

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL - COUNTY HALL ON  
MONDAY, 13 MAY 2019**

**PRESENT**

County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)

County Councillors S C Davies, D R Jones, K Laurie-Parry, E Roderick, L Roberts,  
R G Thomas, Mrs A Davies, Mrs S. Davies, Mrs M Evitts, G Robson, MC Alexander  
and A W Davies

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors G Breeze and B Davies

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors G Breeze and B Davies.

In attendance:

County Councillor M Alexander (Portfolio Holder for Learning and Welsh Language), A Davies (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transport) C Turner (Chief Executive and Director of Education), A Clark (Head of Education), I Bhatti (Senior Manager, ALN and Inclusion), S Quibell (Strategic Programme Manager ALN), E Patterson (Scrutiny Officer)

<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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No declarations of interest were received.

<b>3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP</b>
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No declarations of party whips were received.

<b>4. MINUTES</b>
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019 as correct records.

<b>5. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND INCLUSION TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME</b>
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The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion introduced the paper updating progress on the ALN Transformation programme.

The Transformation Programme results from changes by Welsh Government to the ALN Act which has meant the Code of Practice for SEN has changed the ALN Code for Wales. Policy and practice is been amended to reflect this

change. Since last attendance at scrutiny in December 2018 the main changes have been:

- The new Code of Practice was published in December in draft together with supporting documents outlining how pupils will be supported and how education services will work with social care and health services.
- The Senior Manager ALN has undertaken a large amount of public engagement since December fulfilling his promise to get an understanding of how services are currently provided
- The Powys ALN Parent Carer Forum has been set up
- Meetings of the workstreams within the ALN Transformation have taken place
- The team are working with ERW to regionally co-ordinate the change from SEN Statements to IDPs (Individual Development Plans). ERW has had its own problems but every attempt has been made to ensure that this joint working continues
- Regionally Powys is recognised as a model of best practice for process and project management and the region is currently discussing which LAs will lead on which priorities and it is suggested that Powys lead on parent and pupil engagement and awareness raising.

Difficulties that have been encountered:

- Six of the workstreams are dependent on Welsh Government providing information which is not being produced with enough pace.
- The recent changes with ERW have proved difficult but work regarding ALN Transformation is ongoing

The Head of Education explained that regional co-ordinators for ALN had been seconded from ESTYN and the ERW secondees were returning to their substantive role. ERW are discussing how this key role will be filled.

*In 2020 the ALN Act becomes law and in 2023 arrangements for ALN will supersede those for SEN. Are schools aware of what they will need to do from September 2020, one academic year away?*

Welsh Government have published a timetable of changes. The changing from SEN statements to IDPs will be phased over a period. Welsh Government have yet to decide when the changes to Post 16 will come in but it is expected to be either 2020 or 2021. There will be an overlap between the two arrangements between 2020 and 2023.

*What are the difficulties in providing training?*

The team are working back from 2020 to ensure training is offered ahead of the changes. The team are producing training modules but Welsh Government have indicated they wish local authorities to use nationally produced training modules which have yet to be provided.

*When is training expected to commence?*

The team would plan to start training in September 2019 but the lack of clarity around the content of the Welsh Government training means it is difficult to plan. If the national training modules are not produced soon it may be necessary to locally produce the modules.

*Is it expected that there will be an increase in parental requests for IDPs (Individual Development Plans) as the changes are made and do schools have the resources to prepare IDPs?*

Schools should be preparing IDPs and the service have had Welsh Government support to employ an Officer to support schools in producing IDPs. If there is a significant increase in requests for IDPs the support available for schools will need to be reviewed.

*Phase 1 of the Communications Plan shows that 'Welsh Government training rolled out and undertaken' is shown as green and yet the training modules have not been provided by Welsh Government. This should not be shown as green as it is clearly not proceeding as expected.*

It is shown as Green as from the service perspective all necessary actions have been taken and the delay is from Welsh Government. It is accepted that the schedule should clearly identify where progress has not been as expected due to external factors.

*Are any other of the statuses shown as green where they shouldn't be?*

No

**Recommended that the report be amended to reflect the position to include where external factors have impacted on progress.**

*It is clear from the papers that many meetings have been held but the papers give no indication of the numbers of people attending the meetings or if those attending are those people who the service need to reach rather than those already aware of the imminent changes?*

The engagement arrangements are designed to reach as many interested people as possible. If Members have suggestions for additional ways to keep people informed then the service would welcome this information. Welsh Government have noted the sector leading approach to engagement.

*Is the service confident that the engagement events are reaching those people who need to be informed?*

Yes, as far as can be known and when extra meetings are requested these are arranged.

