
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 22/09/15

Present:

Morning Session

Councillor Beth Lawton (Chair)

Councillors: Anwen J. Davies, Alan Jones Evans, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Chris Hughes, Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dewi Owen, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Hefin Williams and R H Wyn Williams.

Officers:

Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Commissioning Service), Gareth James (Members' Manager – Support and Scrutiny) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Also in attendance:

For Items 4, 5, 6 and 7 below

Councillor Gareth Thomas, Cabinet Member for Education

Arwyn Thomas, Head of Education

Garem Jackson, Education Quality Improvement Officer

For Item 4 below

Gwern ap Rhisiart, Senior Manager Additional Educational Needs and Inclusion

Present:

Afternoon Session:

Councillor Beth Lawton (Chair)

Councillors: Anwen J. Davies, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Siân Wyn Hughes, Elin Walker Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dewi Owen, Ann Williams, Hefin Williams and R H Wyn Williams

Officers:

Gareth James (Members' Manager - Support and Scrutiny) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Also in attendance:

Councillor W. Gareth Roberts, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health

Aled Davies, Temporary Head of Adults, Health and Wellbeing Department

Caryl Elin Lewis, Customer Care and Information Unit Manager

Bethan Eluned Jones, Commissioning Officer

Emyr Edwards, Strategic Policy Manager - Resources

Apologies: Councillors Alan Jones Evans (p.m.), Alwyn Gruffydd (p.m.), Siân Wyn Hughes (a.m.), Linda Ann Wyn Jones (p.m.), Siôn Wyn Jones, W. Tudor Owen, Peter Read, Neil Foden (Teachers' Union) and Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director) - (a.m./p.m.).

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) The following were welcomed to their first meeting of this Scrutiny Committee:

Councillors Anwen Davies, Siân Wyn Hughes and R H Wyn Williams.

- (b) A speedy recovery was extended to the Chair of this Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Peter Read, and all looked forward to his return.
- (c) A reference was made to the sudden and untimely death of Councillor Robert J. Wright, Member for the Pwllheli South Ward, and the huge loss to the area. All present were asked to stand for a minute's silence as a mark of respect to his family in their sad loss.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths declared a personal interest in Item 6 – Trac Scheme, as his daughter in law had been appointed as part of the scheme's workforce, however he would not be withdrawing from the Chamber as it was not a prejudicial interest.

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee that took place on 4 June 2015.

4. TRAC SCHEME

(a) The Cabinet Member for Education's report was submitted outlining the background of the above scheme that was led by the six local authorities to provide skills and suitable support to the County's most vulnerable pupils and young people.

(b) It was explained that Denbighshire County Council lead on the management and monitoring of the regional business scheme and they were financed via the European Social Fund with the intention of commencing the scheme in September 2015 until August 2018 with the possibility of extension until August 2020. It was explained that the aim of the scheme would be to “adopt a method of implementation to identify vulnerable pupils early and respond to their needs by providing a suitable curriculum and support for them”.

(c) Committee Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and the Cabinet Member for Education and the officers responded as follows:

- Eight posts were part of the scheme with the Manager already appointed to commence in November. It was explained that six of the posts were operational and two had the title of Education Social Workers who would be able to work with families with children to overcome obstacles that do not meet with the Social Services needs criteria. The other four posts would focus on attendance, youth workers to inspire children and young people to gain accreditations and a sports worker who would be part of a team to target the needs of young people and support them to continue in education when they had left school.
- That match funding was contributed from the service that was already in schools in terms of the inclusion strategy, supporting children in mainstream, welfare service and the central behaviour support service.
- They would be targeting children from Year 7 upwards and could support pupils along their educational journey and especially during transition at 16 years old and this would assist pupils to make decisions earlier regarding their careers.
- It was confirmed that 480 pupils from Gwynedd was the number of participants who were at risk and it was explained that they had been identified via the engagement framework
- In terms of qualifications, it was emphasised that the relevant officers would work with children daily and in addition that training with a wide number of courses would be available to them for employment.

