

JOINT EDUCATION & CHILDREN AND SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23rd NOVEMBER 2015

Present: Councillor J.E. Williams (Chair)

Education & Children Scrutiny Committee

Councillors: C. Campbell, J.M. Charles, I.W. Davies, W.G. Hopkins,
P. Hughes-Griffiths, J.D. James, M.K.A. Lewis, D.W.H. Richards, T.
Theophilus.

Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee

Councillors: T.T. Defis, P.M. Edwards, W.T Evans, D.J.R. Llewellyn, K. Madge, E.
Morgan, G. Thomas, J.S. Williams.

Also in attendance:

Councillor G.O Jones - Executive Board Member for Education & Children

Councillor J. Tremlett – Executive Board Member for Social Care & Health

The following officers were in attendance:

Mr. J. Morgan – Director of Community Services

Mr. R. Sully – Director of Education & Children

Mrs. R. Dawson – Head of Integrated Services

Mr. A. Maynard – Interim Head of Mental Health & Learning Disabilities (MD & LD)

Mr. S. Smith – Head of Children's Services

Mrs. H. Smith – Executive Support Manager

Mrs. S. Sauro – Performance Review Officer

Ms. B. Dolan – Senior Consultant

Also present:

Mrs. L. Roberts - Inspector, Care and Social Services Wales (CSSIW)

Venue: County Hall Chamber, Carmarthen (10:00am – 11:00am)

1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

It was UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint Councillor J.E. Williams as chair for the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND OTHER MATTERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S.M. Allen, D.J.R. Bartlett, H.I. Jones, P.E.M. Jones, E.G. Thomas and J. Williams.

The Chair congratulated Mrs. Rhian Dawson on her recent appointment as Head of Integrated Services.

The Chair welcomed Mrs. Lesley Roberts, Inspector, CSSIW, to the meeting.

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3. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Councillor K. Madge	Item 6	In that his daughter works in social services
Councillor E. Morgan	Item 6	In that his daughter is a nurse
Councillor D.W.H. Richards	Item 6	In that his daughter-in-law works in Children's Services

4. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None were received.

6. CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES WALES' (CSSIW) INSPECTION, EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL SERVICES 2014/15

The Committee considered the CSSIW report of its annual evaluation and review of Carmarthenshire's Social Services which also provided overall judgements on key areas of progress and areas for improvement. It also received a comprehensive presentation from Mrs. L. Roberts (CSSIW).

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

Concerns were expressed at the lack of stable placements for some Looked After Children (LAC). The Head of Children's Services shared these concerns however emphasised that these were small numbers of LAC with a small number of moves. Generally educational placements were stable but there was a small cohort of young people aged 13 years or older that they were trying to maintain in placements. It was necessary to ensure that the range of foster carers was increased and improved. The Authority would be engaging in a Welsh Government pilot next year to look at different ways of developing foster carers through a 12 week course with specialists and link workers focusing on LAC with complex needs. The Director of Education & Children added that they were working hard to improve performance in stability of LAC placements which had reduced to 6.9% during the first half of this year.

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Further information was requested in relation to children presenting with risky behaviours. The Head of Children's Services advised that this was a small proportion of LAC however the LAC assessment had emphasised the need to improve risk assessments to ensure appropriate support and risk management is put in place.

Concerns were expressed about the very low numbers of adult safeguarding referrals that ended in a prosecution given the serious nature of the complaints. The Interim Head of MD & LD stated that the safety of every individual was paramount however in order for cases to be taken to court they had to be evidenced. The focus of the care management team was on the outcome the vulnerable adult wanted and what they wanted to change. The Inspector added that the low number of prosecutions was a critical point and one of the factors was, whilst there was a clear legislative framework in place for children, there was not one for adults. This was an issue for further exploration between the Council and the Adult Safeguarding Board (ASB). The Director of Community Services advised that this issue was a theme across Wales and that improvements were needed in gathering evidence. He would be looking at this regionally with Dyfed-Powys Police in the ASB. An analysis of cases with a high level of concern but which had not proceeded to prosecution was required.

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 was referred to and concerns expressed that some of its requirements had not been fully costed which would further stretch shrinking budgets. The Director of Community Services advised that the propensity to legislate whilst reducing budgets was indeed challenging. There had not been a clear costing exercise for the new Act which was being implemented in April 2016. To date there was no complete guidance or finalised codes of practice which was a risk for the Authority going forward.

The significant increase in the number of applications for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) during the year was referred to. It was asked why the training for members previously asked for had not yet been delivered. The Interim Head of MD & LD stated that the Law Commission had only just completed its consultation on the law of mental capacity and deprivation of liberty. It had visited Carmarthenshire as part of that process. The outcome was expected next year. There was a screening process in place for DoLS applications so that high priority applications received an assessment promptly.

It was noted that an area for improvement was to continue to improve opportunities for people attending day care services to access work based employment opportunities. It was asked how successful this was. The Interim Head of MD & LD advised that this was challenging, particularly for young people with learning disabilities however it was important to see it as a total package where the dividends included improved self confidence, developing a range of skills and experience, building friendships and not just employment. The number of work experience opportunities had increased but they needed to build on this.

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The increasing number of care leavers not engaged in education, employment or training (NEETs) was referred to and it was asked if this was expected to reduce going forward. The Head of Children's Services stated that employment opportunities for LAC were not as available as he would like them to be however qualifications were being offered to LAC as well as work placement schemes. He reminded the Committee that these were small numbers of young people therefore one or two drop-outs could have a significant impact on percentages. A lot of services worked with and supported LAC NEETs. Three care leavers had recently gone to university so there were also successes.

RESOLVED to receive the report.