

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

5 JUNE 2019

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT)

POST-16 ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) REVIEW

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring to the attention of Scrutiny Committee the latest position on the review of additional learning needs (ALN) provision for post-16 learners as part of the overall review of post-16 provision across Bridgend County.

2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priority/priorities:

- Supporting a successful economy
 - To support local people to develop skills and take advantage of opportunities to succeed
 - To create successful communities
- Helping people to be more self-reliant
 - To give people more choice and control over what support they receive by providing early access to advice and information
 - To reduce demand through targeted early help and intervention programmes
- Smarter use of resources
 - To improve the efficiency of and access to services by redesigning our systems and processes
 - To work collaboratively to make the most of public assets

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2016, a Strategic Review Board (SRB) was established with this key objective:

‘A strategic review is required to evaluate education provision and curriculum delivery across Bridgend County Borough including with Bridgend College, and to determine the future direction needed by means of an options appraisal and the recommendation of a preferred option.’

3.2 The SRB, in turn, set up a Post-16 Operational Board to review post-16 provision across Bridgend County. These Boards have presented a series of reports to Cabinet:

- 31 October 2017: This report described the work of the Post-16 Operational Board and its consideration of seven concepts of post-16 provision. This list was reduced to six and following an assessment exercise the Board recommended a mixed concept provision of some retained sixth forms alongside a sixth-form centre as the preferred model. There was recommendation to undertake further detailed work and bring another report to Cabinet in April 2018.
- 24 April 2018: This report contained further details on the six concepts of post-16 provision and sought approval to go to public consultation.
- 20 November 2018. This report provided details on the public consultation paper and the methods of engagement during the consultation process. Cabinet gave approval for the consultation to go ahead on this basis.
- 16 April 2019: This report provided the feedback to Cabinet on the outcomes of the consultation and sought approval to move to Phase 4. In this phase, consideration would be given to the retention of all sixth forms or the merger of some sixth forms into sixth form centres. A report on this work is intended to be with Cabinet in October 2019.

3.3 In the report to Cabinet dated 21 October 2017, it was proposed that a separate report on post-16 provisions for learners with ALN should be undertaken. It was apparent to the Post-16 Operational Board that there were significant complexities around ALN provision which merited a specific piece of work to run alongside the review of mainstream post-16 provision.

3.4 To instigate this review, meetings were held during 2018 with additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCos) in schools and special schools, together with senior teams, Careers Wales Bridgend College and senior managers in the Inclusion Service. The following areas of work were discussed in these meetings:

- current progression routes for learners with ALN from mainstream and learning resource centre (LRC) settings;
- possible future demand for progression routes;
- the support available to help learners with ALN make a successful transition to post-16 education;
- current features that work well in aiding learners with ALN to make successful transitions to post-16 provision; and
- what could be improved to make transition an even better experience.

3.5 Findings from these meetings are detailed under the 'Current situation' section of this report under paragraphs 4.1 to 4.11.

3.6 In preparation for the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, the Inclusion Service led on a piece of work funded by the ALN Innovation Fund. A 'map and gap' analysis was developed which highlighted the key processes that underpin successful transitions including to post-16. This work has already been presented to Scrutiny Committee.

- 3.7 Local authority officers and stakeholders have attended Scrutiny to present the Central South Consortium ALN Transformation Plan. The second year of the ALN Transformation Plan will be presented to Scrutiny in autumn 2019.
- 3.8 As part of the ALN Transformation Plan, local authority officers will continue to engage with Bridgend College in order to develop and support provision for post compulsory school-aged learners.

4. Current situation

Current progression routes for learners with ALN from mainstream and LRC settings

- 4.1 The current education providers for 16 to 18 year-olds in Bridgend with significant ALN requirements are as follows:
- Sixth forms can provide for more able learners with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Level 3 (A levels and BTEC diplomas) with very limited opportunities for provision at Level 2 (GCSE and lower level BTECs).
 - The main provider destinations for Year 11 learners with significant ALN needs from both mainstream and LRCs are Bridgend College and Ysgol Bryn Castell
 - Other providers referenced by schools are XR Training, ACT, Menter Bro Ogwr and provisions under the Inspire to Achieve European Social Fund project.
 - Heronsbridge School provides a sixth form primarily for learners that have progressed up through the school and stay on roll until they are 19.
 - A few progress into employment or take-up workplace apprenticeships.
- 4.2 Bridgend College offers a range of provisions for learners with ALN. These include:
- Independent living skills (ILS) and employability programmes at Entry Level 1, 2 and 3. One of these programmes has a catering focus and a new programme from September 2019 will focus on horticulture and land-based studies.
 - Supported internships are part of the ILS offer and are usually taken up after learners have completed a year on an ILS programme (the qualification embedded in the supported internship is at Level 1 but could be Entry 3).
 - There are up to 14 Level 1 courses offered at the college covering a range of pathways from construction, catering, public services through to childcare and animal care; most of these courses run but this is subject to the recruitment of viable numbers.
 - Learners attend college part-time each week and an ILS tutor from Bridgend College also delivers in Heronsbridge.
 - There are part-time pathway programmes available which deliver Agored Cymru units at Entry 2 and 3 bespoke to individual needs.
 - Weston House provides a range of opportunities including IT provision, residential facilities and independent living flats. Weston House has fully accessible rooms which include roof-track hoists, sensory learning bases and a training kitchen for developing independent living skills.
- 4.3 Provision at Ysgol Bryn Castell for learners with complex emotional, social and behavioural additional learning needs includes Entry and Level 1 courses in:

- Construction, Horticulture and Equine Studies;
- Customer Service, ICT and Multi-media Studies;
- Sport and Leisure;
- Duke of Edinburgh Award;
- Skills for Work and Life;
- Enterprise; and
- Art and Photography.

4.4 Provision at Heronsbridge School is tailored to each cohort but is focused on developing vocational skills. A work-based skills co-ordinator has been appointed and currently skills training is focused on the coffee shop, car valeting and horticulture. In Year 12, there are performing arts and catering courses linked to Bridgend College. As learners enter 'Year 14' they begin to access taster courses such as construction and sport at the Pencoed campus. Work experience is sought where possible to help develop the essential skills the learners will need after transition. Due to the greater clarity around placement criteria for entry to Heronsbridge School, key stage 3 pupils have more complex learning needs and this will require the post-16 provisions to be adapted to suit the needs of these cohorts.

Possible future demand for progression routes

4.5 For many of the registered learners with ALN in schools the progression route into college is via Entry Level and Level 1 qualifications. In recent years, Welsh Government has indicated a preference for funding qualifications at Level 3+ with less emphasis on the lower level programmes. Therefore, schools and Careers Wales have felt that there has been a lack of provision at the right level for learners with ALN. Furthermore, traditionally the range of pathways available at the lower levels has also been limited.

Current features that work well in aiding learners with ALN to make successful transitions to post-16 provision

4.6 In the meetings mentioned at paragraph 3.4, current features that work well in support of successful ALN progression into post-16 education were identified as:

- Careers Wales advisers;
- getting the course right and having transition visits;
- knowledge of the pupils and their parents;
- work experience and mock interviews particularly valuable for learners with ALN;
- good links with other ALNCos to share good practice;
- connections with Bridgend College; and
- when there are good communications between school and college.

The support available to help learners with ALN make a successful transition to post-16 education

4.7 Support for transition at 16 for learners with ALN comes from a variety of sources. Careers Wales has two specialist advisers who work primarily with statemented learners. They are regarded as being very knowledgeable and their research to support individual learners is regarded as exceptional. They also support learners in

making applications, in visits and speaking with parents and co-ordinators in college. However, they are a much stretched resource and consideration needs to be given to expanding this specialist support. Careers Wales general approach is for this support to be provided to statemented learners.

4.8 Other sources of support include:

- the Careers Wales advisers attached to schools;
- the transition co-ordinators in the college supporting progression;
- many of learners with ALN will travel to college on public transport and travel training is available from special schools and with support from Barnardo's which is commissioned via the Families First grant funding;
- mock interviews are another aspect where support has been available from ACT, ITEC and Menter Bro Ogwr; and
- learners with complex hearing impairments in Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen received additional support from the Inclusion Service in order to aid transition to sixth form and, subsequently, higher education.

What could be improved to make transition an even better experience?

4.9 From the discussions mentioned in paragraph 3.4, suggestions for improvements in support for transition for ALN learners included:

- improved transition planning with formal end of key stage 4 reviews at which the college is present (where it is the destination of choice);
- transition and taster sessions which are especially important for learners with ASD so they can meet staff, their peers and see the facilities; and
- the potential benefits of work experience for these learners as preparation for transition should not be underestimated.

4.10 The admissions process for Bridgend College is all online and Careers Wales has expressed some concerns that this may disadvantage learners with ALN. Although they may receive support in making an application, subsequent steps in the process rely on exchanges of emails. There is a question of how reliable learners in LRCs, Ysgol Bryn Castell and Heronsbridge School are at accessing emails and that they may miss opportunities for interviews.

