

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 MAY 2021

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Melbourne, Molik, Phillips and Singh

Co-opted Members: Carol Cobert (Church in Wales Representative),
Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative) and
Matthew Richards (Parent Governor Representative)

Mia John (Youth Council Representative)

29 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Heather Joyce and Mia Rees. Also from Co-Optees Patricia Arlotte and Matthew Richards.

30 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

31 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 23 February were approved by the Committee as a correct record as proposed by Councillor Molik and seconded by Karen Dell'Armi. The approval of the minutes of the meeting on 15 March were deferred until the next meeting.

32 : YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member, Children & Families), Paul Orders (Chief Executive), Graham Robb (Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Board), Deborah Driffield (Director, Children's Services) and Angharad Thomas (Operational Manager, Youth Justice Service) to the meeting.

Councillor Hinchey and Graham Robb provided the Committee with statements in relation to the Update provided prior to the meeting regarding the changes published yesterday and will apply from mid- July which will include a longer notice or inspection period and rating arrangements. There will be more emphasis on personalisation; how we show that that any offer for a child is right for them individually. It is anticipated that there will be a 3 weeks inspection which will take place sometime from Autumn onwards

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Committee noted the positive feel that came over from the earlier work shop with young people in respect of their experiences.
- Members discussed the number of assessments waiting to be

signed off and the drift. Officers explained it did not mean that work had not been undertaken with young people, the cases had not been officially closed down which meant that there appeared to be 200 open cases when in actual fact there was only 140. There were also administrative issues with the assessments being signed off, particularly over the Christmas period, as a result of sickness, and agency staff leaving. The Quality Assurance (QA) framework has been revised and it is now being overseen by an additional agency manager. Compliance will be monitored closely.

- Members sought information about the evidence required to demonstrate that the provision made for the young person is having the desired impact. Members were advised that further training, particularly in relation to planning and reviews, has taken place which has resulted in improvements being made in self-assessments. With reference to the evidence, Members were told that it relates to the judgement of risk. Previously risk levels were not been correctly assessed and later adjusted. Now risk is being discussed more frequently, particularly with the Risk Management Planning Forum and meetings taking place which has resulted in them being more confident that risk levels will not require adjustments. All of those meetings are now being documented in the Child Review Recording System.
- Members were advised that there are three areas of risk that are assessed: re-offending; serious harm; and the safety and wellbeing of the child. Every case is reviewed on a 3 months basis, risk levels depending on how high they are can be assessed fortnightly or monthly. It is recognised that there is still some way to go before measuring outcomes and impact, and not just outputs and.
- Graham Robb clarified that as a Board they are more interested in the long term progression and achievement measures that is currently being set up – but it is going to take some time. It is hoped that progression in relation to that will have been made by the time of the Inspection.
- The Chief Executive noted that there has been a step change in the quality of governance and it is clear on the basis of the positive discussions in the meeting testifies to that. There is still a major piece of change management to be driven through to its conclusion and the scale of change must not be underestimated; restructuring is part of that exercise together with practice and quality assurance.
- Members discussed the effectiveness of strategic partnerships. It was noted that the way the Committee has been reconstituted to be a partnership problem solving team has the potential to be a really effective. It can pick up groups with particular issues, get the right people in the room to analyse the problem, do something about it and measure the impact.
- The University Health Board will shortly be publishing the work done

on health and wellbeing pathways which will provide data and benchmarking us against what is happening elsewhere in England and Wales. It is anticipated that the impact of that will be visible by the end of next year.

- Members were concerned that references to gaps in provision and services meant that there were significant levels of underinvestment in Youth Justice services. They were informed that the Joint Strategic Needs work should be able, in due course, to highlight whether there is a gap in service or there is a gap in helping children get to that service.
- The Committee discussed the means by which obtaining outcomes across the board can be better reported and evidenced. It was noted that there has been a massive culture shift; there are lots of different models. There needs to be a conversation and understanding of what is important to young people and identifying the changes they want and are willing to make. There have been links with education and the coaching model. It is accepted that a lot of training is required. It is important to become much more aware of family engagement; the Youth Justice Service tends to be about just the child in the system but that has to be expanded to family.

