



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held virtually on Wednesday, 13 October 2021 at 5.00 pm

### **County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor J Edwards	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor A Fox	Councillor E Griffiths
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor M Powell
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor S Trask
Councillor D Williams	Councillor J Barton

### **Co-Opted Members in attendance:-**

Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

### **Officers in attendance:-**

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services  
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services  
Ms Annabel Lloyd, Service Director Children's Services  
Ms Andrea Richards, Service Director 21st Century Schools and Transformation  
Ms Sarah Corcoran, Head of Achievement and Wellbeing  
Ms Denise Humphries Senior 21st Century Schools Project Manager (Childcare & Special Projects)  
Ms Clara Seery, Managing Director Central South Consortium  
Mr Steven Davies, Central South Consortium  
Mr Andrew Williams, Central South Consortium  
Tim Britton, Head of Achievement  
Ms Kate Burton – CAMHS  
Dr Antonio Munoz – CAMHS  
Ms Sarah Daniel – Senior Democratic Services Officer

## **21 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct the following declarations were made

Cllr M Powell - Personal interest as his wife works for Children's Services in RCTCBC

Cllr E Griffiths – Personal Interest as she is a trustee Cylch Meithrin Evan James.

## **22 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 22 September 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

### **23 Consultation Links**

Members were provided with information to consultations which may be of interest to them

### **24 Scrutiny Research**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reminded members of the Scrutiny research facility that was available to them and advised that members should email the scrutiny mailbox with any requests.

### **25 Central South Consortium - New Draft Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Andrew Williams, Assistant Director for Partnerships and Improvement and Ms Clara Seery, Managing Director from Central South Consortium and invited them to give their presentation to members which provided the following to members:

- Changes to performance measures and reporting measures
- CSC Framework for School improvement - based on Welsh governments Draft Improvement, Evaluation and Accountability document
- How we are supporting schools
- How we are measuring progress

A Member asked what pathways were in place so pupils can build on their strengths

The Managing Director CSC replied that all of the reviews involve pupils and their opportunities to engage. The majority of schools spend lot of time gathering information from pupils through various channels such as the school council.

A Member referred to the embedding of ALN into the and asked how the individual schools situation is taken in to consideration and how much flexibility there was when applying the objective standards as some schools had felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic more than others.

The Managing Director CSC agreed and stated that the model is designed to be as flexible as possible and acknowledged that they were not taking a business as usual approach during the pandemic. She added that they have communicated to all staff that they take pace from the school and they were not applying rigid deadlines. She added that they are adopting a much more flexible approach to support schools. She reassured however, that support and challenge was being provided as sensitively as possible and that no school was expected to have a polished curriculum by 2022 as it will be an evolving process.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services added that the School

Improvement agenda remains a high priority for the Authority and with strong leadership we will continue to see an improving position. She added that the Authority, together with CSC are effective in identifying schools that are struggling and therefore can provide early support at the right time.

A Member asked how the Scrutiny Committee could support and provide challenge.

The Managing Director CSC stated that they were looking at the format in how to provide the information to members. She added that they want the Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the information provided to them and challenge the format and how the information is presented to them. She added that there was lots of systems across the LA and CSC where they were held to account.

The Director Education and Inclusion added that they have regular meetings with CSC together with schools causing concern and discuss improvements and progression plans. Regular progress meetings are also held with red and amber category schools and they are closely monitored. Half termly meetings, chairs of governors etc. The Scrutiny is there and dialogue. CSC also present in January every year, including outcomes. Members could decide what information is helpful.

A Member commented that it would be helpful if the next time representatives attend Scrutiny if they could share the presentation in advance with members to give them the opportunity to read through before the meeting. The Member asked how they can support the Local Authority and Central South Consortium in their role as a member of Scrutiny to improve the standards in schools. He commented for example that Scrutiny had not had the opportunity to scrutinise red category schools before the categories were suspended by Welsh Government to reduce pressures on schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The member also questioned officers comments around what information should be shared on their schools with members and asked for clarification.