- That the number of disaffected children was lower in Gwynedd in terms of the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) percentage namely approximately 7 – 8%, however, it was explained that the Trac scheme would address the needs of children once they had left Colleges and were unable to gain employment.
- In terms of training implications to school staff, it was explained that school staff were very well versed in the fields in question but were under increasing pressure and this scheme would lighten the load of schools by having an officer to work for an extended period jointly with the children. It was not anticipated that it would be necessary to train school staff and there would be no additional pressure on them.
- There was a significant percentage of disaffected children on the additional learning needs list and there was a group of children with profound behavioural difficulties and through the scheme it was possible to get to grips with the problems early on.
- That strengthening the link with the Youth Justice Service was currently under consideration and the number who are open to the above Service had reduced significantly nationally and the Department had not invested as much as in the past. It was trusted that through the Trac scheme that the number of pupils who offend could be reduced and they could continue to live and flourish locally.
- Regarding contact with local employers, it was explained that the training needs had been developed at the level of the six north Wales authorities and that a wide range of general courses had been put in place and there was no training for specialist fields. However, further consideration may be given to the training framework and it would be possible to hold discussions with more local employers regarding their requirements.
- That there was a slippage with the receipt of grant, however, it was trusted that they would move forward soon with the financial allocation.
- In terms of balancing the statutory service against the non-statutory, it may be argued that having made an investment early on that money would be saved in the long term.
- That the Area Access Panels would operate at an area level and give consideration to priorities and the type of services offered. The Panels would comprise Trac scheme workers together with school representatives.
- In terms of developing an action framework, assurance was given that they would collaborate with the Careers Wales Service.
- It was further assured that stemming from the concerns regarding the geographical tension with the allocation of funding between the six authorities, that the money would be directed in accordance with the criteria and where the need existed.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the report on the project that was in its early days.

(b) To request that the Education Service submits an update on the scheme within a year of its implementation.

5. CONDITIONS FOR LEADERSHIP AND ALTERNATIVE MODELS

(a) The Cabinet Member for Education's report was presented outlining the project to improve the conditions for leadership in order to raise standards.

(b) Reference was made to the project's aim that would look at five specific fields, namely:

- Commission a report on the leadership and management conditions within the County's schools and implement the agreed recommendations
- Monitor and challenge every school and use all the available powers at the authority's disposal to improve leadership and management at underperforming schools.
- Develop managers and prospective managers within services and identify future leaders

- Develop a strong school to school system and ensure that arrangements are in place to share best practice and avoid duplication; and
- Ensure that capital investment leads to improving leadership and management conditions.

(c) The next steps were elaborated upon and the intention to conduct a further meeting with Independent Consultants with international experience in the field and they would welcome the opportunity to interview members of the Services Scrutiny Committee as part of their research.

(ch) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and the following observations were made:

(i) Do the problems with recruitment only deal with a small section of the County and would joining with other Counties not be of benefit when sharing expertise?

In response, it was explained that the County's geographical nature was huge and challenging as the needs of different areas of the County were quite different. The intention of the Education Department was to re-establish Area Offices in order to conduct local discussions to satisfy the needs of the children. In terms of the development of individuals as leaders, especially in the smallest schools, they had to be given an opportunity to lead on strategic areas in order to show experience in different fields for the NPQH qualification.

(ii) Was there evidence that some schools compete against each other for pupils?

In response, it was noted that if there was joint-ownership of the project to improve leadership and management then an eye should be kept to ensure that every catchment-area was dealt with fairly.

(iii) In terms of agreeing on the attainment levels of pupils during the transition from primary to secondary it was noted that the current information on any child had to be correct from the initial step through the educational stage. It was noted further that assessment was a continuous discussion, however, for a successful transition between primary and secondary there had to be an understanding and the interpretation of the criteria had to be clear.

(iv) In response to concern regarding the findings by parents that some schools were more Anglicised and as a result numbers were reducing in some catchment-areas, it was noted that it was a challenge to reconcile the implementation of the language policy. Again, in the same manner discussion could be conducted locally in order to ensure that children have the same type of experience and provision.

(v) In the context of the federalisation of primary and secondary schools in the future, it was noted that this would be part of the investigation into leadership and alternative models. Although there were specific ideas within the Service it was accepted that the response of the community regarding arrangements and provision were important. In terms of organisation, infrastructure would have to be ensured in order that children get the best results. In light of the current financial climate, if leadership and school middle management were to be improved, then other methods of working such as work sharing across the catchment-area had to be considered.

(vi) In terms of the current level of the recruitment problem, it was noted that Gwynedd had a successful record last year as nine persons had managed to gain the NPQH qualification and this represented nearly half the north Wales quota. However, a system had to be created that would be viable and would give an opportunity for prospective leaders to show the skills to be able to lead and manage. It was further noted that some

schools were too small to have a Management Team that was more than just the Head alone, and therefore made it difficult for individuals to gain experiences and a system had to be created to get individuals to be future leaders. In the context of the lack of recruitment across the County, it was noted that it was getting more difficult and the culture had to change from being independent to that of collaboration.

(viii) In response to concern regarding funding the programme for schools in the twenty first century, it was trusted that the Council could invest as much as possible in order to ensure that the buildings would offer the best for teachers and young people.