4.11 In order to support successful transition a number of issues were identified in the discussions under paragraph 3.4 as being worthy of consideration. These include:

- sufficient dedicated funding from Welsh Government to provide a suitable range of choices/courses for learners with ALN at the right level;
- increased involvement of the college in statement reviews and preparatory visits to LRCs;
- an increase in the amount of specialist Careers Wales support available;
- smaller and more frequent events to help ALN learners through transition and to support 'open days'; and
- transition to post-19 learning provision also has significant issues such as the loss of Education Maintenance Allowance.

4.12 In recent years, there has been greater clarity around placement criteria for entry into Heronsbridge School. This, in turn, is having an impact on the nature of the learners

gaining access to Heronsbridge School whose needs tend to be more complex than might have been the case in the past (see also paragraph 4.4). As a result, learners who might have gained entry in the past are now placed in LRCs. With more learners with higher levels of needs now in LRCs in mainstream schools, there is a need to carefully and strategically plan with our key partners in Bridgend College the future needs of these learners aged 16 to 18.

4.13 A review of provision for learners with ALN was initiated by the Corporate Director of Education and Family Support which will conclude by autumn 2019. This will involve scrutinising provision for learners ensuring that there is appropriate provision to meet the need of all learners at post-16.

4.14 It is anticipated that a report on detailed options for the future of post-16 provision will be presented to Cabinet in October 2019. A section on ALN progression will be included to capture the work that has been outlined in this report and to provide a more holistic/inclusive approach to the development of a post-16 strategy including referencing the outcomes of the options analysis for a new Bridgend Special School.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 At this juncture, there is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

6.1 The previous reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet, when considering the range of concepts for post-16 education, have referenced the issues of faith, Welsh language and the ALN aspects of post-16 provision. The consultation paper focused on mainstream sixth form and college provision and it was stated that additional work and reports will be undertaken separate to but complimenting the review of post-16 provision in mainstream settings. The approach with regard to ALN provisions and support has been set out in this report to scrutiny.

6.2 An initial EIA impact screening was undertaken and has recently been updated. A full EIA will be undertaken as part of the preparation of detailed options in Phase 4 of the post-16 review where stakeholders will be asked to contribute to the assessment.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 Now, and in the short and mid-term, the financial pressures in the education system are a challenge to the viability of small sixth forms, the range of subjects and appropriate progression pathways at the right level that are available to meet the needs of all learners 16 to 18.

7.2 The Cabinet's preferred concepts for the future of post-16 provision in the County are aimed at providing choice in post-16 settings, maintaining the breadth of subject choice and progression routes, improving facilities and enhancing the standards of education.

7.3 Through these developments, the Council is striving to meet the ambitions of all learners and support them to become independent adults and develop their skills so that they can contribute to life and work in Wales. This will enable them to access employment and thereby have incomes that allow them to lead fulfilling lives.

7.4 Through all stages of the review of post-16 provision there has been close engagement with a range of stakeholders including the young people in schools and college. This has meant that the voice of learners has been clearly articulated in the design of future provision. Learners will continue to be engaged in any future consultation activity.

8. Financial implications

8.1 Funding for sixth-form provision in Bridgend County is provided by Welsh Government as a single post-16 grant allocation each year. There is a core allocation based mainly on student numbers, with additional allocations to take into account student deprivation and Welsh-medium education. Total funding for 2018-2019 is £5,829,431, of which over 97% is distributed to secondary schools. In the last three financial years, the core grant has been reduced by £672,427 as a result of the combined effects of lower learner numbers and reductions by Welsh Government to the central post-16 grant for schools.

8.2 A similar funding methodology is applied to the programmes for 16 to 18 year-olds delivered by Bridgend College. In addition, the college receives a block grant to provide support for learners with ALN on the college roll.

8.3 The consultation report referenced the financial pressures being faced by the Council, its secondary schools and Bridgend College. The need to use limited resources efficiently was discussed along with providing good value for money.

8.4 One area presented in the consultation paper was post-16 transport costs. There will be a review of this discretionary expenditure by the Council and any implications for ALN learners arising from this will feature in future reports.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Scrutiny is recommended to:

- note and comment on the feedback from the reviews undertaken to date.

Lindsay Harvey
Corporate Director (Education and Family Support)

5 June 2019

lindsay.harvey@bridgend.gov.uk

Contact officer: John Fabes
Specialist Officer: Post-16 Education and Training

Telephone: (01656) 642663

Email: john.fabes@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

Background documents:

- Scrutiny paper on the concepts for post-16 education included in the public consultation, 16 October 2018
- Consultation paper on 'The potential re-organisation of post-16 provision across Bridgend County Borough Council – consideration of concepts'
- Bridgend County Borough Council Post-16 concepts consultation: Consultation report