Partnership meetings were being held on a monthly basis to discuss data sets, and that has now become a quarterly meeting with actual case studies being reviewed and discussed to see precisely how this service has been involved in the changes in their lives. Updates in relation to that can be provided.

- Members sought clarification in relation to the 8 cases since February that have been the subject of a QA assessment and were advised that each manager has two cases to quality assure; which means that every month 6 – 8 will be conducted depending on the number of Team Managers at the time. Those figures will increase.
- Members discussed benchmarking and how the Quality Assurance work is being done by Team Managers, and whether consideration is being given to an external verification of that process, for example with other Local Authorities. Members were advised that an experienced Operational Manager from another Youth Justice Service had been involved in the development of the benchmarking process, however that has since been reviewed and changes have been made. There was an oversight in the reporting, it is now reported at Team Meetings; in 'one to ones' brought to Children's Services and then the Board. It has to be seen as part of the job, which is a culture change for staff.
- Members referred to the culture shift that is taking place and queried what the views were in relation to staffing. The Director advised that they are in the middle of a formal process in terms of consulting with the current management team. A new proposal has

been made in relation to Youth Justice Services going forward; it is a good model but has not yet been widely shared. It is a very clear proposal; there have to be changes to drive things forward.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

33 : RECOVERY AND RENEWAL: DELIVERING A CHILD FRIENDLY RECOVERY

The Chair welcomed Councillor Huw Thomas (Leader of the Council), Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities), Melanie Godfrey (Director of Education & Lifelong Learning), Mike Tate (Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning), Suzanne Scarlett (Operational Manager, Partnerships and Performance) and Phil Norton (Youth Service) to the meeting. They joined Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member, Children & Families), Deborah Driffield (Director Children's Services) and Paul Orders (Chief Executive).

The Leader provided a statement in which he referred to the Recovery and Renewal Report: Delivering a Child Friendly Recovery to be considered by Cabinet during the next week. It builds on the principles within Cardiff 2030 and recognises that young people are amongst some of the worst impacted by the pandemic. Whilst it is the only report which expressly delivers on how young people are supported, it is important to note consideration of their rights and needs in all respect of all our services.

Councillor Sarah Merry made a short statement in which she expressed excitement at this report, despite the subject matter, believing that it has benefited from the Children Friendly framework and approach to delivery that have already been worked into the Council's services. It recognises that the impact on children and young people is very different for each individual. It is clear that there must be positive messaging for children and targeted help and support.

Councillor Graham Hinchey also referred to the need for the Children Friendly City to relate to all Council areas.

The Chief Executive provided a statement in which he referred to the need for very high level Council working. It is a strong substantial report with input from a range of Council services.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members referred to provision during the planned summer break, and the role of the Youth Service in the summery holiday plans, and that some older students leaving education as early as next month. Members were advised that additional funding has been provided to increase open access provision which will help to with transition from lock down to the start of a 5 day week. As well as programmes such as Shep and the Fit and Fed

programme which is a day time community programme, the Youth Service will be looking to bolster what they would usually offer over the summer but there is also additional open access provision which will carry on throughout the year. There are additional nights and different offers; there will be a flexible use of the outreach and street based teams and the Youth Service bus. Increased Welsh and Digital Youth provision will be accelerated.

- Members noted the Universal Response during the short term, but queried the whether the additional funding would stretch beyond the 9 – 12 months if the needs are more deep rooted. The Leader referred to the increased budget for Youth Services within the base and within the FRM. The data from the summer programme will be analysed and monitored. The capacity and willingness to do that is there. The report is clear that Youth Services are being reviewed which will play into the review of next year's budget.

Members noted that whilst the offer over the summer is universal; it is important to make sure that those harder to reach groups access the provision.