(viii) In the context of the Schools Organisation Team, it was noted that the Team had been established for specific work with the schools in the twenty first century programme and was dependent on the capital budget and the findings of the leadership investigation. Consideration would have to be given to re-structuring within the Department to address wider issues than organisation such as the role of supporting leadership in the local area.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the report.

(b) To nominate the following members of this Scrutiny Committee to meet with the Independent Consultants dealing with the project to offer observations and recommendations on issues that require getting to grips with.

Councillor Beth Lawton – (Vice-chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor Selwyn Griffiths
Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd
Councillor Elin Walker Jones
Councillor Dewi Owen
Councillor Hefin Williams

6. SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION – WELSH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

(a) The report of the Scrutiny Investigation on Welsh-medium education was submitted. This investigated into the reality and performance of Welsh language education in Gwynedd.

(b) Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd, Chairman of the Scrutiny Investigation Group, reported that the investigation had concentrated on three catchment-areas, namely Arudwy, Bangor and Botwnnog due to the linguistic demography of the three specific areas. They looked at how the authority's Language Policy was implemented at grassroots level in individual schools and the extent to which the provision assists in promoting the social use of Welsh by children and young people. Attention was drawn to the attached appendices which stated how they had come to a conclusion and recommendations. It was recognised that excellent work was undertaken in schools; however, there was always room for improvement to ensure the continuation of Welsh within and outside its curtilage.

(c) In conclusion, the Investigation's Chairman took the opportunity to thank his fellow members and the officers for a comprehensive and clear report. He also thanked everyone who had been part of the Investigation by openly sharing their experiences.

(ch) During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted: by individual Members:

(i) Concern was expressed of what was being implemented in private schools in the County with more and more pupils leaving these schools without any Welsh.

In response to the above, it was explained that the public sector had to follow the national curriculum, however the independent sector had freedom, in accordance with Section 163 of the Inspection Department, to offer a wide curriculum where Welsh did not have to be part of that curriculum. It was noted that the education authority did not have supervision over them but they could contact the Welsh Government / ESTYN to find out what are the requirements of the specific Section of the Act and if the inspectorate measured in accordance with local needs.

- (ii) Children made good progress at the Latecomers Centres however, frustration was expressed that the taxi drivers of pupils to and from these centres were not Welsh speakers. It was suggested that a request should be made to the companies who win the transport contracts that it is essential for the drivers to be able to speak Welsh.

In response, it was confirmed that the Education Service would investigate the above.

- (d) It was noted for information to Members that an application had been received from the Welsh Government for the authority to share the Language Charter across Wales.

(dd) The Cabinet Member for Education thanked the Scrutiny Investigation for the thorough work undertaken by them and all the recommendations were welcomed and accepted.

Resolved: (a) To accept the contents of the report and approve the recommendations submitted to the Cabinet Member for Education and to request that he submits a progress report on the actions within six months.

(b) To request that the Lead Officer of the Scrutiny Investigation shares the findings of the Scrutiny Investigation with the County's schools and language centres.

(c) To convey to the Welsh Government / ESTYN the concern of this Scrutiny Committee regarding the school curriculum in the independent sector and the use of the Welsh language as outlined in (i) above.

7. EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION – DRAFT BRIEF

(a) A draft brief was submitted to undertake a scrutiny investigation into the Educational Support Services and the Senior Corporate Commissioning Service Manager outlined the contents of the brief.

(b) The brief was welcomed by Members and in response to a query regarding the timetable it was noted that it was expected that the investigation would be achieved in approximately six to nine months.

Resolved: (a) To accept and approve the draft brief

(b) To nominate the following Members to serve on the Education Support Services Scrutiny Investigation:

Councillor Beth Lawton (Vice-chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor Selwyn Griffiths
Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd
Councillor Eirwyn Williams

Councillor R H Wyn Williams**Member to be nominated from the Arfon area (with Councillor Hefin Williams in reserve if needed)**

The morning session commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 12.00

8. SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2014-15

(a) The annual report was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Adults and Health, giving an overview of the statistics and the main issues that had stemmed from complaints during the 2014-2015 together with a response to questions asked by the Members of this Scrutiny Committee at its preparatory meeting on 28 July.

(b) Members were reminded that the complaints procedure was statutory and outside the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

(c) Members were afforded an opportunity to ask questions and the Cabinet Member and the officers responded appropriately as follows:

(i) That the statutory Social Services complaints procedure was separate to the corporate complaints procedure and dealt directly with the care of individuals, however, complaints were received outside the statutory procedure and in these cases they would be dealt with under the corporate complaints system. It was explained that there were two steps to the Social Services complaints procedure, namely step 1 - local response and step 2 appointing the services of an independent investigator to investigate the complaint.