The Managing Director Central South Consortium clarified that the comments around information sharing were around the format of the information and how this should be presented to members. She agreed that members should be afforded all information in relation to schools in their area and welcomes members support and scrutiny on them.

She advised members that there were many mechanisms in place for the CSC and the Local Authority to be held to account on the support they are providing to schools and this can be developed.

The Director education and Inclusion added that the Local Authority holds regular meetings with CSC where schools causing concern are discussed with Leadership teams at the schools so they can assess what additional support is required if necessary and monitor their progress. She added that CSC present a report in January every year which details Estyn inspection outcomes and analysis of previously red and amber categorised schools. She added that at this meeting members could decide which information is presented to them is helpful and how they would like it presented in the future.

The Chairperson thanked the officers from Central South Consortium for attending the meeting and looked forward to welcoming them back in January 2022. Thanked officers, see you in January.

**RESOLVED: To note the presentation and update from Central South Consortium**

**26 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**

The Chairperson welcomed Kate Burton CAMHS Manager and Dr Tony Munoz Consultant Psychiatrist, Louise Mann Assistant Director Quality, Safety & Safeguarding and Sian Lewis Managing Director Welsh Health Specialised Services to the meeting and invited them to present their report to members.

The Director Children's Services opened with the report which provided information in relation to Children's Services interaction with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in the context of two prior presentations by CAMHS at previous Scrutiny meetings in March and Council in June 2021. Colleagues at the Health Board then gave members a presentation which detailed the key services available and the areas identified for improvement and how these were being progressed.

The CAMHS Manager advised of a website called Kooth. This has an option to choose RCT as an area and was very proactive with linking in with schools. She added that engagement with schools does take time. She further added that the website has interactive sessions and information sharing of promotional material. She clarified that they were based in the UK, and were aware that they need to increase their Welsh language options to ensure equal accessibility in Wales.

The Chairperson stated it was a concern of hers at the lack of Welsh Language information that was available from the company. The CAMHS Manager reassured that they are actively developing this area.

A Member stated that the Crisis team provides cover to patients between the hours of 9AM – 9PM but was aware that this cover wasn't enough as this was then putting pressure on A&E departments as they were available 24 hours a day. He also asked if there were mental health professionals available at the A&E departments to provide out of hours care.

The CAMHS manager replied that there were mental health specialists at the A&E departments, however, if they were not available they would call the crisis teams if required. The medics on call are psychiatrists and consultants. She added that it was recognised that it is a pressure on A&E and they were working together on a solution.

A member asked what the uptake of Kooth.com was. They asked if there was a place for online platforms supporting younger people.

The CAMHS Manager replied that the perception was that there was wider pressures on girls from society and the way they express themselves. We would look at their specific needs when they are presented and tailor a package of support for them.

A member also asked if more information could be provided to members as to why more girls were suffering from mental health issues. A Member also suggested that the website should be easier to navigate, as not all young people would know that they live in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board area.

The CAMHS Manager advised that access to Kooth was through a website where users would select their health board area and gain access to the support. She advised that it was targeted towards 11-19 year olds and was promoted through secondary schools. In relation to the she advised that they will shortly start receiving quarterly reports. She recognised that it will take time for young people to be fully aware of the support available to them but this is something that would be continually developed. She reassured members that this was not an alternative to treatment but another platform of support as it was recognised that some young people prefer to engage in this way.

A Member asked for comments on the points raised by report by the Local Authority regarding the delays in Neurodevelopmental (ND) assessments.

The CAMHS Manager commented that there will be an increased focus on collaboration and more integrated ways of working and ensure that all agencies are working together and make relationships stronger. She added that they were also currently developing a piece of work to develop a better service for secure residential care for young people.

Dr Anthony Munoz from CAMHS advised that there had been some changes to staffing in the ND service which was being monitored. He added that monthly meeting were taking place to discuss children and young people that have home tuition and/or attend college. He added they were keen to cover as much of the wider population as possible.

A Member asked what the triage service involved. Whether it was face to face, online or telephone appointments.