*Was the service expecting people attending the engagement events in January 2019 to be unaware of the proposals around the new ALN legislation?*

That was unexpected and the service also asked how people would prefer to be contacted regarding progress of ALN transformation.

**Recommended that the plan contains sufficient information to be able to assess what are successful ways of engagement to assist other authorities in developing their engagement programme.**

*Can clarity be provided on the approach that the authority is taking with regard to providing ALN support in mainstream schools but also providing a new Special School in Newtown to replace Ysgol Cedewain? Will the new school be built to the same size as the current school?*

The Portfolio Holder advised that Ysgol Cedewain would be replaced but not on a like for like basis. The Portfolio Holder also clarified that this may be for a

smaller number of pupils in the future and would be for those pupils with more complex needs. The school would also provide outreach support so that pupils with less complex needs could be supported in mainstream schools where appropriate. At present approximately 20% of the pupils in Ysgol Cedwain have the lowest two levels of need and would now be placed in mainstream schools with support. Thus the pupils who will be in Ysgol Cedwain will be those with the highest level of need. An additional benefit will be the shorter transport time and lower transport costs of providing more education locally. Often primary schools are able to manage the additional needs of pupils but when they reach secondary school it is no longer possible to meet the needs. It does seem strange that a child supported in their local school from the age of 4-11 is no longer able to be supported from the age of 12.

*What guarantees can be given that outreach will be provided? It was promised for the units in Ystradgynlais and has not materialised?*

The Senior Manager advised that this was the case and advised that he is investigating this including value for money

*If Powys are the admissions authority and there are 20% of pupils in Special Schools who do not need to be there is the authority responsible for this issue?*

The schools service are looking to determine the best model for ALN education across the authority and are looking at mainstream schools, specialist units and special schools. This work is still ongoing and a final decision on the arrangements has yet to be made.

*Mainstream schooling for pupils with ALN with additional support is welcomed but how will this be resourced?*

The Portfolio Holder observed that it is cheaper to provide mainstream education and by reducing the number of pupils in Special Schools then savings will be made on the costs of education in the Special Schools and the transport to the Special Schools. This money will be available to resource the support for pupils with ALN in mainstream schools. For the last five years work has been undertaken in all the High Schools to make them accessible to wheelchair users and only two sites remain where further work is required.

There will always be pupils who would need to be educated in a Special School but the most important aspect is the needs of the child and how the child can learn life skills. Education in their local school allows the pupil to develop friendships and contacts in their community which is of great benefit as they move on from education.

The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion explained that the service are developing the mechanisms and processes to support mainstream schools develop the support plans for individual children. These are the pupils with the lowest levels of need who would not be requiring 1:1 support.

The Head of Education confirmed that there was little evidence locally or nationally that providing 1:1 support for pupils results in pupils making good educational progress.

*What work has been undertaken to assess the financial resources needed to support the altered arrangements from 2020? Has the potential that latent demand will be unleashed been considered?*

The Senior Manager advised that the new funding formula incorporates funding for ALN but the service are mindful that it is important to avoid a cliff edge as the changes come into effect.

The Portfolio Holder noted that the Health Board have data regarding the babies and young children with special needs who will be accessing education services in the near future. It was noted that Powys has a large number of low birth weight babies which can impact on the number of children attending schools with ALN, however, children can be supported to acquire skills in a unit and move into mainstream education.

*Diagnosis has improved and it will be necessary to match the diagnosis with support for those children with identified needs.*

It will be crucial to work with health and social care particularly around the younger children and with social and emotional support for older children.

**Recommended that the importance of collaborative working with partners is stressed throughout the ALN transformation programme.**

*If Ysgol Cedewain is not being replaced with like for like what will the new school be like?*

The Portfolio Holder advised that the data would be examined to ascertain what need would be projected. Those pupils with lower level needs would move to mainstream education. The space this would leave could potentially be used for educating pupils who are currently placed out of county.

*What size would the new school be?*

The new school would be smaller but the exact size will be calculated using health and local authority data to project demand.

*Will those pupils already accessing education in Ysgol Cedewain be moved to mainstream schools?*

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that those pupils already accessing education at Ysgol Cedewain would complete their education in the school but that in the future pupils with lower level needs would be placed in mainstream provision rather than at Ysgol Cedewain.

*The changes extend the ages at which children and young people are entitled to support to include birth to pre-school and 18-25. What plans are in place to support pre-school age children?*

The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion explained that the service are working in partnership with the Health Board for early identification of need and to develop a process to support young children with early provision and transition into education. The Health Board run specific projects of which we are partners such as the Incredible Years and the First 1,000 Days to help identify problems early. There are specific issues for example it is difficult to access Speech and Language therapy, as in particular there are no Welsh Language Speech and Language therapists. This results in delayed diagnosis meaning that problems are more severe than would have been if early help had been available.