(ii) In response to a concern highlighted regarding a failure to provide specialist equipment such as purpose-built beds for patients requiring care at home and specifically in terraced housing in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area, it was noted that the Service was aware of the issue and it was the subject of a discussion with the Health Board.

(iii) The officers noted the comments that it was necessary to interpret the responsibilities of the Health Board and Social Services because of the lack of clarity amongst the County's residents and it would be further considered how this issue can be addressed.

(iv) Regarding patients being sent to Community Hospitals rather than to residential care homes, it was explained that the solution to this matter was difficult due to the need to try and give the correct support to families.

(v) A concern highlighted regarding a taxi travelling from the north of the County to the south to transport a patient to a local hospital and the matter would receive attention jointly with the Health Board if the Member submitted additional information to the Head of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department.

(vi) That a special complaints form for children and young people was ready and would be launched soon and it was further noted that there was a separate sheet for adults that was already being used.

(vii) In response to a comment that the number of enquiries was higher than the complaints and vulnerable people were perhaps less likely to complain, it was noted that although every enquiry / comment were noted as a complaint, it was ensured that the Service would try to resolve the enquiries.

(viii) In terms of the comment made that clear communication should be ensured with users regarding arrangements to pay for care, from the complaints submitted it was seen that discussions had been undertaken but no written evidence had been recorded. Assurance was given that a piece of work was proceeding in this context to find a solution to this matter.

(ch) During the ensuing discussion the following general comments were highlighted:

- (a) The Cabinet Member for Social Services, Adults and Health noted that arrangements on the new way of working at Ysbyty Alltwn were vitally important to try and abolish the split between the responsibility of the Health Board and Social Services. It was further noted that patients who had received a service via the new procedure at Ysbyty Alltwn had expressed satisfaction with the service.
- (b) That the report was fairly positive and obviously via discussions the Service offered solutions for users. However, it was further noted that the Team that operates is part of the proposals system for cuts and if the resources were halved this may have an impact on the service offered.
- (c) The opportunity was taken to thank the Service for their work.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the report.

9. END TO END - ADULTS

(a) The Cabinet Member for Social Services, Adults and Health presented a draft report on the End to End review of older people's services.

(b) A presentation was received from the Head of Adults, Health and Wellbeing Services in a slide format and he noted that the direction set for the review was not new with much of it based on existing arrangements and the Council's resolutions over the last few years. Attention was drawn to the vision, nature of the vision and a series of service principles. It was further noted that specific requirements had been set under the Social Services and Well-being Act (2014) and attention had to be drawn that the percentage of the older population was increasing. In the future the budget would be significantly less than in the past and it would be necessary to keep an eye on the impact of this.

(c) He referred to the review's methodology and noted the following fundamental steps:

1. Good Practice – to learn lessons from others on pioneering methods of operation accepting there is no one best method in every case or field. There are several methods that may work and it will be necessary to be wise and choose what would be appropriate and best for Gwynedd.
2. Comparison – mainly with the 'family' of comparative authorities to measure progress / Gwynedd's performance.
3. Look at the progress not only with hard data but also in terms of gathering information and response at a local level.

Regarding well-being and managing the demand, it was noted:

1. That well-being was a responsibility across the Council, not a matter for Care Services / Social Services only and well-being needed to be considered before profound problems occurred.
2. The need to use intervention and prevention as early steps on their own but these could also make an important contribution towards managing the demand for formal care services.
3. There was no one general ideal answer to shape frontline services. Also integrated methods could be included such as Ffordd Gwynedd work at Ysbyty Alltwn and the third sector contribution.
4. That the relationship with communities received specific attention in the Council's Strategic Plan. Resources will have to be directed to achieve this and it had to be accepted that neither Gwynedd nor any other local authority would succeed without strengthening this element of the Service.
5. That restructuring the Department was key to the provision of services in a new way and to meet with the expectations of the Act and those of service users.

In the context of the development of social work practice, it was explained

1. That it was inevitable that social work practice would change in order to respond to the requirements of the Act and the need to transform services
2. Evidence indicated that culture and standard of the work practice were key to find appropriate and better methods to meet the needs of individuals.
3. It was necessary to try and support individuals to live at home with appropriate support and over time in order the dependency on residential care could be reduced.
4. That offering and promoting direct payments placed the focus on the outcomes to the individual were two important aspects when developing social work practice.
5. That the Care Workforce Development Team had a key role to develop the Council's ability to achieve the changes.