The CAMHS Manager responded that it was a telephone triage which is staffed by RNS. She added that they will identify the challenges and urgency of each individual immediately following a referral which was followed by a three week wait for an assessment which is currently undertaken via video call. She added this is reviewed frequently and in line with current restrictions.

The Chairperson thanked the officers from CAMHS for attending the meeting and providing information to members.

**RESOLVED: Members noted the report and requested to receive a presentation/ report as information before March 2022**

## **27 Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) Consultation 19:05**

The Director of Education and Inclusion presented the report to members to give members the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process.

The Chair reminded members that the WESP was due back to Committee for pre-scrutiny at their December meeting

The Chair referred to page 41 of the document where it was stated that when additional funding is made available the Council would be ambitious with their proposals to invest in Welsh medium childcare and early years settings. She asked what if funding wasn't forthcoming

The Director of Education and Inclusion stated that the Authority are committed

to investment in this area and hoped members would feel reassured by their past commitment in this area. She added this could be demonstrated through the childcare capital grant scheme (Dolau, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar, Llanhari, Evan James, Ynyswen, Abercynon and Llantrisant had all received recent investment) with further proposals on the horizon which will positively impact their target for the provision of Welsh Medium Education. She reassured that the capacity will be there and there will be growth in the sector for RCTCBC

Another member welcomed investment in education in Welsh medium childcare settings but was surprised to read there was no development planned in areas where there were currently no Welsh education settings. She added that she felt the loss of Pont Norton did leave a gap in the Pontypridd area and was concerned that Evan James would have enough capacity to compensate that loss and felt this gap needed to be explored.

The Director of Education and Inclusion responded that it was critical that the Authority attracts at an early age with a view to retain once the children are in the sector. She added that Childcare sufficiency assessments are also undertaken and they are proactively looking to identify gaps in provision to ensure the Authority can address the needs that are sustainable. She added that a partnership approach with all sectors is needed to ensure the ambitious targets are met.

The Service Director 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation added that we are starting to see an improvement in the take up of numbers for Welsh Medium Education with Ysgol Llanharry attracting more families, rather than them opting for Llanharry. She added that Dolau Primary school was also receiving a new 560 place extension which will cater for Welsh medium education and serve the new Llanilid development

The Senior 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Project Manager added that the Capital investment in Welsh Medium Childcare was starting to see an improvement in numbers with Ysgol Llanharry reporting higher numbers with their offer of flying start through the medium of English, families are then opting to stay on at Ysgol Llanharry. She added that they were working hard with Mudiad Meithrin to identify gaps and find solutions and identify a provision for a Clych Meithrin near Taffs Well and Nantgarw area.

The Senior 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Project Manager added that they were also exploring other innovative solutions such as an outdoor nursery/ forest school provision which would be the first in area. She added this option will form part of a funding bid for further capital investment in the area.

A Member referred to the letter on page 85 of the report that stated the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 places a duty on all Local Authorities in Wales to consult on, produce and review plans that provide the strategic direction for the planning and delivery of Welsh medium and Welsh Language education in their locality. She asked for more information on this.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services stated that Central South Consortium were doing a lot of work in English Medium Schools to make the Welsh Language accessible to learners and to ensure an inclusive approach.

**RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of the report and it was agreed for their comments to be taken forward as part of the consultation process**

**28 Update On The Education And Inclusion Services Support For Schools And PRUs In Response To Covid-19**

The Head of Achievement presented the report to members which gave them an overview of the progress RCTCBC has made in relation to recommendations from the overarching thematic report Estyn published in January 2021. He added that they were very pleased with the report from Estyn and they were complimentary of the work of the Local Authority in partnership with Central South Consortium. He thought it was efficient reaction of the Authority to the needs of learners during the pandemic that was recognised by Estyn.

The Chairperson referred to Appendix 1 of the report which referred to the engagement of learners being at home and the fatigue of parents and pupils. She asked if officers were now seeing an end to this with a return to the classroom.

The Head of Achievement informed members that from his visits to schools and meetings with senior leadership teams he reported that pupils were pleased to be back at school and in the classroom with their friends. He added that the schools also reacted to the demands of working parents by altering timings of online lessons. He added however, the fatigue was still present, as the pandemic had not gone away but that we were moving in the right direction.