- Members discussed the need for there to be flexibility around the needs of children and young people bearing in mind the impact of the pandemic will have affected them and their families differently.
- Members discussed to the importance of programmes being able to ensure our children understand how democracy works and how to make their voices heard in a political field and advocate for causes they believe in.
- Members discussed a recent comment that young people doing drugs in Cardiff is normal and hoped that the new provision will engage children more positively. Members were advised that whilst drugs were more common than they should be, it should not mean that that is or should be normal. There has been increased funding from the budget for the Youth Service; the current review off that service will be taken into account when arguing where funding is to be allocated.
- Members queried the proportion of the projects referred to in the report which are not funded and what is the risk of them falling by the way side in terms of the current conversations ongoing with Welsh Government (WG). Members were advised that Officers had been asked with ensuring that commitments made in the report were covered within the budgetary framework. Members were advised that there has been an alteration today on one specific point, it relates to the grades being determined by schools; schools are currently going through a process of centre determined grades, once those grades are awarded the children

can appeal. The usual round of resits has not been built into the system so are waiting for advice from WG on how those young people, who do not achieve the results they would have hoped to achieved had it not been for the pandemic, are then able to address that gap.

- Members asked whether there is a higher number of pupils presenting with wellbeing issues, anxiety and depression within schools and if so whether school based counselling will be expanded and will that be offered during the summer if required. Officers advised that a universal tool is being looked which can identify the wellbeing of children and can feed into programmes within school. Equally, consideration is being given to extending school based counselling provision and it will be available through the summer as part of the Shep programme. There will also be targeted additional mentoring.
- Members were advised that there has been a significant increase in the number of children being admitted to hospital as a result suicide attempts and serious self-harm. There were a cluster of children approximately 5 or 6 weeks ago coming through the MASH and on contacting the hospitals were made aware that there were at least 9 – 13 children in paediatric wards at any one time. Sadly there has been 2 suicides in Cardiff over the last 2 months and we do have a cohort of young people who are attempting suicide and serious self-harm attempts. Meetings have been taking place with Health and Education about monitoring this small cohort of young people. There is a lack of specialist resource in Wales to support these young people; this issue has been raised with WG. This is going to get worse before it gets better. In the longer term it is hoped to have joint commissioning, but in the medium term there needs to be wrap around service and through the Regional Safeguarding Board a refreshed strategy is being drafted in relation to self-harm and suicide prevention.
- Members sought clarification in relation to the evidence officers have about the challenges facing schools in reaching their hardest to reach pupils and are there some schools facing a much stiffer challenge than others and is there sufficient capacity in the system to ensure the problem does not become deep seated? The Assistant Director advised that there is big issue about the re-engagement of all pupils, not just hard to reach pupils. Education and Children's Services have worked very closely together to develop the vulnerable learner panel and identify early who those pupils and young people are to ensure that there is appropriate support around that. There are currently still 100 on that panel with whom support is continuing. Some of the targeted provision in schools looks not just the vulnerable young people but also those with vulnerable families. Focussed work has also been done with EOTAS pupils.

- Members queried whether schools attendance figures have returned to normal and were advised that attendance figures have increased since Easter. It is difficult to continue to track and in relation to reengagement issues there are no penalty notices in place at the moment and no way of enforcing that issue at the moment. That issue is to be looked at by WG in the return to more normality from September.

It was noted that attendance is also being monitored closely with the Education Welfare service; figures as recently as this week have come through – it is steadily improving. It is being discussed on a fortnightly basis to track how levels are improving; there will still be some challenges whilst parents still have some discretion.

- With reference to the school leavers in 2021 Members queried at what point will the data that will be useful to the service to intervene in particular ways be available. Officers advised that the latest VAP to identify vulnerabilities has just been completed. Schools will RAG their most vulnerable pupils for additional mentoring support. There is a range of vulnerabilities that are considered. Some will be more challenging this year. This year there is an ability to link with the Youth Justice Service. Year 11 destinations meeting have just started looking at those EOTAS pupils, they have their own specialised VAP which meets fortnightly with a range of professionals.
- Members were also advised that there has also been some additional funding, details of which will be provided to Secondary Heads on Thursday, to look at the spend in terms of transition, particularly of Year 11 and 12 pupils to go on to either college or sixth forms.

Members were pleased to see the joint working between the Directorates, particularly within Education and Children's Services.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

34 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Committee noted the update on correspondence update; Q4 Performance update; Capturing and Reporting the Impact of Scrutiny Briefing; and CYPSC Work Programming.

35 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled at this meeting.

36 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

37 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Tuesday 13 June 2021 at 4.30 pm via MS Teams.

The meeting terminated at 7.35 pm