In order to achieve the aims and requirements of the Act, it was noted that it was required to strengthen the support to live at home and focus on the following specific aspects:

1. Dementia and vulnerability
2. Day Care in Gwynedd
3. Role of the third sector, especially in terms of providing support in the home and in the community
4. Home Care – it was recognised that it was necessary to look at the correct balance in terms of internal / external provision in Gwynedd as approximately 50% / 50% currently had an internal and external provision and this was a cause of concern in terms of recruitment in Meirionnydd.

Regarding accommodation provision, it was noted that an alternative option had to be ensured for older people such as extra care housing. It was noted that clarity regarding the role of local hospitals was important in terms of planning for nursing and residential care in the future and as a context to prioritise options over the next few years. The priorities will have to reflect the requirements that will be highlighted as a result of the needs assessments.

Integration with NHS services may achieve positive results, however, this may vary from area to area. It was noted that the Intermediate Care Fund programme leads us towards better commissioning and facilitating movement in the correct direction.

To conclude, it was noted that the methodology was dynamic with decision to be made over the next 18 months, some of these were strategic and operational decisions that would shape the future and would entail huge and inevitable changes.

(ch) Members were given an opportunity to express their comments and the following points were highlighted:

- (i) It had to be ensured that the third sector operated across the whole of Gwynedd
- (ii) There was praise in the Bangor area for the additional care housing provision
- (iii) The importance of including respite care provision within the strategy to support carers
- (iv) The importance of forging a relationship with other partners e.g. Môn / Menai the north of the County and Ceredigion / Powys for the south.
- (v) The good practice undertaken in Dolgellau Hospital was mentioned.
- (vi) The importance that elected members supported the Social Services Department and that early intervention and preventative work was vitally important.
- (vii) Would the arrangements of implementing the pool budget be suitable and work for the changes in this field?

(viii) Why cannot the Council operate dual registration in order that community nurses can give them a service in residential care homes?

(ix) That home care worked successfully if the facilities were available, however it was known that individuals had to move from their home area to get residential care provision and this caused difficulties for families to visit and to travel etc.,

(x) Concern regarding the lack of recruitment of carers in competition with the better wages offered by supermarkets.

(xi) Can lessons be learnt from other authorities that perform better within the family, and was it possible to make more use of private residential homes?

(d) The officers responded to the above observations as follows:

- Perhaps it would be possible to give consideration to experiment with the implementation of the pool fund in certain pockets of the County, but certainly this would have to be considered step by step.
- In terms of comparing performance with other authorities, it was assured that this had been considered and incorporated in the report's recommendation.
- That the scenario regarding the living wage might possibly close the gap in the future in terms of residential and private care.
- Although respite care had not received specific attention within the report, it was recognised that there was room to make use of respite care by considering other methods to reduce the dependency on respite care.

Resolved: To accept the contents of the draft report and to request that the Cabinet Member for Social Services: Adults and Health and the Head of Social Services give consideration to the relevant comments outlined by members in (i) – (x) above as part of the final report.

10. THE CARE CHALLENGE PROJECT

(a) A report on the Care Challenge project was submitted. This project was one of the projects of the Council's Strategic Plan and was crucial to transform social services in response to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and the challenging financial agenda that they were facing.

(b) The Cabinet Member for Social Services: Adults and Health explained that it was proposed to conduct Focus Groups with Members on 29 September between 2.00 – 4.00 pm at Porthmadog and work was on-going to engage with users, key partners and communities.

(c) Observations by Members were requested on the project brief and an appeal was made for them to take part in the Focus Group on 29 September.

(ch) During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted: by individual Members:

(i) Concern that private care homes were closing due to the inability to recruit staff

(ii) A Member noted that specialist nurses were available and wanted to work and consideration should be given to the method of recruitment by offering additional financial incentives to work night shifts, travelling costs etc., and therefore it would not be necessary to recruit nurses from overseas. This would also ensure the use of the Welsh language which was so important to the older generation.

(iii) Administrative work had increased compared with the past when nurses could focus on caring for patients, however by today they were expected to undertake a great deal of administrative work as well as nursing.

(iv) Disappointment that only one session was offered to the Focus Group.

(d) The Cabinet Member for Social Services: Adults and Health and the officer responded to the above and noted:

- It was recognised that it was difficult to recruit but an assurance was given that the work was being commissioned by the Local Services Board together with further work with Bangor University in terms of having the provision of a School of Medicine.
- That it was proposed to conduct more sessions with the Focus Group, however it was difficult to find a suitable date for all.
- It was confirmed that the e-mail will be sent once more to Members to remind them of the date of the first session of the Focus Group on 29 September, where ideas would be discussed.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the report.

The afternoon session commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 3.00pm

CHAIR