

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	27 September 2016
SUBJECT	Specific Performance Matters
CABINET MEMBERS	Councillor Mair Rowlands and Councillor Gareth Thomas
PURPOSE	Response of the Children, Young People and Leisure Cabinet Member and the Education Cabinet Member to specific matters relating to performance

Specific questions were asked by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee beforehand to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Leisure and the Cabinet Member for Education. (There were no specific questions to the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health)

These following written responses were given by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Leisure; and the Education Cabinet Member.

- 1 SCC/024 Measure - Percentage of looked after children during the year who have a Personal Education Plan within 20 school days of being admitted to care or joining a new school during the year.**

Question from Councillor Beth Lawton, Chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee

The performance shows a substantial decline from 82% in 2014-15 to 37% in 2015-16.

You have noted that 'areas for improvement have been identified by the Measurement Officer and the Education Officers that will enable more effective collaboration when collecting data.'

The Members are pleased to see that you're planning on improving the performance, and are keen to receive more information about the disappointing performance and the plans to improve the performance.

We ask that the **Cabinet Member for Education and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People** respond separately to the following points please.

- Explain the reason(s) for the decline.
- What was done during the year 2015-16 to address the decline?
- What are your plans to address the decrease in 2016-17?

Response from Councillor Mair Rowlands - Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Leisure

Up to 2015-16 the percentage of looked after children during the year that have a Personal Education Plan within 20 school days of being admitted to care or joining a new school during the year was consistently high (86.5% 2013-14, 82.1% 2014-15).

During the 2015 summer term the staffing structure of the support for looked after children within the education department changed. There was some confusion regarding whose responsibility it was to inform schools about the need to draw up individual plans and also who was responsible for collecting and checking them. The matter was raised at the Corporate Parent Panel and the Children and Supporting Families Department was instructed to collaborate more closely on improving the measure and to ensure quality of the Personal Education Plans.

During the year it was agreed that an education officer will undertake the responsibility of informing Gwynedd schools of the need to draw up individual plans along with ensuring that these plans are returned within 20 days. When a pupil is placed out of county, the education officer in care ensures the same procedure, but at times, it's more of a challenge to receive these plans from the out of county schools on time.

I'm pleased to see a vast improvement in the percentage of looked after children that have a Personal Education Plan within 20 days at the end of 2015/16, the performance was very poor at 37.9%. I'm pleased to say that the figure has increased to 72.7% (July 2016). During 2016-17 we anticipate that the percentage will return to the figures seen before the summer term 2015. The education officer monitors the figure weekly. The education department and children and young people services will continue to monitor the figure on a quarterly basis.

Response from Councillor Gareth Thomas, Education Cabinet Member

Up until 2015-16 the percentage of children receiving care during the year with a Personal Education Plan within 20 days from the date of receiving care or joining a new school during the year has been consistently high.

During the summer of 2015 the staffing support structure for children in care changed. There was confusion regarding who was responsible for informing the schools of the need to set up individual plans and also who was to collect and check them.

During the year, it was agreed that an education officer would undertake this role of informing Gwynedd's schools of the need to set up individual plans as well as to ensure that these plans were returned within 20 days. Where a pupil is in a placement outside of the county the education officer for children in care ensures that the same procedure is undertaken.

During 2016-17 we foresee that the percentage will return to the figures seen before the 2015 summer term. The education officer monitors the figure on a weekly basis. The Education Department and the Children and Young People Services will continue to monitor the figure quarterly.

EDU/008a measure - Number of permanent exclusions in primary schools during the academic year**Question from Councillor Beth Lawton, Chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee**

The performance shows a substantial decline with 3 exclusions for the first time during the 2014-15 Academic Year.

You have noted *'A lack of specialist provision is a factor in this increase. During the next year we will commence with the provision of specialist units within schools to support the pupils with the most complex behavioural and emotional needs.'*

The Members are pleased to see that you're planning on improving the performance, and are keen to receive more information about the disappointing performance and the plans to improve the performance.

The **Cabinet Member for Education** is asked to respond to these following points, please.

- Explain the reason(s) for the decline.
- What was done during the 2014-15 academic year to address the decline?
- What was the performance for the 2015-16 academic year?

Response from Councillor Gareth Thomas, Education Cabinet Member

The primary school referral unit was closed during 2014-15 following allegations of protection of children. Because of this there were no options available for the placement of these children for short periods that would usually have reduced the chance of permanent exclusions.

Due to the nature of the protection of children investigation it remains difficult to make any permanent changes to the service of maintaining primary behaviour.

During the 2014-15 educational year a number of pupils that would usually have been placed in an unit provision were placed back into main stream schools. This was done by additional support in the form of classroom assistants. For the majority of pupils who were inside the referral unit this support was successful with the pupils integrating successfully.

During 2015-16 a forum was set up to maintain behaviour in order to guide the work of teachers and specialist support workers. The number of new referrals to the forum increased to 93, before reducing to 60 by the end of the academic year.

For the 2015-16 educational year the number of permanent exclusions reduced back to 0.

Preventative Services for Vulnerable Children and Young People (P9)**Question from Councillor Beth Lawton, Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Committee**

The **Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Leisure** is asked to share details on the Needs Assessment Programme with the Members.

Response from Councillor Mair Rowlands - Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Leisure

The purpose of this project is to set a direction and to establish priorities for the preventative agenda in Gwynedd, working on a multi-agency basis to ensure that we focus our efforts on doing the right things in the right places.

The Children and Supporting Families Department have formed a multi-agency Task Group to lead on the work by responding to the needs assessment and the first meeting will take place on the 21st of September (we'll give a verbal report at the meeting on the 27th). This group will be responsible for giving the work a direction and for drawing up an action plan. An important aspect of the Task Group work and the action plan will be looking at re-commissioning services with the next round of Families First money.