*What resources are available to support pre-school children diagnosed with ALN?*

The Portfolio Holder advised that it can be the case that those children who don't attend playgroups are in need of support, but that Health Visitors are best placed to identify those children with ALN.

The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion advised that further work was needed to improve the transition from pre-school provision to school provision.

*What plans are in place to support 18-25 year olds with ALN?*

Welsh Government are working with Local Authorities to make appropriate arrangements for this age group. At present Welsh Government are responsible for funding ALN for 16-18 year olds. This responsibility will be transferred back to local authorities and planning will start from KS3.

*When schools were first advised of the changes to ALN concern was expressed regarding their role in the new structure. Has this concern been allayed and what is the view of pre-school providers in their ability to offer support to a child with ALN?*

Welsh Government require local authorities to appoint an Early Years Co-ordinator to oversee transition to schools. The Health Board has a DECLO who links with education to ensure that health needs are being met.

*Is it the intention for there to be cluster working of ALNCo's (Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator)?*

The Portfolio Holder advised that the potential for ALNCo cluster working is being examined. Cluster working would allow for increased specialist expertise amongst ALNCo's.

The Senior Manager noted that 2 or 3 groups of schools had requested to trial a shared ALNCo

*How will this work if, as at present, ALNCo's are required to sit on Senior Management Teams?*

There will be a number of issues to resolve which is why a pilot will be necessary.

*Is this change fully funded from Welsh Government?*

The Portfolio Holder for Education advised she had not seen the funding from Welsh Government but that if intervention could be provided earlier then higher costs at a later date could be saved and the changes could be cost neutral or cost positive. It will be necessary to closely monitor how this progresses and be realistic about what can be delivered.

*What progress is being made in respect of ICT provision?*

The service are examining using either of two systems i.e. WCCIS (Welsh Community Care Information System) which has an education model or Teacher Centre. Current trials with WCCIS and development work carried out by Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire regarding Teacher Centre will be evaluated and presented to the ALN Transformation Steering Group for consideration and decision about a way forward.

*Has the service discussed with Children's Services their experience of using WCCIS?*

The Strategic Programme Manager – ALN Transformation advised that the team were aware of the pros and cons that Children's Services had encountered with WCCIS and it would be interesting to see if their processes encountered the same issues.

The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion noted that WCCIS was a Welsh Government programme which was used by both the local authority and the Health Board.

*What arrangements are in place for schools on Powys borders where pupils maybe accessing services from other Welsh Health Boards or English Health Trusts or for children moving between local authorities?*

IDPs will be standard across Wales but there is no standard education IT system across Wales. Some but not all other local authorities use Teacher Centre. It is the role of ERW to try and regionally find a solution for these issues.

C Turner left 4.05pm

*How will 'all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure provision in Welsh' be put in place?*

The Head of Education advised that in the past there may not have been sufficient acknowledgement of the additional costs of translation.

*Where have the newsletters regarding the ALN review been sent?*

Hard copies have been available at events, they are sent to schools and to parents and carers who have requested additional information and they are sent to the Clerk to Governing Bodies.

**Recommended that the ALN newsletters are included in the Member bulletin.**

*What is the position regarding the two items that were due to come to Committee for pre-Cabinet scrutiny today?*

The Specialist Centre workstream has been deferred as the consultations have provided much information which will require full and further consideration. It is intended that this will be brought to Cabinet in autumn and will come to Scrutiny on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

The BESD workstream cuts across all the other workstreams and does not rely on one person to deliver this. It has taken longer to get going.

The PRU has been restructured.

The Portfolio Holder suggested that a briefing paper be brought to scrutiny regarding the changes to the PRU and EOTAS.

**Recommended that request be made to the Co-ordinating Committee for a scrutiny briefing on the PRU and EOTAS.**

The Strategic Programme Manager – ALN Transformation showed a short presentation on RIX Wiki a multi-media advocacy service which supports person-centred planning.

Recommended that	Reason for recommendation
the Early Years workstream of ALN Transformation clearly includes consideration of the support (financial or otherwise) to pre-school providers	Clarity was not provided in answer to the question ' <i>What resources are available to support pre-school children diagnosed with ALN</i> ' This question will be revisited at the next scrutiny briefing on the ALN Transformation programme

<b>6.</b>	<b>LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19</b>
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The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018-19 was approved and would be sent to Full Council for information.

<b>7.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S BRIEFING</b>
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All matters had been included within the agenda.

<b>8.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The work programme was noted subject to the following changes:

Schools Major Improvement Programme was deferred to the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019. However, the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019 clashed with the OVO Women's Cycling Tour congestion and road closures would take place across the county. The Scrutiny Officer was instructed to find an alternative date for this meeting.

**County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)**