The Director Education and Inclusion added that Estyn also undertook a number of engagement calls. As part of this the Local Authority uploaded all the evidence available as part of evaluation, for which link inspectors were very complimentary. She added that they also had excellent feedback from schools on the level of support that has been provided to them during the pandemic.

A Member stated that Cabinet supporting the Family Engagement Officers was critical and should be embraced.

She then referred to the change in patterns of behaviour in learners and how they were experiencing difficulties adjusting back into the classroom setting

The Member also noted that boys engaged better through online learning and thought the Authority can take the positives from that in future approaches to blended learning.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services advised that we were seeing improvements in attendance with the volume of Covid-19 cases in school now going down. She added that it was pleasing that cabinet could support the funding for the Engagement officers and they would also be taking away the positives from the virtual elements of learning.

**RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of the report and letter from Estyn.**

**29 Consultation - Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan for 2021 – 2024**

The Director of Education and Inclusion presented the report to members to give them the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process in respect of the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024. Any comments will be taken into account in the consultation process.

- Attendance – high priority
- Priority for CHYP Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Strong leadership and Teaching in Welsh Medium Schools. A Shortage of teachers in Welsh Language Schools. Pool is quite small. Can we have an update?
- Courses for post 16 throughout the medium of welsh, how achievable and realistic?

In concluding the report the Director of Education and Inclusion commented that the recent pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges and the workforce has worked tirelessly to overcome these challenges for the benefit of the learners and communities. A clear and cohesive strategy was now essential for ensuring learners have the best start in life and access to the right continued support.

The Chairperson highlighted three concerns being attendance, the mental health and wellbeing of learners and the shortage of welsh language teachers in schools and asked for officers to provide comment on these areas.

The Director of Education and Inclusion stated that leadership is critical to ensure we secure the best possible leaders as there is much competition and movement from one sector to another. She advised that investment in staff and their professional development was critical to the retention of staff, developing aspiring head teachers and the school improvement services this was in addition to CSC also running leadership programmes.

She reassured members that the Mental Health and Wellbeing Agenda also remained a very high priority and they were very responsive to grant funding streams and utilising those to ensure they have highest possible impact. Concerning attendance, she concluded that joined up working with the governors, head teachers and family engagement is ongoing and continually developing.

A Member commented that there was a possible missed opportunity to reflect the national agenda in the education mission. He felt a stronger statement would have been to reflect children's rights and the importance of the voice of the child. The director of Education and Inclusion thanked the member for his comments and this would be taken on board.

A member asked had the Authority reviewed the first phase of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and had lessons learned ready for the second stage.

The Director of Education and Inclusion advised that we are now in Band B of the programme with some Band A's up and running for many years. Family engagement and termly reporting from those schools had formed a very robust monitoring process for the investment. She added that self evaluation had also been undertaken to ensure that resources were being deployed to the right place.

She advised members that historical reporting of the performance always details inspection outcomes so performance is monitored, however she commented that the figures do not always give you everything you need to know and officers often have to investigate further to find the cause of any potential issues. She reassured that any schools receiving enhanced support would be reported to



members.

A Member referred to funding allocated for Children and Young People specifically for behavioural needs and asked how we ensure that this is appropriate and inclusive and offered through alternative educations.

The Director of Education and Inclusion advised that there was investment in trauma informed schools and there was also training around those approaches with wellbeing champions across the clusters appointed. She advised that there has been huge investment in those areas. She added that the key priority was using the framework to inform thinking and how schools use the resources and in developing bespoke alternative pathways for learners who don't engage in the traditional pathways. This she added had been successful as PRU referrals have decreased over time.

**RESOLVED: The Chairperson thanked all members for their comments and advised that they would go forward as part of the consultation process.**

**30 Chair's Review and Close**

The Chair thanked all members, officers and invitees for attending the meeting

**31 Urgent Business**

None

**CLLR S REES-OWEN  
CHAIR.**