with dementia who suffer abuse (figure 5)**

- **investigate the response arrangements of agencies when large sporting events occur at the regional safeguarding group**
- **determine if there is a link between the increase in direct payments and level of financial abuse suffered by adults**

8.	SERVICES FOR CARE LEAVERS	PSC8-2015
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The Youth Offending Team Manager and Leaving Care Services Team Manager presented a report on Services for Care Leavers (copy filed with signed minutes).

The Youth Offending Team Manager confirmed that a range of accommodation options are available but use of Bed and Breakfast was minimal.

The newly introduced scheme When I am Ready which will be implemented from 2016 allows young people to stay with their foster carers beyond the age of 18. They will be able to stay in foster care until they are 21 or if they are in education or training until they are 25. This is similar to the Staying Put scheme in England. In Powys the Council has had a supported lodgings scheme for care leavers since 2007. There is a difference between the supported lodging scheme and the When I am Ready scheme in the tax rates applicable with the When I am Ready scheme being more tax advantageous for carers. There will be a budgetary impact with the introduction of the When I am Ready scheme.

When I am Ready is a national scheme and Welsh Government guidance has been published. There are still some areas of concern regarding implementation which will need clarifying. There are approximately 10-15 LAC in each year group which may choose to stay with their foster carers. Foster carers also provide holiday support for LAC who are attending university. Some foster carers keep the room for their university age foster child whilst others choose to provide respite foster care during the university term.

In most cases young people do not leave home at 18 and there is a social return on investment to provide longer support to care leavers.

Members thanked the officers for providing the information requested.

Recommended that the report be noted.

9.	ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY GROUP	PSC9-2015
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Documents considered:

- Progress report – Scrutiny Officer

The Lead Member explained the focus had been on the improvement items and the group had looked at two areas at each meeting. These meetings had raised further questions which would need consideration. A report on the Scrutiny Observations on progress against the Improvement Objectives would be presented on 22nd March 2016 and a copy was attached to the progress report.

The work programme would be considered at the next meeting of Joint Chairs.

Outcome:

- That the update be received.

10.	CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY GROUP	PSC10-2015
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Documents considered:

- Progress report – Scrutiny Officer

The Lead Member advised Children's Services were currently undertaking a review of all services including CYPP to identify how best to meet the savings required whilst providing well targeted services.

Outcome:

- That the update be received.

11.	CULTURAL SERVICES SCRUTINY GROUP	PSC11-2015
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Documents considered:

- Progress report – Scrutiny Officer

The Scrutiny Observations on the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Report was attached to the Progress report. The intention to consider co-location of libraries in schools was welcomed. The report would be considered at Cabinet on 22nd March 2016 and the response reported back to People Scrutiny Committee.

Outcome:

- That the update be received.

12.	EDUCATION SCRUTINY GROUP	PSC12-2015
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Documents considered:

- Progress report – Scrutiny Officer

The Lead Member drew attention to the School Categorisation noting that there was much room for improvement. Powys have a high proportion of schools in the red and amber support category in the ERW region. It is of concern that not all schools accept their categorisation and the level of support that this entitles them to.

A local member queried Bro Hyddgen being placed in the Red support category and it became apparent that confusion existed regarding the categorisation of schools into Red, Amber, Yellow and Green and how this related to the support that a school would receive.

Recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Education

- that it be arranged, through Powys or through ERW for school Governors to receive a briefing on the Categorisation of schools to include how the categorisation is calculated and what entitlement for support this results in.
- this briefing paper be copied to the People Scrutiny Committee

13.	REGENERATION SCRUTINY GROUP	PSC13-2015
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Documents considered:

- Progress report – Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services

The Lead Member advised that the work programme for this group would be considered at Joint Chairs.

Outcome:

- That the report be received.

14.	JOINT CHAIRS NOTES	PSC14-2015
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Documents considered:

- Notes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2016

Outcome:

- That the notes are received.

15.	WORK PROGRAMME	PSC15-2015
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The work programme was noted.

County Councillor D R Jones (Chair)